

June 2014

Information for Historians on the RCUK Open Access Policy

RCUK has announced the final version of its Open Access policy, which as from 1 April 2013 applies certain requirements to recipients of research-council funding (i.e. to recipients of postgraduate studentships, research fellowships and research grants from AHRC and ESRC). These requirements apply to all journal publications stemming from RCUK-funded research – any journal articles that would need to acknowledge RCUK support. As you may know, there has been considerable debate in the arts and humanities disciplines about the terms of the proposed RCUK policies, which seem to be modeled on policies developed in and appropriate for science rather than arts subjects, and which pose threats to academic freedom and quality. Many international journals, including often the key journals for the histories of many parts of the world, will not comply with the UK's policy, but it cannot be in the interest of individual scholars – or of RCUK – not to publish in those key international journals. RCUK has acknowledged some of these criticisms and says that it will 'allow some flexibility in implementation of its policy' over the next few years, subject to review in 2014 and subsequently. It does not propose full implementation until 2018. Scholars should of course decide for themselves their own publishing strategies. They should consult the terms of their contracts with their employers and the terms of grant from the research councils. The following information is offered to help scholars understand the options open to them, and to help us gather data for the 2014 review that might persuade RCUK to alter its policy thereafter.

Specifically:

- choose the best journal for your research;
- find out what Open Access terms that journal offers;
- where available, choose a 'Green' Open Access option (i.e. not 'Gold', which requires payment of an Article Processing Charge – this would require you to seek approval for your publication plan from managers who control the funds, and to accept a CCBY licence, for which see below);
- under 'Green' Open Access, the journal allows you to put your work into a repository (normally one maintained by your institution), where it remains under an embargo for a period of 6 months to 3 years (the RCUK policy mandates a 24-month maximum for most humanities scholarship);
- after the embargo period is elapsed, the work becomes freely available;
- ask your chosen journal in what form it wishes you to put your work into the repository; the most common options are:
 - the submitted manuscript (before peer review and acceptance)
 - the accepted manuscript (after peer review and revision; this is RCUK's preferred option, though not required)
 - the accepted manuscript, after editing and formatting (e.g. a PDF of the work as it appears in the journal; this would be our preferred option, as it ensures that only one – the final – version of the work is in circulation, for quotation and citation);
- ask your chosen journal which licences it offers; the most common are:
 - CC-BY (RCUK's preferred option, but also the most permissive licence, which allows others to use your work for their own commercial purposes, and which the permits mixing of your work with the work of others without specifying which is which – i.e. what we tell our students is plagiarism)
 - CC-BY NC (this prohibits commercial use of your work; this is permitted by RCUK, but only for 'Green' Open Access publications)
 - CC-BY ND (this prohibits 'derivative use' of your work – i.e. it prohibits the mixing of your work with the work of others)

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- CC-BY NC ND (this prohibits both commercial use and derivative use – it would be our preferred option, though it is not compliant with RCUK policy)
- If your preferred journal is not compliant with RCUK policy (that is, if it does not offer Open Access terms of any kind, or if its embargo periods are longer than 24 months, or if you have not accepted a CC-BY NC licence for 'Green' publication), and you decide to publish anyway, please keep a record of the terms on which you have published and if possible report this to us by emailing s.carr@ucl.ac.uk; these emails will not be responded to but will be logged, and will help us to make an informed contribution to the 2014 review;
- If you decide not to publish in your preferred journal in order to comply with RCUK policy, please also report this to s.carr@ucl.ac.uk; this will enable us to show how the current policy is limiting UK scholars' ability to publish in the best journals.

For more details of the RCUK policy, see <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/RCUKOpenAccessPolicy.pdf> .

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