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Ireland: The Transition to Open Access

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Summary

Ireland's transition to Open Access has been iterative and substantive, with government bodies and funding agencies adopting Open Access policies over a period of several years. These policies have been developed through consensus building amongst different stakeholders and culminated in the establishment of the National Steering Committee on Open Access in 2012¹. The committee had representation from all Irish funding agencies and in October 2012 it successfully formulated the 'National Principles for Open Access Policy Statement' which outlines a framework for Open Access in Ireland². The principles, which have placed Ireland in an exemplar position in Europe, consist of a green way mandate and encouragement publishing in Gold Open Access journals. The policy is supported by all Irish funders and uses existing infrastructure including the use of RIAN³, a national portal that harvests content from Institutional Repositories of the Irish seven university libraries. The framework includes a set of common principles, general principles and other supporting statements on infrastructure, advocacy, coordination and exploiting Open Access.

The research and scholarly communication system of the country

Higher Education in Ireland is referred to as third level education. Ireland has seven Universities, fourteen Institutes of Technology, including the Dublin Institute of Technology and seven Colleges of Education. Other third level institutions provide specialist education in such fields as art and design, medicine, business studies, rural development, theology, music and law.

Ireland is increasingly being recognised for its research ability. The Irish Universities Association states that "In 1981, the impact of Irish research as measured by the number of citations per publication has risen from a very low level to exceed the world & EU average, joining nations including France, Germany and the UK. In that period the number of papers produced per annum globally has increased by 100% whereas in Ireland it has increased by 400%. At the same time, Ireland has more than doubled its percentage share of world research papers. Currently, Ireland produces 0.49% of all world research papers"⁴.

1 Open Access Ireland (<http://openaccess.thehealthwell.info/about-us-2>)

2 National Principles for Open Access Policy Statement Ireland
(<http://openaccess.thehealthwell.info/sites/default/files/documents/NationalPrinciplesonOAPolicyStatement.pdf>)

3 Rian (<http://rian.ie/en>)

4 Irish Universities Association (<http://www.iua.ie/research-innovation/research-impact>)

There are approximately 100 book publishers in Ireland distributing their output in English and Irish online and through 230 bookshops and Irish book publisher sales account for around 20% of total book sales in Ireland. The number of books published in Ireland amounts to approximately 6,000 annually, though the volume sales, value and average selling prices have declined in recent years according to Nielsen BookScan⁵. Some of these book publishers; particularly international publishers with offices in Ireland have introduced different models of Open Access. Much of this change is driven through funders mandates, such as the Wellcome Trust which has worked in partnership with the Health Research Board and Science Foundation Ireland and now includes monograph's and chapters in their Open Access policy⁶. The impact of Open Access is within Ireland is evident in Ireland's scholarly journal output. Much of this is delivered through scholarly societies and university presses. Publishers and aggregators are now making articles Open Access, even when journals are not. For example, the Irish Journal of Medical Science⁷ is delivered via Springer and now has 21 Open Access articles available on the publisher platform.

Policy Landscape

The first Irish funder to adopt an Open Access policy was the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) in 2008⁸. The IRCSET was merged with the Irish Council for Humanities and Social Sciences in March 2012 to form the Irish Research Council. Other funders adopted Open Access policies subsequently including the Higher Education Authority in June 2008 and the Science Foundation Ireland in February 2009⁹.

Driven by the post-2008 economic downturn in Ireland, which resulted in a need for greater public accountability and value for money, the establishment of the National Steering Committee in 2012 accelerated the move towards a national strategy on Open Access in Ireland¹⁰. The committee included all major stakeholders, namely the Health Research Board, Science Foundation Ireland, Consortium of National and University Libraries, Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Digital Repository of Ireland, Dublin Institute of Technology, EdepositIreland, Environmental Protection Agency, Health Service Executive, Higher Education Authority, Institute of Public Health in Ireland, Institutes of Technology Ireland, Irish Research Council, Irish Universities Association, IUA Librarians' Group, Marine Institute and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. Its combined expertise across a range of disciplines sought to reach consensus on Open Access policy and strategy.

Progress amongst Irish funders, publishers, universities, academics and libraries has not been without difficulty, but the Irish Government has accepted the premise that publicly funded research should be Open Access. This

5 Niesen Bookscan (<http://www.nielsenbookscan.co.uk/controller.php?page=48>)

6 Wellcome Trust Monograph deposit (<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Policy/Spotlight-issues/Open-access/Monograph-deposit/index.htm>)

7 Springer (<http://www.springer.com/medicine/internal/journal/11845>)

8 Registry of Open Access Repository Mandates and Policies (<http://roarmap.eprints.org/63>)

9 Registry of Open Access Repository Mandates and Policies (<http://roarmap.eprints.org/95/>; <http://roarmap.eprints.org/115>)

10 Open Access Ireland (<http://openaccess.thehealthwell.info>)

has taken place against a backdrop of on-going issues related to the length of embargoes, issues of career progression for young academics and the viability of the scholarly publishing system.

