

## **Open access publishing and the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture network**

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### **Abstract**

Publishing is an important component of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture's (RUFORUM) work to improve the quality of postgraduate training and research in the agricultural sciences. But many members of the RUFORUM network are not familiar with the benefits of open access publishing. This article explains the concept, its importance within the African context, ways in which the RUFORUM community can take advantage of publishing research articles in an open access format, and ways to evaluate open access journals in order to ensure that the most appropriate journal is selected.

Key words: Copyright, institutional repositories, journals, open access, publishing

### **Résumé**

La publication est un élément important dans le travail du Forum des Universités Régionales pour le Renforcement des Capacités dans l'Agriculture (le RUFORUM), afin d'améliorer la qualité de la formation postuniversitaire et de la recherche dans les sciences agricoles. Mais de nombreux membres du réseau de RUFORUM ne sont pas familiers avec les avantages de la publication en libre accès. Cet article explique le concept, son importance dans le contexte africain, les moyens par lesquels la communauté de RUFORUM peut profiter de la publication d'articles de recherche dans un format d'accès ouvert en ligne, et des moyens d'évaluer les revues en libre accès afin de s'assurer que le journal le plus approprié est sélectionné.

Mots clés: droit d'auteur, les dépôts institutionnels, revues, accès ouvert, de l'édition

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### **Introduction**

Open access publishing means that resources are free to users worldwide and that they may be distributed without requesting permission. Research has demonstrated that open access brings increased visibility, usage, and impact to the work of academics, researchers, and students.<sup>1</sup> Open access is compatible with copyright, peer review, prestige, quality, and

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<sup>1</sup> In 2014 the European branch of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) listed how open access benefits authors, researchers and students looking for information, universities, libraries and others. Go to <http://sparceurope.org/open-access/benefits-of-open-access/>.

indexing. Open access resources must still be cited when used. In fact, there is even an open access search engine in order to detect plagiarism.<sup>2</sup>

Governments in North America and many donors, such as the Department for International Development (DFID) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), require that all research they fund be made freely available to the public. The international centers associated with the CG system have moved to open access policies, as has the World Bank. In addition, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) maintains an open access policy for theses, dissertations, case studies, books, and other research output produced under RUFORUM auspices and encourages members of the RUFORUM network to publish in an open access format.

Open access is particularly important within the African context. Journal subscriptions are expensive. Even though most African universities and research institutions can read journals in the agricultural sciences online at no charge through AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture),<sup>3</sup> or on CD-ROM at little cost through TEEAL (the Essential Electronic Agricultural Library),<sup>4</sup> these services will not last forever. Moreover, if Africa's research output is to reach the scientific community worldwide, it must be widely accessible. Open access to Africa's research output can help accomplish these objectives.

**Open access and Journals.** The number of journals employing open access models is growing. These include journals, such as the *African Crop Science Journal*, which maintains an open access license for the entire journal, and journals, primarily those published by commercial publishers, which have more complicated arrangements. Some subscription-based journals permit authors to publish their articles as open access for a special fee. These are referred to as "hybrid" journals. *Crop Science*, which is published by the Crop Science Society of America, is an example of a hybrid journal. Although the journal is copyright protected, for a fee of \$1,000 in addition to normal page charges, authors may opt to publish their article as open access.<sup>5</sup>

In all cases, articles based on research conducted with funds from donor agencies that have signed on to open access policies must be made publicly accessible after a 12-month embargo period. Moreover, some journals, such as *Crop Science*, will permit authors to place a pre-print or some other version of their article in a personal or institutional repository, such as in the RUFORUM repository.<sup>6</sup> Many publishers also permit self-archiving of the PDF of the final draft after 12 months. It's complicated, and journal licensing and archiving policies are discussed in more detail on the next page.

Table 1 has several agricultural journals included in TEEAL; their licensing policies will give you a more complete idea of the range of options available to authors.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://oaps.eu>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.aginternetwork.org/en/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.teeal.org>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.crops.org/files/publications/cs/cs-instructions-to-authors-2013.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://repository.ruforum.org>

**Table 1. Examples of journals in the agricultural sciences and their licensing policies.**

Journal title	Licensing policy	URL
African Crop Science Journal	Bioline has an open access policy for the journals it mounts. But see the ACSJ copyright statement (http://www.bioline.org.br/info?id=cs&doc=about.)	<a href="http://www.bioline.org.br/cs">http://www.bioline.org.br/cs</a> <a href="http://www.ajol.info">http://www.ajol.info</a>
African Journal of Agricultural Research	This is an open access journal, with a Creative Commons attribution license.	<a href="http://www.academicjournals.org/ajar/">http://www.academicjournals.org/ajar/</a>
African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition, and Development	Although the journal is fully copyrighted, issues and articles are freely available online.	<a href="http://www.ajfand.net/">http://www.ajfand.net/</a>
Agriculture and Food Security	This open access journal is published by Springer for the the Norman Borlag Institute, which addresses the challenge of global food security.	<a href="http://www.agricultureandfoodsecurity.com/">http://www.agricultureandfoodsecurity.com/</a>
BMC Veterinary Research	This open access journal is part of the BMC series, which publishes subject-specific journals focused on the needs of individual research communities across all areas of biology and medicine. It considers articles on all aspects of veterinary science and medicine, including the epidemiology, diagnosis, prevention and treatment of medical conditions of domestic, companion, farm and wild animals, as well as the biomedical processes that underlie their health. Many of the articles in BMC Veterinary Research are relevant to Africa and by African authors.	<a href="http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcvetres/">http://www.biomedcentral.com/bmcvetres/</a>

