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# Open Access Policies and Practices at Leiden University

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Marco de Niet (1962) works at Leiden University Libraries (UBL) as the Research and Education Services Division Manager and he is also Deputy Director. He is responsible for all the services provided by UBL to the Leiden University Faculties and other user groups, on site and online. His key focus is on the development, implementation, and impact of open academic and cultural information services. He is currently also a member of the Supervisory Board of *Europeana*, the European flagship initiative for digital cultural heritage.

Increasing the number of Open Access publications is an important step toward full-scale Open Science practices. New options to publish in Open Access are constantly emerging, with Open Access publishing being promoted more and more by research institutions, governments, academic societies, and commercial publishers who incorporate Open Access in their business models. Likewise, governments in Europe and the Netherlands stimulate Open Access with policies and legislation (Bosman et al. 1-4). A few years ago, funders across Europe joined forces to speed up the process of transformation of scholarly publishing towards Open Access.

Leiden University, which has been supporting its researchers actively for several years now, tops the charts of Dutch universities with the highest level of Open Access publications amongst the entire output of peer reviewed articles. Nevertheless, Open Access publishing requires firm adjustments to the publishing strategy of a scholar. If you are an author or an editor at Leiden University, what are the choices that you are confronted with when trying to make Open Access publishing a reality? How do the University and Leiden University Libraries (UBL) organize support for scholars and editors so they can make the right choices about publication platforms, Open Access types, and proper licenses?

Leiden University Libraries pays special attention to the findability of Open Access publications in its vast academic collections, and to the role of Leiden's Scholarly Publications Repository, in relation to the information services provided by publishers and other repositories. As such, once a publication is available as Open Access, what search and retrieval facilities are available to others who would like to find and access such an article? In this paper, we will address these issues by examining both policies and practices at Leiden University and its faculties.

## **Open Access Policies**

Governments, funders, universities, and other academic institutions worldwide are embracing the notion of Open Science in order to make

publicly funded research available and inclusive for everyone. As Open Access publications are an important contribution to full-scale Open Science practices, policy makers set as a key target that all academic peer reviewed journal articles will become available in Open Access in the short term (for other publication types, such as books, the Open Access ambition is set for a longer term). As Leiden University also supports these goals, it has developed its own Open Access policy, to which all Leiden scholars need to comply. This includes, for instance, the obligation to upload the full-text versions of their articles to the Leiden Repository (“Scholarly Publications Leiden University”). In addition to this policy, a Leiden researcher may also need to comply with other Open Access policies or requirements (for instance, if the research is funded by an external funder). One such requirement may be that the article is published in Open Access immediately at the moment of publication, even though the journal it is published in requires a certain period of restricted access behind a paywall.

As for Leiden University’s policies, the Open Access mandate for PhD theses is already almost 20 years old, whereas the one for peer reviewed articles is more recent. This policy is based on the 2018 sector agreement between the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU, now called ‘Universities of The Netherlands (UNL)’) and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The aim of this sector agreement is to achieve Open Access for all peer reviewed scholarly articles reporting on research paid for through Dutch public funds. That is why, from 2017 onwards, Leiden scholars were required to make a version of their Leiden-affiliated peer reviewed articles available in Open Access via the Scholarly Publications Repository of Leiden University, acknowledging the publisher’s policy. This is called *green Open Access*. In 2020, the Executive Board of the University added Article 25fa of the *Dutch Copyright Act (DCA)*, also known as the *Taverne Amendment*, to the policy (“Artikel 25fa ch. Ia”; Sondervan et al.). This allows scholars to share short academic works within a reasonable period of time, regardless of any restrictive publishers’ guidelines, if their research was funded in whole or in part by the Dutch government. Article 25fa, which is expected to be used by all

Leiden scholars by the Executive Board, entails that, after uploading the published versions of articles, book chapters in edited collections, book reviews, and conference papers in the Leiden Repository, these publications will become available in Open Access after an embargo period of six months after the first publication. In December 2020, the Open Access policy of Leiden University was incorporated into the employment contract of all Leiden scholars.

