"ASK THE LIBRARIAN"
about …
OPEN ACCESS INFORMATION

Pātai: (Question)

I've almost completed my thesis and want to keep up to date with current research when I graduate. How can I access scholarly research literature after I leave university?

Librarian Jennifer Hobson replies:

Although many resources available while studying will not be accessible once you have graduated, the good news is you can get scholarly information from other sources even if you do not belong to a university. Using Open Access information is one way to access quality scientific, technical and scholarly publishing. Other methods include using additional services available from publisher's websites and taking advantage of public libraries.

What is Open Access and why is it important?

Open Access is a rapidly growing movement which makes scholarship available outside of the university, and reduces dependence on commercial publishers. Online access to information is provided to the public *free of charge*. This includes access journal articles, conference papers, government reports, research reports and theses. Like other scholarly literature it is often peer reviewed and can enhance the career prestige and research profile of the author or organisation (important because most authors are not paid to publish their articles).

The Open Access movement builds on the scientific tradition of open publication and communication to disseminate the results of research as widely as possible. It promotes the interest of many groups: authors, readers, teachers and students, libraries, universities, journals and publishers, funding agencies, governments and citizens. Whether you are between graduating and employment, or in an academic or professional position, you may want to consider publishing in an Open Access journal or repository. For more information Suber (2006) provides a good overview of the Open Access topic and Voss (2007) highlights several issues.

Maintaining expertise after your thesis has passed its "use-by date" is one reason to use Open Access research. Other reasons include to:
- Remain part of the academic community
- Support your life-long learning
- Retain currency in subject knowledge to enhance job prospects, or support a later return to academic life
- Access scholarly literature without access to subscription databases
- Find the contents of online databases that search engines such as Google do not retrieve.

Who provides open access information?

Producers of Open Access information pay the cost of publishing. This may be subsidised by a hosting university or society. Access is provided by organisations, including:
- Universities with institutional repositories
- Government agencies and non-governmental organisations such as World Bank, IMF, and United Nations
- Taxpayer-funded research organisations such as US National Institutes of Health
- Groups of volunteers and some entrepreneurs
- Many commercial publishers facilitate access to the literature via their websites. Some provide limited or temporary access to full text (free, sample or recent issues); access to abstracts and summaries only, or access to the full text at a cost.

Finding Open Access sources

Primary sources of research are Open Access journals (which produce and publish peer reviewed articles) and Open Access repositories (which archive and store research outputs such as papers, theses and articles). Below are examples of Open Access sources which are useful to begin with. A more comprehensive list (including subject related and publisher's websites) is available on the University of Auckland Library website:
http://library.auckland.ac.nz/instruct/il/openaccess.htm

Institutional Repositories

- **eScholarship Repository – University of California**
  http://repositories.cdlib.org/escholarship/
  A repository which has search and alerting functions in common with many online databases. It contains thousands of full-text research papers and publications
- **Dspace** - https://dspace.mit.edu/
  MIT's online research repository.
- **Kiwi Research Information Service** - http://nzresearch.org.nz/index.php/index
  New Zealand universities and polytechnics
- **ResearchSpace@Auckland** - http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz
  University of Auckland's new institutional repository of research, including theses and collections of research papers.

Search Engines

- **OAIster** - http://www.oaister.org/
  A free collection of academic e-books and e-journal literature, it is one of the largest search engines and is a useful place to begin your search
- **Scirus** - www.scirus.com/srsapp
  One of the biggest and most comprehensive collections of academic literature.

Journal Sources

- **Highwire Press** - http://highwire.stanford.edu/
  Full-text collection of scholarly journals
- **DOAJ** - http://www.doaj.org/

Directory of open access journals in all fields and languages.

Full Text Books

- **Google Print** - http://www.google.com/books
  Full text books
- **Microsoft Live Search Book**
  http://search.live.com/results.aspx?q=&scope=books#q=
  Still in testing mode

There are several ways you can make the most of these resources, for example:
- Investigate the subscription services available from your public library and professional organisations
- Bookmark publishers' websites and institutional repositories of interest to you
- Set up email alerts or RSS feeds to updates of the latest publications

Bibliography

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SPARC Open Access Newsletter is published and sponsored by the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC): http://www.arl.org/sparc/ and written by Peter Suber, who also authors the Open Access News blog:
http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/fosblog.html

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