**Table 1. Contd.**

Journal title	Licensing policy	URL
International Journal of Pest Management	This journal is available by subscription. But authors may designate their article as open access, with an appropriate Creative Commons license, for a fee of \$2,950. In addition, articles funded by certain donors are made available after 12 months. Finally, authors may deposit in a repository their manuscript after peer review, but prior to publisher formatting.	<a href="http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tpm20/current#.UsEuRWQW10x">www.tandfonline.com/toc/tpm20/current#.UsEuRWQW10x</a>
Phytopathology	All content of Phytopathology is open access 12 months after publication. Authors can request immediate open access for their articles at a cost of \$2,400, in addition to the usual page charges. Authors may archive a pre-peer review preprint of their article.	<a href="http://apsjournals.apsnet.org/loi/phyto">http://apsjournals.apsnet.org/loi/phyto</a>

The *African Journal of Rural Development*, which is cohosted by RUFORUM and Makerere University, is a new open access journal worth bearing in mind. Go to: <http://afjrd.org/>

The business models journal publishers use are changing. Commercial publishers make money by charging for access, usually through subscriptions. With the development of open access models, however, the cost burden frequently shifts to the author, who is asked to pay a fee for publishing his or her article. It is therefore essential for research project budgets to include a line item for all anticipated publishing charges.

**Open access and intellectual property rights.** By default, copyright is automatic, with “all rights reserved.” It is therefore necessary to modify, but not replace, traditional copyright with a policy that allows for open paradigm rather than one that is closed. Creative Commons (CC),<sup>7</sup> a US non-profit organization was created to do just that. CC has created a range of easy-to-use copyright licenses that offer a simple, standardized way to give the public permission to share and use an author’s creative work — on the conditions of his or her choice. Some licenses are very permissive and allow adaptation; others are more restrictive and permit users to read and distribute, but not to adapt. It is important to remember that CC licenses are not an alternative to copyright; they let you easily change your copyright terms from the default of “all rights reserved” to “some rights reserved.” Open access journals therefore usually use a CC license. Others use a CC equivalent.

**Publisher policies and the rights of authors.** Another issue pertains to the rights of authors to deposit copies of their research in a personal or institutional archive. Journal publishers will make the articles they publish available on their websites, of course. But subscription only journals charge a fee for access. But, as stated above, publishers frequently permit authors to mount a version of their articles on personal or institutional websites. Many authors opt to use both mechanisms to ensure that their research is circulated as widely as possible.

RoMEO Colour	Archiving policy
<a href="#">Green</a>	Can archive pre-print and post-print or publisher’s version/PDF
<a href="#">Blue</a>	Can archive post-print (ie final draft post-refereeing) or publisher’s version/PDF
<a href="#">Yellow</a>	Can archive pre-print (ie pre-refereeing)
<a href="#">White</a>	Archiving not formally supported

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<sup>7</sup> <http://creativecommons.org/>

How is it possible to determine a journal's policies pertaining to archiving and licensing? The University of Nottingham in the UK maintains an excellent site called SHERPA/RoMEO<sup>8</sup> on publisher copyright policies and self-archiving. Sherpa/RoMEO uses four colors, as shown above, to categorize publisher policies, and this color sequence is now widely used when discussing different licensing arrangements. Green is the most permissive, while white is the most restrictive. RUFORUM authors should aim for green and never settle for white. SHERPA/RoMEO will also give users information on a journal's licensing status, when it is available. The screen capture below is an example of a SHERPA/RoMEO journal record.

Journal:	<a href="#">Applied and Environmental Soil Science</a> (ISSN: 1687-7667, ESSN: 1687-7675) [started 2009]
RoMEO:	This is a <b>RoMEO green</b> journal
Listed in:	<a href="#">DOAJ</a> as an open access journal
Author's Pre-print:	✓ author can archive pre-print (ie pre-refereeing)
Author's Post-print:	✓ author can archive post-print (ie final draft post-refereeing)
Publisher's Version/PDF:	✓ author can archive publisher's version/PDF
General Conditions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publisher's version/PDF may be used</li> <li>• Creative Commons Attribution Licence</li> <li>• Eligible UK authors may deposit in <a href="#">OpenDepot</a></li> </ul>
Mandated OA:	Compliance data is available for <a href="#">17 funders</a>
Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All titles are open access journals</li> </ul>
Copyright:	<a href="#">Policy</a>
Updated:	20-Mar-2013 - <a href="#">Suggest an update for this record</a>
Link to this page:	<a href="http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/issn/1687-7667/">http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/issn/1687-7667/</a>
Published by:	<a href="#">Hindawi Publishing Corporation - Green Policies in RoMEO</a>

