

<http://www.jasonmkelly.com/2013/01/27/green-gold-and-diamond-a-short-primer-on-open-access/>

## **Green, Gold and Diamond? A Short Primer on Open Access**

**Jason M. Kelly's blog**

**27 January 2013**

Open access has gathered a lot of media attention since the digital community's [loss of Aaron Swartz](#). As a tribute to Swartz's "hacktivism" — which included freeing academic journal articles locked behind a paywall in JSTOR — thousands of scholars posted their own work online with the hashtag [#pdftribute](#). However, open access is not a new movement.

In academia, the open access movement has been gaining traction for many years, led by libraries and scholars, who have faced increased fees from journal publishers and who believe that research should be free and readily accessible to everybody — especially because it is often supported by public funding. Articles which are locked behind paywalls or are accessibly on a pay-per-use model cost universities millions of dollars each year, which have led to outcries over price gouging. In a notable protest over fees, over 13,000 researchers have signed the "[Cost of Knowledge](#)" petition to boycott the for-profit publisher Elsevier.

Governments and professional institutions have also responded to the need and desire for open access. Researchers funded by the National Institutes of Health grants are obligated to place their work in the open access repository [PubMed Central](#). In the UK, the so-called [Finch Report](#), a government commissioned study, made the recommendation that open access should be a requirement for any publicly funded research. The [Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities](#) has over 400 signatures from libraries, professional organizations, research institutes, and universities.

But, of course, there is a financial reality to open access. Despite the common perception that posting work to the internet is virtually free, this is not

necessarily the case when it comes to scholarly work. Take a typical journal article. There are costs for the editorial work, peer review, copyediting, typesetting, marketing, web hosting, and upkeep of online systems. Some publishers claim that this explains the need for subscriptions and paywalls. However, the cost of editorial work and peer review is rarely reimbursed by journals. It is the universities that cover these costs in the form of salaries and course releases. Typesetting is much less labor intensive in the digital realm, and copyediting is increasingly quite minimal.

A second argument against open access often comes from scholarly societies themselves. After all, they are often the organizations that produce academic journals, and their budgets often depend on revenue from journal subscriptions. And, since professional societies have historically been essential to academia — hosting conferences, serving as advocates for the profession, and providing a variety of supplementary benefits — declines in revenue from the journals could undermine their viability.

Taking into account this situation, scholars, professional societies, governments, and publishers have worked out several models for open access, generally referred to as gold open access, green open access, and diamond open access.

**Gold Open Access:** usually refers to a journal's online policy, which may allow immediate open access to the final edited version of a peer reviewed journal publication

**Peer Review:** the article goes through the journals' processes of peer review

**Public Access:** the public has immediate access to the final, published version of the article; or, after several years, the journal may make articles open access

**Funding Models:** the researcher pays a fee to the journal, which can be between hundreds and thousands of dollars (e.g. *Nature*); or, an institution pays an annual membership which waives its members' publishing fees (e.g. *PLoS*)

**Green Open Access:** usually refers to a journal's policy which allows scholars to upload an earlier version of their article to a digital repository; the pre-print article may have been edited and peer reviewed, but scholars could also post

work that has not gone through peer review

**Peer Review:** a scholar can post a paper that may or may not have gone through peer review; a journal with a green open access policy will often allow an author to post the pre-print, edited, and peer reviewed version of an article

**Public Access:** articles are immediately available to the public

**Funding Models:** neither the researcher nor the public pays a fee; repositories are supported through institutional funding.

**Diamond Open Access:** this is a relatively recent model similar to Gold Open Access, but with the important innovation that there is no fee for authors.

**Peer Review:** the article goes through the journals' processes of peer review

**Public Access:** the public has immediate access to the final, published version of the article

**Funding Models:** the researcher pays no fee to the journal (e.g. *Episciences Project*)

For a more detailed guide to open access, see Peter Suber's "[Open Access Overview](#)."