My first contact with the open movement was when my older sister was an undergrad at a public university in Brazil. She was learning to use scientific papers for her assignments and she showed me SciELO, a publishing platform from Latin America, with scientific papers free to access. By the time I was an undergrad, I learned that this was not the case for the majority of the scientific literature, which are behind a paywall and are not even remotely accessible to a Brazilian student like I was. As we learn how to be scholars, we find out very early on that producing new knowledge is very expensive, and that most of us have limited access to resources to support it. I decided then that I should get involved in what I learned later was called the "open movement", in the hope that students and professionals from the next generations would face less barriers to access research resources.

By sharing resources and products of the research cycle we wouldn't need to invest more to re-do something that was already done, and we could more easily build on top of other people's knowledge to create a global network of human knowledge. Just like knowledge mobilization, Open Scholarship also enhances inclusion by promoting knowledge exchanges between equity-seeking, underrepresented or excluded groups, and by "reducing inequalities in access to scientific development, infrastructures and capabilities among different countries and regions".

What does "open" mean?

The Open Scholarship practices optimizes the impact of research, and it includes concepts such as open access, open education, and open data, each of them characterizing a specific aspect of sharing knowledge, but also flourishing as interdependent concepts. Whenever you come across the term "open", it means that someone has thought about how other people could (or could not) re-use that product and has expressed that through an open license document with legal value. It also means that values related to equity, accessibility, inclusion and diversity are somewhat playing a role in how this product was designed, produced and shared. "Open" does not necessarily mean "free", but it often means that you can re-use, remix or redistribute something, giving the proper attribution.

When someone collects data for a specific research project, they start a data lifecycle that can end with the publication of a paper, or get a "stretch" when it is deposited with a license on a repository. This allows other researchers to skip the process of collecting that data all over again, wasting resources and slowing down the production of new knowledge.

Sharing data also helps to make your research trustworthy, because anyone can reproduce the analyses and check if the results are true. It's important to notice that data sharing is a practice that does not overwrite the right to privacy, and very often human data cannot be shared publicly. There are ways to account for that and still be part of the open movement, as long as the researchers are fully transparent about their processes. If you have 20 minutes and want to reflect on data sharing, I recommend watching this documentary.

A movement for change

The open movement empowers people to overcome the limitations of resource sharing in knowledge and culture production and usage. With that vision in mind, the Institute for Neuroscience and Neurotechnology at the Simon Fraser University is leading a revolution to make it possible for every member of the SFU community to implement open practices in their academic routines. Our role will be to connect the open scholarship initiatives already in place at SFU (such as the open access and open data hubs at the Library, the Public Knowledge Project at Publishing, and the Open Educational Resources office), grassroots movements and the Knowledge Mobilization Hub to promote community-led events and programs to support students, faculty and staff to design their scholarly products under the "open lens".

There will be many opportunities to contribute and collaborate to this movement! We will need community leaders to help us organize events and workshops, to help us spread the word and to mentor other community members. If you want to keep an eye on what we're doing, sign up to our newsletter here.

Just like the KM Hub, we want to do more with what we know "by intentionally co-creating, disseminating, and implementing research". If our dreams are to come true, in 10 years the whole SFU community will think of open scholarship as the default way to do things. It will not be a matter of resources or infrastructure – we will all be working together to share what we have the privilege to produce for the benefit of all.