The implementation of Open Access for Irish institutions has required the development of institutional and shared digital infrastructure (e.g. digital repositories), increased engagement with scholars to ensure that research outputs are deposited in repositories and published in Open Access journals (where appropriate), the adoption of new roles (e.g. by academic libraries) to manage the increasing scale of article-processing charges (for 'Gold' Open Access) and the development of the 'National Principles for Open Access Policy Statement' launched on 23rd October 2012 by funders, which is supported by a coordinating committee of funding agencies.

The Common Principles state:

1. The policy confirms the freedom of researchers to publish where ever they feel is the most appropriate.
2. The policy is intended to increase the visibility of, and improve access to, the outputs of research funded by the Irish State, where such research is published by the researcher(s) concerned.
3. The policy is designed to support the free flow of information across national and international research communities; to support the principle of research-enabled teaching and learning and the generation of Open Education Resources (OERs); to contribute to Open Innovation through richer and more effective knowledge transfer and diffusion; and to support greater transparency, accountability and public awareness of the results of publicly funded research.
4. The policy is based on recognised best practice. It aligns with EC and OECD Open Access recommendations.

The General Principles state:

1. Peer reviewed journal articles and other research outputs resulting in whole or in part from publicly-funded research should be deposited in an Open Access repository and made publicly discoverable, accessible and re-usable as soon as possible and on an on-going basis.
2. Repositories shall release the metadata immediately upon deposit. Open access to the full text paper should be made immediately upon deposit or upon publication data at the latest.
3. Researchers are encouraged to publish in Open Access Journals, but publishing through Open Access Journal is not necessary to comply with this Open Access policy. Payment of additional Open Access charges through the 'Gold' Open Access model is not necessary to comply with this policy.
4. A repository is suitable for this purpose when it provides free public access to its contents, supports interoperability with other repositories and with other research information and reporting systems, is harvestable by national portal(s) and international aggregators and takes steps toward long-term preservation.
5. Research data should be deposited whenever this is feasible, and linked to associated publications where this is appropriate.

The committee's recommendations on Open Access were accepted by the Irish Government in October 2012. Ireland adopted a 'Green' Open Access policy, with optional provisions for funders to fund 'Gold' Open Access article processing charges and the encouragement to open up the accompanying research data too. The Committee continues its work to help develop Open Access in Ireland, as many funders agree that these are 'early days' and the transition to Open Access will need to be supported. To help support this transformation

Ireland has established a number of support services to assist with staff development and the creation of peer-to-peer networks. Ireland has also invested in a network of 13 institutional repositories that are supported by shared trusted repositories and discovery services.

Infrastructure Landscape

In 2007 the Irish Government awarded funding to build an Open Access institutional repository in each Irish university and to develop a federated harvesting and discovery service via a national portal for Open Access publications. The Irish Universities Association coordinated the development of the project that resulted in the launch of Rian (the Irish word for 'path') in October 2010¹¹. Rian is a portal that enables users to search across Open Access repositories from partnering institutions. Additional partners are now involved with Rian including the Dublin and Waterford Institutes of Technology. A working group helped support the development of this Irish Open Access institutional repository infrastructure, called 'ReSupIE'¹². It provided practical support to assist with the implementation of Open Access in partnering organisations. This assisted with the transition in regards to skills development, knowledge transfer and organisational change. Rian statistics reveal that there are 48,552 Open Access items available (between 1st January 1970 to 26th November 2014) in Ireland¹³. Rian collaborates with other European Open Access repository initiatives such as OpenAIRE, DartEurope, Driver and Base.

Open Access to humanities and social science research data is facilitated through the Digital Repository of Ireland. A research consortium of six academic partners working together to deliver the repository, policies, guidelines and training built the trusted national repository. These research consortium partners included the Royal Irish Academy (RIA, lead institute), National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUIM), Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), and National College of Art and Design (NCAD). A network of academic, cultural, social, and industry partners, including the National Library of Ireland (NLI), the National Archives of Ireland (NAI) and RTÉ, also supports the repository.

