“**HowOpenIsIt?” Open Access Spectrum FAQ**

Updated 10/1/14

**Q1: Is this guide meant to be used by publishers, funders, policy makers or authors?**

A1: The “HowOpenIsIt?®” Open Access Spectrum applies to journals but all groups can benefit from its use. The guide’s primary aim is to standardize Open Access terminology so that authors can make informed decisions on where to publish based on publisher policies. It also provides a resource for funders, government agencies and institutions as they establish criteria and enforcement for the level of Open Access (OA) required for their policies and mandates.

**Q2: How can I use this guide to assess a journal's degree of openness?**

A2: The guide illustrates the continuum of more versus less open for easy comparison of publications and policies across a grid of clearly defined components. The more open a journal’s policies are in any given category, the higher up that journal will be across the “HowOpenIsIt?” Open Access Spectrum (OAS). The ability to evaluate a journal’s policies with respect to where they are on the OAS allows authors to make informed decisions about where to publish.

**Q3: Who created the guide?**

A3: The guide was created as a collaborative project by the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition ([SPARC](http://www.sparc.arl.org/)) and Public Library of Science ([PLOS](http://www.plos.org)), in conjunction with the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association ([OASPA](http://oaspa.org/)). The guide has been vetted and refined in a practical use pilot of 100 journals by PLOS, SPARC and [Copernicus Publications](http://publications.copernicus.org/) in consultation with OASPA, Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access ([SHERPA](http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/)) and Infrastructures for Open Access ([IS4OA](http://is4oa.org/)).

**Q4. What changes have been made to the Open Access Spectrum since it was first released and why?**

A4: The 2014 release addresses subtleties that required clarification for more than two-thirds of the 100 journals analyzed in a practical use pilot of the original “HowOpenIsIt?” OAS in order to fully interpret the nuances of their policies. PLOS, SPARC and [Copernicus Publications](http://publications.copernicus.org/), in consultation with OASPA, Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access ([SHERPA](http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/)) and Infrastructures for Open Access ([IS4OA](http://is4oa.org/)), conducted the pilot. Changes include: an adjustment to the Reuse Rights category to address journals that allow reuse of some, but not all, articles; substantial revisions to the Copyrights category to focus less on which party owns the copyright and more on what authors are allowed to do with their rights; the addition of a time dimension within the Author Posting Rights category to accommodate not just what version an author can post and where, but also when; the inclusion of language in the Automatic Posting category that encompasses non-biomedical repositories, as well as an adjustment to address journals that automatically post some, but not all, articles; and a modification of the Machine Readability category to better reflect what is possible and what is practical in today’s publishing environment.

**Q5: How does this chart relate to Green OA?**

A5: Green OA means researchers self-archive a version of their published work into a subject-based or institutional repository following publication in any journal. The OAS covers archiving under both author and automatic posting categories.

**Q6: The "How to Use this Guide" page in the OAS mentions the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI). What is that?**

A6: [BOAI](http://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/) is an international effort that in 2002 established the basic tenets of Open Access to the research literature. The initial recommendations were developed by leaders of the Open Access movement and for the past decade advocates have worked to provide the public with unrestricted, free access to scholarly research, much of which is publicly funded. Making the research publicly available to everyone – free of charge and without copyright and licensing restrictions – accelerates scientific research efforts and allows authors to reach a larger number of readers. In September 2012 the BOAI issued a new set of [recommendations](http://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/boai-10-recommendations) that reaffirm and expand the original Budapest Declaration.

**Q7: May I print and distribute the guide?**

A7: Yes, provided that it retains attribution to the creators of the guide (see A15).

**Q8: May I present all or part of this content on a slide, website, or in other material?**

A8: Yes, please see A15 for proper attribution.

**Q9: So-called "hybrid journals" contain certain articles that are made immediately available for free. Why are they listed as very restricted on the Reader Rights and Reuse Rights scales?**

A9:Hybrid journals collect subscription fees for their journals and simultaneously offer the option for authors to pay a fee to make their article open and available to interested readers that are not subscribers. The hybrid model makes an individual article Open Access, not the journal. The “HowOpenIsIt?” Open Access Spectrum evaluates publishers and their journals, not individual articles. Some publishers of hybrid journals in essence charge twice for the same article, and take money to make articles open without reducing subscription fees of the journal.

**Q10: What are remixing reuse rights, and why are they important?**

A10: To achieve the full potential of Open Access material, it is crucial that articles can be reused in many ways to support new research, from translation to remixing and reanalysis of data. Combining work with other work, or remixing, allows creation of new pieces of research, informational or educational material. Images and audio or video recordings can be combined with other materials to create an enriched article. For example, when a new species is described in a research article, it’s of interest and value to create articles on the new species in online services such as Wikipedia or the Encyclopedia of Life. This is just one example of potential downstream reuses of scholarly material and the possibilities are limited only by the imagination, provided people have the permission to explore the possibilities.

**Q11: Why does it matter which version of a paper (e.g., the published article, the final peer reviewed manuscript) is available to an author to post elsewhere?**

A11: Scholarly research typically undergoes a number of revisions between the time an author submits it to a journal and the time it is published. Electronic communication and dissemination mean that multiple drafts of an article may be circulating on the Internet. This can cause confusion among readers and other authors wishing to cite a work. The final, peer reviewed and accepted manuscript may lack some of the formatting of the actual published version of record but will be associated with a unique Digital Object Identifier (DOI).

New technologies such as CrossMark clearly indicate on the published article page itself the version status. This reduces confusion when viewing an article on the publisher’s site but does not address self-archiving versions, where it is up to the author to post a revision, a point in favor of choosing Gold versus Green OA.

**Q12: Why did PLOS not get the highest score for the Machine Readability component?**

A12: High scores in Machine Readability are not achievable by any publisher as a community standard API or protocol does not exist today. Machine readability and the automated discovery and use of content is perhaps the major challenge for scholarly publishers of the next decade and PLOS believes there is work to do in this area, for all publishers. It must be easy for machines to understand where to find articles and to identify the parts of an article. There is also work to be done on improving the way data is represented in research articles (e.g., tables) and more generally how data is described within the article and supplementary material.

**Q13: How does this guide apply to other Open Access media (e.g., books, datasets)?**

A13: It doesn’t. This guide focuses exclusively on journals. The unique issues associated with the application of Open Access to other media are beyond the scope of this project.

**Q14: Is this guide meant to apply to every scholarly discipline?**

A14: The principles of greater openness, fewer restrictions on readership and more freedom to reuse are universal. However, the guide itself focuses on issues relevant to Science, Technology and Medicine (STM) publishing. Other areas of scholarship may have specific considerations that are not considered here.

**Q15: How do I give proper attribution if I use the Open Access Spectrum?**

A15: Please use this: "HowOpenIsIt?® Open Access Spectrum", © 2014 SPARC and PLOS, licensed under CC BY". For more information on attribution, refer to this Creative Commons [resource](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).