Leiden scholars who receive funding from national or international research funders, or who have co-authors who need to comply with Open Access policies of their funder or their institution, may also need to acknowledge external Open Access requirements. The Open Access policies of funders may apply not only to peer reviewed articles but also to peer reviewed book chapters and books. The most important funders of Leiden scholars' research are the Dutch Research Council (NWO) including ZonMw, the European Commission, and the European Research Council (ERC). The first two have joined *cOAlition S*, a coalition of science funders, set up with the specific purpose to accelerate the transition to Open Access, which launched *PlanS* in 2018. Its main principle is that “with effect from 2021, all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in Open Access Journals, on Open Access Platforms, or made immediately available through Open Access Repositories without embargo” (“Principles and Implementation”). These different Open Access policies from institutions and funders, sometimes resulting in incompatible requirements, can make it difficult for authors to know how to comply.

In addition to these differing policies, there are also several options for researchers to choose from if they want or need to publish an article as Open Access. The two main routes are designated with the labels *green* and *gold*. If the *green* route, also called *self-archiving*, is chosen, the authors publish a version of their article in a repository, such as the Leiden Repository, which is sent to the publisher for official publication. In contrast, in the *gold* route, the publication is direct Open Access upon

publication on the website of the publisher. Whereas there are no publishing costs for the author involved in the *green* route (although an embargo may be in place), with the *gold* route, an *Article Processing Charge* (APC) is (pre)paid to buy off the immediate availability of the article in Open Access. It could be the case that such publishing costs are covered by sponsors of the journal – for instance, funders, donors, subscribers, or societies. This last model is also called the *diamond* route.

There are two main models of *gold* Open Access: *full Open Access journals* and *hybrid journals*. Hybrid journals are subscription journals that are not Open Access by default, although authors can decide to pay an APC to publish their article as Open Access upon publication. Dutch Universities have collaboratively made so-called *read-and-publish* deals with 18 international publishers, which combine subscription access to the archives of the publisher with Open Access publishing for new articles by an author of a Dutch University, who then takes the primary responsibility for communication with the journal during the submission and publication process (that can only be one person). It is important to note that most of these agreements only include hybrid journals. However, a requirement of *PlanS* for these deals is that they are “transformative” (Borrego et al.). Their aim is to flip the subscription journals to full Open Access journals by 31 December 2024, at the latest.

In line with Dutch policy, Leiden University aimed to have 100% of the publicly financed peer-reviewed scholarly articles published in Open Access by 2020. According to Dutch Universities, the national percentage published in Open Access, in 2020, was 73% (gold: 25%, hybrid: 35% and green: 13%) and, according to Rathenau, 71%. This diverges from the average of 52%, in EU27 (“Monitor.”; Koens and Vennekens). In the CWTS Leiden Ranking, Leiden University obtained the highest Open Access score in the Netherlands, that is, 77% (gold: 19%, hybrid: 21%, bronze: 17%, green: 20%, and unknown: 1%) from 2016 to 2019 (“CWTS Leiden Ranking 2021.”). Open Access rates for books and book chapters are not monitored yet, but we know that the percentages are much lower, which is related to the costs involved and the focus on peer-reviewed articles in policies and legislation. Recently,

a working group at the national level was set up to work on a new “Definition Framework for Monitoring Open Access” that also includes books, chapters, and reports.<sup>1</sup>

All in all, we can observe that, looking at the percentage of Open Access at Leiden University for peer-reviewed articles, the original policy goals to reach 100% Open Access by 2020 have not yet been met. Nevertheless, Leiden University is well on its way, and Leiden authors must already be quite familiar with Open Access publishing, as most of them have made their reviewed articles available in Open Access via various routes.

