

HOW WE DO... OPEN ACCESS

Open access (OA) means both making knowledge available online for free and giving people the right to use that knowledge. If there are no price or permission barriers to content and information, they can be shared with anyone, anywhere, anytime. OA advances research, improves decision-making, encourages innovation, and is a step towards greater equality.

This is why we are committed to promoting open access, and since 2002 have awarded more than \$47m to university libraries and OA initiatives. We are also part of the [Open Research Funders Group](#), a global network of funding organizations working to make scholarly knowledge 100% OA.

We make grants to widen access to books and monographs, improve metadata and discoverability of open access content, and to challenge the limitations imposed on access to knowledge by copyright laws around the world. Our [open access and digital preservation policy](#) describes the technical standards we require our grantees to follow to ensure sufficient digitization quality and long-term access to materials.

We believe open access is for everyone, not just scholars, so we support organizations such as **Public.Resource.Org** to enable free access to government information such as law and technical standards. We support innovative projects to make books that have already been published freely accessible online. Our grant to the **Internet Archive**, for example, encourages university presses to make their books freely available online via controlled digital lending.

There is already a lot of open access material online. As OA becomes more wide-spread, it's important to ensure that free materials are easy to find and use. Through our grant to the **Open Access Button** we help libraries better direct people to freely accessible versions of works that are otherwise held behind paywalls.

What is Open Access?

Open access (OA) content is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions, making knowledge available to more people around the world. Just like conventional scholarly content, OA content can be peer-reviewed, printed and can produce revenue – even profit. To learn more, watch the '[Open Access Explained](#)' video or read [Open Access by Peter Suber](#).

OA in culture and environment

We ask that all materials resulting from our grants are made publicly available for free via the internet. For example, our grant to the Endangered Archives Programme at the British Library, has helped document more than 330 at-risk archives from around the world and to make them available online in high-resolution. We also support Conservation Evidence at the University of Cambridge. The project produces synopses of paywalled academic research, making the latest conservation science accessible to practitioners. [Learn more](#).

Did you know?

Approximately 80% of academic research is public or charity-funded. Unfortunately, most scholarly works – the primary sources of human knowledge – are locked behind paywalls, costing up to hundreds of dollars per item. Authors often must sign-away all copyright to the publishers as a pre-condition of publishing. They generally do not receive royalty payments for their research. All revenue instead goes to the publisher.

As a result of this system, a few academic publishers now enjoy an oligopoly control over human knowledge, and it is very profitable. Large publishers have consistently made 30% to 40% profit margins a year for the past two decades from work given to them and reviewed for them for free by scholars.