Royal Historical Society
Sharing your work Online and Open Access publishing: A Brief Introduction for ECRs

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1. Introduction

This guide presents a brief introduction to some of the most likely routes that enable historians to publish their work online. This is a complicated and ever-changing landscape, and recent policy developments around the Research Excellence Framework and the potential implications of open access initiatives have made an already complex situation potentially even more so.

You can find up-to-date commentary from the Royal Historical Society on some of the specific challenges for historians that are arising on the Policy pages of our website: www.royalhistsoc.org/policy.

2. Our Position on Open Access

The Royal Historical Society actively supports and promotes forms of publishing that enhance the visibility and accessibility of academic research, including 'open access'. The RHS has recently launched its own open access book series *New Historical Perspectives*, specifically aimed at offering early career historians a platform to publish open access and without fees, demonstrating its own institutional commitment to broad access to historical scholarship.

Nonetheless, in the present national and international publishing landscape, there are limits to what is possible. Peer-review and publication do not come free – there are costs involved in reviewing and editing scholarly work, publishing online, sending to journals for review and otherwise advertising its publication. Furthermore, authors have for decades enjoyed certain moral rights to have their work properly used, reproduced and attributed. Not all forms of 'open access' respect these rights, nor have their virtues or demerits been subject to systematic scrutiny in recent OA discussions.

2. Putting Your Work Online

You have the right to do whatever you want with your own manuscripts (drafts of papers, conference presentations, etc.), so long as you're not using content that belongs to other people in ways that are not permitted (e.g. images, music, major portions of copyright works). Options for using such content include:

- Work that is in the public domain
- Work that is made available through a Creative Commons license
- Work that is out of copyright.

One option for sharing your own work online is to post it on a personal website or blog. You will need to consider what rights over your own content you wish to give to others, and the terms on which you are posting.

- If you say 'all rights reserved', then you are permitting others to read your work, but not to use it in any other way.
- If you are happy for others to use your work – for example, to copy and distribute it – Creative Commons has designed a range of licences that you can use to indicate exactly what uses you are happy to permit. (see https://creativecommons.org/licenses/). The most popular of these licences among humanities scholars tends to be CC BY-NC ND. This allows others to copy your work in full and distribute it intact, but not to alter it or to combine it with their other work in ways that make it difficult to distinguish yours from theirs, and not to make use of it commercially. You can add the relevant CC logo to your paper when you upload it to show under what terms you are making it available.

3. Completed Dissertations and Theses

Institutional policies for publishing dissertations and theses produced by their students vary widely. All universities require you to deposit your dissertation in their libraries (or, increasingly, their online repositories), but many allow students to request an 'embargo' that prevents others from accessing your work without your permission for a period of 2-6 years or longer. This is because, in our discipline, dissertations do not often (as they often do in the sciences) bring together work that has been published elsewhere in article form, and they are often seen as preparation for a book that will eventually be published. It's not yet clear how the availability of dissertations online might affect your ability to publish a book based on it. So the embargo gives you some control over the dissemination of your work until it is published. In 2013, the American Historical Association encouraged universities to permit embargoes of up to 6 years. You should find out for yourself what your own institution's policy allows.

4. Journal articles

Articles published in academic journals will often be made available online and in print format simultaneously. Online article publishing is also the area where open access publishing has extended furthest. In the UK, some funding bodies including AHRC, ESRC and Wellcome Trust now mandate open access publication for outputs resulting from a grant. Your approach to your own journal articles will depend on who (if anyone) has paid for you to do your research, and the funds that are available to you for publication.

There are two main routes to open access publishing, commonly known as "gold" and "green":

- *Gold open access*: the final, print version of a publication that is made freely and permanently available by the publisher, immediately upon publication. This can either occur in a fully open access journal, or in a "hybrid" subscription-based journal that offers authors an open access route on a case-by-case basis, often for a fee, known as an "article-processing charge", or APC.
- *Green open access:* a version of the article (often the author's final accepted, but unformatted and unpaginated, manuscript) is made freely available in an author's institutional archive or repository, or in another online repository such as PubMed. This practice is commonly referred to as "self-archiving". Publishers may require that this document is only made available after an embargo period following publication (commonly 12-24 months).

5. Books

There are at present no mandates from UK funders of historical research (except for the Wellcome Trust who fund research in the history of medicine) requiring open access publication for work published in book form, including chapters in collections of essays.

Some policies refer to 'conference proceedings', but this refers to journal-like forms of publication common in the sciences and does not cover collections of essays published as books, even if they derive from conferences.

Because publication of books is a good deal more expensive than publication of articles, there can be formidable barriers to providing open access for books in ways that do not discriminate against un- or under-funded historians (i.e. most of us!) Increasingly, however, open access publishers are becoming more common, and

However, recent policy developments, and the likely requirement for open access monographs in the REF exercise of 2027, will (potentially) be a major change in practice, with clear implications for Early Career Historians. The Royal Historical Society is closely involved in discussions around the important transition to open access. We have made, and will continue to make, significant contributions to consultations, including Plan S. Find out more on our website policy pages.

We are happy to provide informal advice to colleagues with specific enquiries, even if the current uncertainty of some important policy outcomes makes hard-and-fast recommendations extremely difficult at this stage.

6. Useful Resources

RHS Open Access and Publication Policy documents: https://royalhistsoc.org/policy/publication-open-access/

JISC "An Introduction to Open Access": https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/an-introduction-to-open-access

SHERPA RoMEO: "an online resource that aggregates and analyses publisher open access policies from around the world and provides summaries of self-archiving permissions and conditions of rights given to authors on a journal-by-journal basis": http://sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/

Report: Sarah Kember, *Critical Issues in Open Access and Scholarly Communications: https://www.gold.ac.uk/goldsmiths-press/features/critical-issues-in-open-access-and-scholarly-communications/*

Blog: The Scholarly Kitchen. The US-based blog of the Society for Scholarly Publishing contains regular relevant pieces on open access publishing: https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/

Resources: The Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association website hosts a number of important international documents and declarations, as well as resources for authors relating to open access: https://oaspa.org/information-resources/openaccessresources/.