## Publishing Practices

So, how do authors decide how to publish their works as Open Access? That depends on several criteria, such as the impact of the journal, the discipline, the career status of the researcher, the opportunities (is there, for instance, a funder budget or an Open Access deal with a 100% discount?), the funder requirements, and the personal preference of the researcher and institute (Kramer and Bosman). Let us look at these criteria more closely. Although the journal impact factor may no longer be used as a quality indicator in grant proposals and research evaluations in the Netherlands (VSNU et al., “Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027.” 33 and “Room for Everyone’s Talent.” 7), it is obvious that impact on the advancement of science or on society is a key driver for authors to publish their research results. Opinions differ, however, on how Open Access publishing improves impact. Most Open Access journals are new and do not yet have the status of the leading commercial scientific journals. But, on the other hand, Open Access publications may reach much wider audiences. Dutch universities and funders who support the *Declaration on Research Assessment* (DORA) have jointly developed a policy in which Open Sci-

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1 On 22 April 2022, the steering group Strategie, Public Affairs & Governance (SSPG) of the Universiteiten van Nederland (UNL) approved the “Adviesrapport Vernieuwing open access monitoring per 2022” from the “open access monitoring werkgroep”.

ence (including Open Access) is better recognized and rewarded, which may help to increase the status of Open Access publishing (VSNU et al., “Room for Everyone’s Talent” 7).

For some disciplines (e.g., Physics, Economics, and Law), there is a tradition to share works in an early version of the manuscript via preprint servers, such as arXiv, RePEc, and SSRN. For other disciplines (e.g., Medicine, Science), there are good opportunities to publish *gold* Open Access, since there is usually more budget to spend on Open Access and more suitable journals available. For Humanities and Social Sciences, Open Access is harder to achieve, but it is getting better: they now also have preprint servers, such as SocArXiv and OSF Preprints, which they can make use of prepaid deals, and there are more *diamond* Open Access journals emerging, for which payment is not needed.

As for career status, senior researchers, in general, know where they want to publish, and most of them also guide their PhD students in selecting an appropriate journal. On whether Open Access helps or hinders one’s career, opinions are quite divided. Some point to the lack of quality of Open Access journals, whilst others focus on the importance of Open Access, as possible future employers, especially outside academia, will have easy access to the publications (without payment). The same applies to sharing preprints. It can be very interesting for an employer to see what the applicants have worked on, especially when formal papers are still under review.

Scholars are presented with various opportunities that reduce the costs of Open Access publishing for them. For instance, they may publish Open Access with a 100% discount when a journal is part of a national *read-and-publish* agreement and when the author fulfils the terms and conditions required by the publisher. However, not all journals are covered by such deals. For example, the journals *Nature* and *Cell* are not included in the deals with Springer Nature and Elsevier. In such cases, it is up to the scholar to pay an APC in order to publish an article as Open Access. If the scholar did not secure sufficient funds from their funder, or if their department or funder is not willing to pay, the publication can only be accessed behind a paywall. In that case, the repository of their univer-



sity can be used to publish Open Access without any costs. Briefly put, authors can make use of Article 25fa DCA to make their article Open Access or follow the journal's Open Access policy.

As mentioned above, Leiden scholars have to be compliant with the Open Access policy of the University and that of their funders, which means that decisions are often based on these policies. These policies can concern a certain open content license, the obligation for direct Open Access (without embargo), or a mandatory upload in the repository, even when the article is available in *gold* Open Access with the publisher.

A final factor that impacts the levels and routes of Open Access publishing is the preference of the researcher or the institute. The personal preference of the author to select a specific journal to publish in is usually driven by the need to secure a certain level of quality. The institutional preferences often result from the need to reduce costs: does the publishing require additional funding (e.g., the payment of an APC) or not? Nevertheless, there may be other kinds of motivations for an author to prefer Open Access, as is illustrated in Figure 1. It should be noted here that some publishers misuse this system and mislead scholars that have such aspirations. Under the banner of Open Access, so-called predatory publishers are collecting APCs while promising peer review of the articles, but they do not actually make that happen. Instead, they prioritize financial gain as their goal, rather than the advancement of scientific research as a collaborative effort (Grudniewicz et al 210-212).



