# The open movement at SFU

By Gracielle Higino

The Simon Fraser University is home to many open scholarship projects, and you’re going to hear more and more about it in the next few years. 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](https://www.scielo.org/en/), a Latin American publishing platform, with free access to scientific papers. When it was my turn to be an undergrad, I learned that the majority of scientific literature is behind a paywall and not 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 expensive, and that most of us have limited access to resources to support it. I decided then to get involved in what I later learned later to call the “open movement”, in the hope that the next generation of students and professionals will face less barriers to accessing research resources.

Sharing resources and products of the research cycle will reduce investments in repeating research unnecessarily, and we can more easily build on other people’s research 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 as the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science states, by [“reducing inequalities in access to scientific development, infrastructures and capabilities among different countries and regions”](https://doi.org/10.54677/MNMH8546).

### What does “open” mean?

Open Scholarship practices optimize the impact of research. 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 legal document. It also means that values related to equity, accessibility, inclusion and diversity are somehow 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 in a repository. This allows other researchers to skip repetitive data collection, avoid [wasting resources](https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2022.0938), and speed up the production of new knowledge.

Sharing data also helps demonstrate your research is trustworthy, as anyone can reproduce the analyses. It’s important to note that data sharing 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](https://vimeo.com/819068030).

### 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](https://www.sfu.ca/neuro-institute.html) (INN) at 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. These practices are based on [five principles](https://www.sfu.ca/research/performance-excellence/open-science/open-science-principles.html) that were designed collective by the SFU community, and include “respecting the dignity and privacy of research participants”, “prioritizing translation with harmonized approaches to intellectual property” and “transformation through equitable practice of open scholarship”.

25 years after learning about SciELO, I am now the open scholarship community manager of this initiative, working along with the INN to connect the open scholarship practitioners at SFU (such as the [open access](https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/publish/scholarly-publishing/open-access) and [open data](https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/publish/research-data-management) hubs at the Library, [the Public Knowledge Project at Publishing](https://pkp.sfu.ca/), the [Open Educational Resources](https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/research-assistance/format-type/oer) office, and the [Knowledge Mobilization Hub](https://www.sfu.ca/research/researcher-resources/further-my-research/knowledge-mobilization-hub.html)) to promote community-led events and programs to support students, faculty and staff to design their scholarly products under the “open lens”. The consolidation of the open movement within SFU reinforces its commitment to the [Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information](https://barcelona-declaration.org/), co-signed by the University in 2024.

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.

If you want to keep an eye on what we’re doing, sign up to our newsletter [here](https://secure.campaigner.com/CSB/Public/Form.aspx?fid=1882702&ac=gifk).