You should also check the publisher's website to ascertain open access and archiving information. When in doubt, write the publisher. You require answers to the following questions:

- (i) What are the journal's copyright policies
- (ii) If the journal is fully copyrighted, does the publisher offer an open access option?
- (iii) If so, how much does it cost and is there a discount for developing-country authors?
- (iv) Is the author permitted to deposit a version of his or her article in a repository?
- (v) If so, which version and what are the conditions?
- (vi) Is there an embargo period before the journal article is made freely available? (It is usually 12 months.)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/index.php?la=en>

### **Not all open access publishers produce quality journals**

Although many open access publishers are legitimate, there are shoddy publishers everywhere. Some open access publishers appear to be particularly unscrupulous and have come in for a good deal of criticism by librarians and scientists. These publishers are attempting to profit from the open access movement. The fees they charge authors are high; the peer review and editing they provide are almost non-existent.

There are a number of ways that you can seek to mitigate the risk of selecting an unreliable publisher. The goal is to select the best publisher for your research.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the list in the previous section, the bullets below provide steps for ascertaining a journal's legitimacy.

- (1) Use the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).<sup>10</sup> The University of California system, for example, encourages university staff to publish in OA journals. Authors can even receive a grant to cover publishing costs, but only for those journals that are included in DOAJ. You can use DOAJ to search by journal title or by subject.
- (2) Check to see whether the journal title is included in TEEAL, which screens journals carefully.
- (3) CAB Abstracts is another excellent source to use. CABI does not index all of the journals it includes cover-to-cover. It selects articles that are relevant to its areas of coverage in the broad based agricultural sciences. If CABI includes articles from a journal title that you are considering, it is likely that your article will be indexed.
- (4) Conduct "due diligence" on the journal—
  - (i) Be wary of any journal title that does not give full contact information, including address.
  - (ii) Ensure that the editorial board is composed of experts in the field. You may want to write one or two of them to see whether they are really on the editorial board.
  - (iii) The journal should prominently display on its web site author fees and its peer review process.
  - (iv) Carefully read the author guidelines. If there are none, this might not be a journal in which you want to publish.
  - (v) Read a few articles to ascertain their quality and check to see whether those articles are indexed in CAB Abstracts.
  - (vi) Journals typically list the indexing and abstracting databases in which they are included. Check to ensure that this is the case.
- (5) Ascertain that the journal publishes regularly and that the publication schedule meets your needs. Some journals have faster review and editorial processes than others.

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<sup>9</sup> If you want to read further, Jeffrey Beall, a librarian who writes extensively about "predatory publishers," has an extensive list of what to look out for. Go to <http://scholarlyoa.com/2012/11/30/criteria-for-determining-predatory-open-access-publishers-2nd-edition/>.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.doaj.org/>

- (6) Read a few articles to ascertain their quality and check to see whether those articles are indexed in CAB Abstracts.
- (7) Journals typically list the indexing and abstracting databases in which they are included. Check to ensure that this is the case.
- (8) Talk with your supervisor and colleagues. Ask whether they are familiar with the journal.

### **An Open-Access Publishing Checklist**

- (i) Be sure to include a line item for page charges in your research budget. Open access fees can be as high as \$3,500. This is in addition to the page charges that some subscription-based publications require. Thus, if you are thinking about publishing in a “hybrid” publication, you should reserve additional funds.
- (ii) Think carefully about where you want to publish, and do your homework to ensure that you are selecting an appropriate journal.
- (iii) Consider using the RUFORUM repository to archive your work. The RUFORUM repository is indexed in *Agris* and CABI, two essential services relevant to agriculture. This will improve the possibility that your research will reach a wider audience.

#### Creating Enabling Policies for Open Access Publishing in the RUFORUM Network

As explained above, many donors now require grantees to make their research publicly available within 12 months and the number is growing. What can the RUFORUM network do to encourage open access publishing by students and academics? Below are some avenues for university leaders, senior administrators, and staff together with RUFORUM to explore:

- (i) Members of the university community should be given incentives to publish openly, either in open access journals or through open access designation of their article, as discussed above. Universities in many countries actively encourage members of the university community to publish in open access journals or formats. This is not the case yet in sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of South Africa,<sup>11</sup> but the RUFORUM network could lead the way.
- (ii) Authors should be encouraged to deposit a version of their research in repositories—the university’s institutional repository, if there is one and also in the RUFORUM repository.
- (iii) Not specifically on journals, but members of the RUFORUM network should work towards establishing open access policies for their institutions. The University of Nairobi established such a policy in 2013. There is an excellent article in *SciDevNet* about the policy and its importance to African scientific research and the global knowledge pool.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) maintains a list of accredited open access journals. Go to the University of Pretoria page on open access journals for more information: <http://www.library.up.ac.za/aoajsa.htm>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.scidev.net/global/r-d/news/kenya-s-top-university-opens-up-its-research.html>

- (iv) Although Open Educational Resources (OER) are increasingly understood by RUFORUM network members, open access publishing is not. It would be useful for RUFORUM to organize workshops for the students studying under RUFORUM auspices and their supervisors to sensitize them and to explain how to make open access publishing work for them.

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