**Fig. 1** Kingsley, Danny, and Sarah Brown, “Benefits of Open Access”, *Wikimedia Commons*, 28 October 2015, licensed under CC by 4.0, [www.commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benefitsofopenaccess\\_cc-by\\_logo.pd\\_eng.jpg](http://www.commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benefitsofopenaccess_cc-by_logo.pd_eng.jpg).

## Library Support

Leiden University Libraries offers support, services, and infrastructures to make Open Access publishing for Leiden scholars as easy as possible. For example, the UBL's expert team, located at the Centre for Digital Scholarship (CDS), focuses on informing, advising, and answering researchers' questions. The experts participate in European and national networks that enable them to inform and advise researchers, faculties, institutions, and management of the university about the latest developments, workflows, opportunities, and requirements. Additionally, scholars can find extensive information about Open Access on the university website ("Open Access."). UBL/CDS also provide a flowchart that shows Leiden scholars how to publish a peer reviewed article in Open Access before submission, at submission, and upon publication. The Open Access experts also frequently give presentations and workshops at the institutes of the University, which are tailor-made to fit the publishing traditions of individual disciplines. Moreover, scholars can visit an Open Access expert individually on appointment.

In addition, the UBL/CDS runs a central helpdesk for the University and uses various tools to answer the questions that reach them, such as:

- the national *Open Access Journal Browser* (at [openaccess.nl](http://openaccess.nl)), with information per journal, for instance, about the national *read-and-publish* deals, and references to the *Directory of Open Access Journals* (a list with high quality peer reviewed full Open Access journals) and *Sherpa Romeo* (publishers' Open Access policies)
- *Directory of Open Access Books*
- *PlanS* journal checker tool
- *Think, Check, Submit* (to prevent predatory publishing)
- *Openjournals.nl* (to host small Dutch and academic journals)

Besides support, the library also offers authors the opportunity to publish Open Access without any costs. Together with the other University Libraries in the Netherlands, UBL participates actively in the negotiations with national and international publishers, in order to get access

to their archives, as well as create favorable publishing conditions (Van Otegem et al. 16). As a result, Leiden researchers can make use of 18 publishing agreements for more than 11,000 journals with 100% discount. In 2021, 1,367 peer reviewed articles of Leiden University (including the University's Medical Centre, LUMC) have been published under *read-and-publish* deals. UBL also manages the Leiden Scholarly Publications Repository, through which they can disseminate their publications in direct Open Access, or after 6 months, making use of the *Taverne Amendment*. In 2021, 89% of the peer reviewed articles (excluding LUMC) had an upload in the Repository.

As part of the policy of the University, Leiden scholars are required to register their Leiden-affiliated output (such as PhD theses, scholarly articles, books, and conference proceedings) in the Leiden University Current Research Information System (LUCRIS). Here, they can upload their publications and, if necessary, indicate if there is an embargo. After this registration, the publications become available in the Leiden Repository, which disseminates the output widely and in a sustainable way. The publications also become visible on the researcher's personal page on the website of the University and on many other services, such as *Google Scholar* and *OpenAIRE*, a technical infrastructure funded by the European Commission, that harvests research output from data providers, including the Leiden Repository. All EU-funded research should be offered to the EU harvester by local repositories. cOAlition S has also formulated requirements for repositories that institutions must fulfil, which have recently been implemented in the Leiden Repository ("OpenDOAR"). Finally, the files are also archived in the e-depot of the National Library of the Netherlands.

In recent years, UBL has done several Open Access projects. The project *UBL helps with Open Access* aimed to make Leiden scholars aware of the 100% Leiden Open Access policy, the policies of journals, and the *read-and-publish* deals. The library informed scholars about their articles that could have been, but were not yet, available as Open Access. If a researcher was interested in this, the library could take care of uploading and labeling their publication as Open Access.

