Unlock More Content with Open Access

The risks and rewards of embracing OA at work
Open access (OA) has been a disruptive force in the publishing industry, providing researchers with free access to content. However, this change agent has also introduced some confusion. As publishers work with academic institutions and governmental bodies to establish viable business models around open access, content consumers in the corporate sphere increasingly encounter open access content in their daily work. A recent study published in *PeerJ* estimated that at least 28% of scholarly content is available as open access. Professionals in corporations using tools like PubMed and Google regularly find OA content. During a time-crunch in the middle of putting together a regulatory filing, responding to a healthcare professional (HCP) or trying to identify a new medical breakthrough, it’s only natural to think about using content that’s instantly and freely available.

Everyone wants simple access to scientific literature at a reasonable cost, but there are some special considerations when using open access content in a corporate setting.

**READ THE FINE PRINT**

There’s a whole rainbow of open access models and a handful of OA Creative Commons licenses that have different rules about how content can be used.

Reading the terms and conditions isn’t most people’s idea of fun, but it’s important to make sure you are using the content in a way that’s consistent with the open access license terms and your company’s compliance policies.

For instance, a great deal of open access content is published under a Creative Commons (CC) license. There are several flavors of CC licenses that indicate how the content can be used. Some of these licenses do not allow for commercial use, but they do not clearly define what commercial use is, and interpretation varies across publishers and across corporations consuming the content. Confusion can also arise between the types of commercial use, like individual research versus large-scale copying and distribution for Sales and Marketing purposes.
Each organization must define its own risk tolerance regarding OA. It can be common for large pharmaceutical companies to interpret these licenses as not allowing use of the articles by anyone in their corporation because they are a corporate entity, while others feel that this content can be used for individual research purposes in the workplace but not for promotional activities that directly lead to revenue.

It’s important to know your company’s policy on the use of OA content and to read the terms provided along with the article.

NOT ALL OA CONTENT IS CREATED EQUAL

There are many excellent OA journals that publish groundbreaking research, but unfortunately there are also some OA journals that do not maintain rigorous publication standards.

Studies published in *Nature* and *The Scholarly Kitchen* have exposed problematic journal practices and demonstrated the threat to the integrity of scientific discourse posed by such practices. In response to predatory journal practices, the *Think Check Submit* initiative was formed, which offers authors some criteria to consider when evaluating where to submit their articles.

The advice of ‘buyer beware’ applies to OA consumers as well as OA authors. It would be wise to follow a similar path of vetting when using open access content in a corporation, like checking a journal title’s record in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). When offering research to support a patent submission, a regulatory filing or a key business decision, no one wants to accidentally cite papers full of incorrect or misleading science.

Some OA consumers may prefer to avoid content available in open access repositories, in which an article is published in a traditional journal, but the author is also allowed to post it on a personal blog or in an OA repository. The copies posted on blogs or in OA repositories may not be exactly as the final published version of the article. For example, copyediting and pagination may not yet have been performed.

Green OA content is indexed on Google Scholar, which means what you find freely available there and on other websites may be an early version of an article instead of the final published version, also known as the version of record. The earlier version of an article might be perfectly fine for your purposes, but some activities such as submitting a regulatory filing or responding to an HCP’s question about dosing, necessitate that you use the version of record.

THE TOP OPEN ACCESS MODELS

Gold
An open access journal publishes the article, supported by fees known as article processing charges (APCs) covered by the author, an institution or a funder.

Green
The author places the article in an open access repository, and in the future a final version may be published in a traditional journal or somewhere else.

Hybrid
A traditional journal publishes the article, and the author pays a fee to make the content open access, or the paywall may be removed after a certain amount of time has passed.
MORE CONTENT AND MORE AVAILABILITY MEANS MORE DISCOVERY

As more content is published as open access, the burden to determine if and how corporations can use this content increasingly falls on content consumers to ensure that they are using these articles compliantly.

When working with OA publications, remember to take these best practices into consideration:

- Take stock of the context of your usage
- Read the fine print
- Check your company’s policies
- Make sure you are using credible publications
- Obtain the version of record of the article
- Seek out only content with the best reputation when investing research time or making key business decisions

Remember: open access is only possible because researchers are willing to openly share their work with the world. No matter how you are using open access content, always make sure to properly attribute the author.

Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) builds unique solutions that connect content and rights in contextually relevant ways through software and professional services. CCC helps people navigate vast amounts of data to discover actionable insights, enabling them to innovate and make informed decisions. CCC, with its subsidiaries RightsDirect and Ixxus, collaborates with customers to advance how data and information is integrated, accessed, and shared while setting the standard for effective copyright solutions that accelerate knowledge and power innovation. CCC is headquartered in Danvers, Mass. and has offices across North America, Europe and Asia. To learn more about CCC, visit www.copyright.com.

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