

# hoi ik ben een titel

Geert Kapteijns<sup>\*</sup>

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Universal free online access of scientific journal articles is within reach if universities and funders mandate their authors to self-archive their refereed manuscripts in an institutional archive (IR), upon acceptance in the (subscription) journals of their choice. This form of open access (OA), known as *Green*, can be implemented unilaterally by the universities and funders at little cost. It should not be confused with *Gold* OA, meaning OA through *publishing* directly in an OA journal.

I claim that the Dutch government and the association of universities (VSNU), by focussing on Gold prematurely, have made deals that will needlessly slow down the provision of access and maintain or even increase the publishers' profit margins. Sustainable Gold access (including copyright reform) will follow once universal Green has been reached and publishers only provide the organisation of peer-review and luxury services like enhanced PDFs or paper versions.

Grassroots publishing initiatives, such as SciPost, politicize the community by offering a glimpse of a possible future. But if they are serious about subverting the publishing industry, they should, in addition to their innovative activities, put their full weight behind the optimal Green mandate.

## I. Introduction

The current accessibility of research journal articles is decidedly suboptimal. Journal prices have been rising at 2.5 times the rate of inflation the last couple of decades [1, 2], but even if all 28000 existing journals could be subscribed to at production cost, universities would not be able to afford them all [3]. This means that all researchers, even at the richest institutions, do not have full access to the output of their colleagues, and all researchers are denied the full impact of their research, since they cannot reach the entirety of their intended audience.

It is unbearable that this *access/impact problem* still persists, because with the advent of the Web, articles can be reproduced and spread at virtually no cost. Doubly unbearable, since the whole en-

terprise is funded with tax-payer money for the benefit of society.

The solution to the problem is, according to Stevan Harnad, closer to raincoat science than rocket science (see Figure 1). In a haiku [4]:

It's the online age  
You're losing research impact...  
Make it free online

In other words, authors can continue publishing in subscription journals, but should as an extra administrative step *publicly self-archive* their refereed manuscripts. This practice, which Harnad has been advocating since 1994 [5], was laid out by the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) as the first strategy to be implemented [6]. It later came to be known as the *Green* strategy [7]. If it is universally adopted, the access/impact problem would be solved.

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<sup>\*</sup> ghkapteijns@gmail.com



that became available only after a (possibly long) embargo period are counted.

In the domain of Physics and Astronomy, where sharing preprints has historically played an important role [16], self-archiving is universally endorsed by publishers<sup>2</sup>. The preprint server arXiv, established in 1991, has become the canonical place to share manuscripts. But even in this field, self-archiving is not systematic, although the numbers are slightly higher. Estimates are that around 20% of papers that appear in Web of Science journals can be found on arXiv, possibly as an unrefereed (preprint) version [12, 18]. Some subfields, such as astronomy and high-energy physics, have around 70% Green, with the percentage in top journals approaching 100% [19].

If the benefits are clear, why do scientists refuse to self-archive? Harnad lists many possible reasons [20], the most prevalent being that (i) scientists think it is illegal, (ii) that it causes their papers to be less likely to be accepted, and (iii) that scientists are simply too lazy.

The solution is for universities and funders to *mandate* their researchers to self-archive. It is worth quoting Harnad's implementation proposal in full [21]:

- (1) All research funding agency OA Mandates need to specify clearly and explicitly that the deposit of each article must be in the author's institutional repository (so the universities and research institutions can monitor their own output and ensure compliance as well as adopt mandates of their own for their unfunded research output).
- (2) All mandates should specify that the deposit (of the authors refereed, revised, accepted final draft) must be done immediately upon acceptance for publication (not on the date of publication, which

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<sup>2</sup>This is an example of "proof by intimidation." Feel free to prove me wrong using [17]. In any case, physicists, along with computer scientists and mathematicians, have always freely shared their preprints and refereed manuscripts. E-mail and later preprint servers became natural tools to make this practice easier and were freely used, even before the issue of self-archiving ended up in publisher contracts [16]. Publishers have, to the best of my knowledge, never ordered anyone to take down a manuscript in these fields.

is often much later, variable, not known to the author, and frequently does not even correspond to the journal issue's published date of publication, if there is one).

- (3) All mandates should urge (but not require) authors to make their immediate-deposit immediately-OA.
- (4) All mandates should urge (but not require) authors to reserve the right to make their papers immediately-OA (and other re-use rights) in their contracts with their publishers (as in the Harvard-style mandates).
- (5) All mandates should shorten (or, better, not even mention) allowable OA embargoes (so as not to encourage publishers to adopt them).
- (6) All repositories should implement the automated "email eprint request" Button (for embargoed [non-OA] deposits).
- (7) All mandates should designate repository deposit as the sole mechanism for submitting publications for performance review, research assessment, grant application, or grant renewal.
- (8) All repositories should implement rich usage and citation metrics in the institutional repositories as incentive for compliance.

A few of the points are worth stressing. Articles accepted in the 38% [11] of journals that impose embargoes on self-archiving or do not allow it at all should still be deposited (point 3). The institutional repository should implement an "email eprint request" or "fair dealing" button [22] (point 6) that allows prospective readers of these deposited non-OA articles to request an individual copy with a single click, which the author can acknowledge with another single click. This is completely legal, except under almost inconceivable circumstances, since the articles are shared for the purpose of "study, criticism, and news reporting."<sup>3</sup> The institutional repository merely facilitates the age-old scientific practice of handing

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<sup>3</sup>The timid reader may read section "Legal and policy considerations" from [22] or consult her national legislation.

out personal-use copies to interested colleagues, thus providing “almost-OA.”

Equally important is what is *not* in the mandate. Harnad:

[It is essential] not to insist prematurely on further rights – over and above free online access – that publishers are not yet willing to allow, such as text-mining, re-mix and re-publication rights. First things first: Funders, institutions and authors should not prolong their failure to grasp what’s already within their reach by over-reaching for what’s not yet within reach: The perfect should not be allowed to become the enemy of the good.

An optimal self-archiving mandate, if universally adopted by universities and insitutions, solves the access/impact problem without forcing publishers to change their business model, without limiting authors in their choice of journals and at low cost. Once the access and archivation of research output is firmly controlled by the community and the role of publishers is reduced to organising peer-review and offering luxury products, publishers will have lost their bargaining power over copyright and re-use rights and they will soon follow.

### III. Current policy in the Netherlands: Fool’s Gold

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### IV. Grassroots initiatives

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## References

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