Another project was the implementation of Article 25fa DCA (“Taverne Amendment”). As the wording in this article is vague, the Dutch University Libraries, including UBL, joined forces to get legal advice on how to interpret it (e.g., what does *reasonable period* stand for, what is *the work*, and what does *wholly or partly funded* really mean?). They first tested the interpretation in a pilot and later implemented it in the repositories for all their scholars to use. Since the implementation, over 2000 short works have been made Open Access in the Leiden Repository, thanks to the *Taverne Amendment*.

A third project relates to publication policies. Currently, the library is working with research institutions on institutional publication policies that help control the costs of APCs and assist authors in making the right choices in accordance with the policy of the university, their institute, and their research funder. Since publication traditions may differ per institute, it is useful to address this at an institutional level. The main principles of the institutional policies are:

- Open Access is how we publish
- Quality and freedom of choice where to publish are paramount
- Compliance with *PlanS* requirements, if required
- Costs must be made transparent and controlled

The experts of UBL/CDS constantly monitor compliance with the Open Access policy of Leiden University and other relevant policies and advise the institutes accordingly.

## **Finding Open Access Research Outputs**

The search and retrieval strategies of a person looking for scholarly information in Open Access do not differ much from traditional search strategies. However, there are some tools available to make it easier to find Open Access publications. For example, when a researcher visits the website of a publisher, they can use the *Unpaywall* browser extension, which shows whether a version of the publication is available in Open Access

(“Unpaywall Extension.”). When the publication is green Open Access in a repository, *Unpaywall* will refer to that copy of the publication. The advantage for Leiden scholars is that they do not have to log in or be in the Leiden network domain to have access. This way, it is easy to find the Open Access publications in the Leiden Repository via the publisher’s website. Leiden University Libraries also manages other repositories to improve (open) access to the publications of students and researchers, such as dissertations, bachelor and master theses, journals and book collections published at Leiden University, conference proceedings from conferences held at our university, and the publications of Leiden University Press. All these collections benefit from the repository infrastructure: long-term preservation and access, permanent identifiers (UBL uses *Handle* to guarantee the findability of publications), clear guidance on the rights and obligations of the end user, and increased visibility in international networks. Furthermore, service providers can harvest the metadata easily via an international standard, the *Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting* (OAI-PMH). As a result, scholarly publications can also be found, for example, in the Dutch research portal *Narcis* and the European Research Portal funded by the European Commission, *OpenAIRE*.

Open Access publications can, of course, also be found in the library catalogue, through metadata from the *Directory of Open Access Journals*, the *Directory of Open Access Books*, and all the publications in the Leiden Repository. In fact, library catalogues are essential for digital-only Open Access books, as these are not for sale and can therefore not be found at booksellers. UBL’s Subject Librarians also select relevant Open Access materials and add them to the catalogue. By using these different sources, the library catalogue offers a complete overview of all relevant materials available, be it by subscription or in Open Access.

## Conclusion

Leiden University Libraries works closely with Leiden scholars to make Open Access of all Leiden-affiliated scientific output a reality. UBL offers support to scholars so they can choose the right Open Access route(s) in compliance with the relevant policies, and preferably without payment. In addition, they support the institutes at Leiden University to include Open Access as an integral part of their publication policies and strategies. In 2020, most peer-reviewed articles at Leiden University were already available in Open Access. However, work still has to be done to reach the 100% target for peer reviewed articles, as well as to make other works Open Access, such as books and book chapters. The Leiden Repository plays a key role in implementing the Open Access policy of Leiden University. It makes the publications of Leiden University findable and accessible, thereby increasing their international visibility and impact. Although many works are Open Access nowadays and do not have to be purchased for the collection, the subject librarians at Leiden University Libraries still need to select the high-quality Open Access journals and books to be indexed in the library catalogue of Leiden University. It is in doing so that Open Access publications are integrated seamlessly into search and retrieval services.

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