Open Access to health service research and grey literature is facilitated through the Lenus repository. Lenus was launched in 2009 and is managed by the Health Service Executive (HSE)¹⁴ Regional Library & Information Service in Dr. Stevens' Hospital, Dublin¹⁵. Lenus makes available the research output of the many organisations providing healthcare in Ireland, along with their administrative, clinical and regulatory publications. Together they provide the background and context for Irish healthcare. In October 2013 Lenus was included as a participating repository in RIAN, the national Open Access portal. Another recent initiative is EdepositIreland¹⁶, a self-deposit service open to all publishers in Ireland managed by Trinity College Library, Dublin. The edeposit collection works alongside a sister repository, TARA (Trinity's Access to Research Archive)¹⁷.

11 Rian, Pathways to Irish research (<http://rian.ie>)

12 Irish Open Access Repositories Support Project Working Group (<http://www.irel-open.ie/moodle>)

13 The number of items in RIAN during the specified time period (<http://rian.ie/en/stats/tableInfo>)

14 HSE is the Irish equivalent of the UK's National Health Service – NHS.

15 Lenus repository (<http://www.lenus.ie>)

16 EdepositIreland (<http://edepositireland.ie>)

17 Trinity's Access to Research Archive (<http://www.tara.tcd.ie>)

Skills Landscape

The Repositories Support Project Working Group has supported staff skills in the development of Open Access and repository management. The Repository Network Ireland (RNI) group helps librarians, repository managers and other information professionals develop their technical skills. To date the RNI has run several events including a workshop on copyright and repositories and two teachmeet workshops held during international open access week in 2013 and 2014. Plans for 2015 include a workshop on research data management and another teachmeet. RNI is run on a voluntary basis and manages a LinkedIn Group, a Twitter account and Gmail account¹⁸.

Challenges and On-going Issues

While Irish funders do ask grantees to confirm whether they have complied with the Open Access requirements in their grant funding reporting there is a recognition that more could be done to ensure more compliance with Open Access requirements. The evidence to support the impact of the 'Green' Open Access policy in Ireland is limited, but anecdotal evidence from some Irish funding bodies indicate that compliance with the Open Access recommendations is extremely low, but increasing. There is a recognition that such major cultural change across scholarly publishing and research behaviours requires encouragement rather than compulsion at this stage of the process. Agencies such as Science Foundation Ireland have started an annual audit and this is beginning to show increasing amounts of compliance amongst grantees.

Some have questioned whether a mandate to publish research findings is enough or should policies and strategies take into account the 'durability' of Open Access. For example, if research findings can be easily found, but cannot be validated because data and other research outputs that would permit reproduction are not available, then the value of the research may be lost over time. A number of grantees have expressed the desire to see the critical path to the costs of data archiving to be included in future funding. Meanwhile, the evidence to support the socio-economic impact of Open Access across Irish society and the economy has yet to be measured. Some funders are now considering what steps might be required to assess the impact of their open access policies.

One recent positive step is the voluntarily adoption of Institutional mandates requiring Open Access archiving of research publications by Irish institutions, led by Trinity College Dublin. There is now a move within these institutions to link publications to performance and future funding.

Conclusions

Ireland stands at an important juncture in its Open Access journey. Significant progress has been made in delivering Open Access using institutional and national policies and strategies. These are underpinned by institutional digital repository infrastructure and the development of shared trusted national repositories. Skills

¹⁸ Repository Network Ireland (<http://rni.wikispaces.com>)

development has been supported through the development of peer-to-peer networks. Higher education sector changes as a result of reports of research prioritisation and a national strategy for higher education to 2030 have also played their part.

However some concerns remain over the sustainability of Open Access and scholarly communications. Some additional research and modelling on the part of funding agencies might address these concerns, especially if the lessons learnt from the digital preservation and the total cost of ownership are taken into account. This may require a review of the way funding is calculated to take into account a more durable Open Access environment. Additional evidence on the return on investment from Open Access in Ireland could be considered. This might, for example, include a challenge fund to encourage 'secondary research' based on OA research data and publications. Such case studies might help address some of the knowledge gaps that exist in regards to the value and benefits to Irish research of Open Access over time.

The case for shared digital infrastructure beyond research data in the humanities and social sciences and the Rian discovery portal remains an open topic in Ireland. However, getting early stage implementation for Open Access remains a priority at this stage. Additional investigation into further subject-based, national or international digital infrastructure is likely in the future.

Useful links

- » **Digital Repository Ireland** (<http://www.dri.ie>)
- » **Open Knowledge Ireland** (<http://openknowledge.ie>)
- » **Research Data Alliance** (<https://rd-alliance.org>)

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