European Research Council
Scientific Council

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ERC Scientific Council Guidelines for Open Access

17 December 2007

*Note: This version of the ERC Scientific Council's Open Access Guidelines has been superseded by a **revised version**.*

The latest version of the Guidelines can be found on the webpage of the ERC Scientific Council's Working Group on Open Science:
https://erc.europa.eu/thematic-working-groups/working-group-open-access

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1. Scientific research is generating vast, ever increasing quantities of information, including primary data, data structured and integrated into databases, and scientific publications. In the age of the Internet, free and efficient access to information, including scientific publications and original data, will be the key for sustained progress.

2. Peer-review is of fundamental importance in ensuring the certification and dissemination of high-quality scientific research. Policies towards access to peer-reviewed scientific publications must guarantee the ability of the system to continue to deliver high-quality certification services based on scientific integrity.

3. Access to unprocessed data is needed not only for independent verification of results but, more importantly, for secure preservation and fresh analysis and utilisation of the data.

4. A number of freely accessible repositories and curated databases for publications and data already exist serving researchers in the EU. Over 400 research repositories are run by European research institutions and several fields of scientific research have their own international discipline-specific repositories. These include for example PubMed Central for peer-reviewed publications in the life sciences and medicine, the arXiv Internet preprint archive for physics and mathematics, the DDBJ/EMBL/GenBank nucleotide sequence database and the RSCB-PDB/MSD-EBI/PDBj protein structure database.

5. With few exceptions, the social sciences & humanities (SSH) do not yet have the benefit of public central repositories for their recent journal publications. The importance of open access to primary data, old manuscripts, collections and archives is even more acute for SSH. In the social sciences many primary or secondary data, such as social survey data and statistical data, exist in the public domain, but usually at national level. In the case of the humanities, open access to primary sources (such as archives, manuscripts and collections) is often hindered by private (or even public or nation-state) ownership which permits access either on a highly selective basis or not at all.

Based on these considerations, and following up on its earlier Statement on Open Access (Appendix 1) the ERC Scientific Council has established the following interim position on open access:

1. The ERC requires that all peer-reviewed publications from ERC-funded research projects be deposited on publication into an appropriate research repository where available, such as PubMed Central, ArXiv or an institutional repository, and subsequently made Open Access within 6 months of publication.

2. The ERC considers essential that primary data - which in the life sciences for example could comprise data such as nucleotide/protein sequences, macromolecular atomic coordinates and anonymized epidemiological data - are deposited to the relevant databases as soon as possible, preferably immediately after publication and in any case not later than 6 months after the date of publication.

The ERC is keenly aware of the desirability to shorten the period between publication and open access beyond the currently accepted standard of 6 months.

ERC Scientific Council Statement on Open Access
December 2006

1. The ERC Scientific Council stresses the fundamental importance of peer-reviewed journals in ensuring the certification and dissemination of high-quality scientific research and in guiding appropriate allocation of research funds. Policies towards access to scientific research must guarantee the ability of the system to continue to deliver high-quality certification services.

2. While the certification quality of the scientific publication system is not in doubt, the high prices of some journals – which do not seem to be chiefly driven by cost considerations – raise significant worries concerning the ability of the system to deliver wide access and therefore efficient dissemination of research results, with the resulting risk of stifling further scientific progress.

3. These considerations lead the ERC Scientific Council, like other research funding bodies, to stress the attractiveness of policies mandating the public availability of research results – in open access repositories – reasonably soon (ideally, 6 months, and in any case no later than 12 months) after publication.

4. Of course, general open-access policies are not trivial to implement because: (i) the speed of 'obsolescence' of knowledge varies across disciplines; and (ii) so does the availability of open access repositories. Moreover, coordination between research funders (at EU level, across parts of the Framework Programme for example, but also at the level of Member States and their regions) is highly desirable.

5. This being said, it is the firm intention of the ERC Scientific Council to issue specific guidelines for the mandatory deposit in open access repositories of research results – that is, publications, data and primary materials – obtained thanks to ERC grants, as soon as pertinent repositories become operational.

6. The ERC Scientific Council moreover hopes that research funders across Europe will join forces in establishing common open-access rules and in building European open access repositories that will help make these rules operational. To facilitate this process for EU- funded research, it recommends that the European Commission sets up a task force including representatives from the various FP7 programmes (Cooperation, Ideas, People, ...) to develop an operational FP7 policy on open access by the end of 2007 (which takes in particular into account disciplinary differences and technological constraints).

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