Open Access — An opportunity not to miss!

Worldwide, research results are increasingly being made accessible for everyone by means of internet, via "Open Access" (OA). Meanwhile it has been proved that as a result of this, publications and authors are found faster and cited more often. Therefore Open Access is highly recommended! The "Institutional Repository" (IR) of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel will be operational before the start of the next academic year. In this repository, open access and other documents can be stored. Hence keep your appeared publications or versions after peer review ready for deposit in PDF-format!

(Attention: If you wish to protect your research before publication, or if the research is subject to an agreement where the intellectual property rights must be protected, you better first contact the Technology Transfer Interface in order to examine what is possible.)

Open Access: a worldwide evolution
Open Access is a way of publishing where the reader can unlimitedly consult the published material online. There are two ways to do this:
- publish the publication in a “traditional” journal and afterwards archive the publication yourself in an Institutional (or Subject-based) Repository
- publish the publication in an "Open Access" journal, so that the publication is immediately available worldwide for everyone (also without subscription).

The evolution to publish via Open Access is pushed forward worldwide and is for instance supported by the European DRIVER-project (Digital Repositories Infrastructure Vision for European Research, EC 6th framework program). At this moment, almost all Belgian universities, the FWO, the FNRS and the Flemish Community have signed the "Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities".

"Open Access" versus journals: what should you pay attention to?
OA is complementary with respect to the existing publication culture in journals, books, proceedings, ... Before a publication is made accessible for everyone by means of an Open Access Repository (OAR), the editor's policy with respect to OARs must be examined. Most editors of journals (±92%) allow "self archiving" of full text versions in repositories, sometimes with conditions regarding form (for example latest version of the authors after peer review, not the final version of the editor) or time (embargo period). The fact that Open Access is not restricted to journals, but also concerns for example books in Humanities, is illustrated by the Open Humanities Press (OHP), a new international initiative of academics, journal editors and librarians to promote Open Access publications in Humanities.

Further information on the policies of editors with respect to self-archiving can be found by means of RoMEO (Rights MEtadata for Open archiving).

What is an "Institutional Repository" (IR)?
Institutional Repositories are databases in which "full text" versions of publications are deposited: they contain the scientific output of the institution. By means of the IR everyone can download the available publications, if the author has given his authorisation. In certain cases only a restricted access can be permitted. In general, an IR is managed by the library of an institution. At present the university library of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel is working on an IR which will be integrated with the R&D-database and the library system. Initially it will contain PhD theses and articles. Publications which are deposited by the researchers in the institutional OAR can easily be collected by so-called "harvesters" (such as OAISTER) and are therefore much easier accessible for everyone. Thanks to the integration of the IR with the R&D-database, the input of metadata (authors, title, reference) need not happen twice. These metadata remain publicly visible via the R&D-database and a link is made where a "full text" version is available in the IR.
Making the “full text” of your publication publicly available has important advantages!
When publications are found more easily and sooner, they will also more and sooner be read
and cited. It is thus absolutely recommended to make publications visible by means of the OAR
of your institution, as soon as these have been accepted for publication, or as soon as this is
possible according to the conditions of the editor. Take care that it is mentioned as completely
as possible in the metadata of the document in the IR where it was published. Only in this way
can citations be correctly identified by citation-indexes! The impact advantage as a result
of Open Access is certainly not negligible. There is even talk of a 50 to 250% increase of
citations depending on the field (Harnad, 2006) and three times more citations for articles in
Open Access journals compared to non-Open Access journals (Eysenbach, 2006). Therefore it is
not surprising that a number of universities, research institutions and financing bodies already
issued a mandate to make full text publications available by means of Open Access. Examples
are the National Institutes of Health (NIH; US), University of Southampton (Department of
Electronics and Computer Science ECS; UK), Welcome Trust (UK), Queensland University of
Technology (QUT; Australia), European Laboratory for Particle Physics (CERN), University of
Minho (Portugal), National Institute of Technology (NIT; India), Zürich University (Switzerland).

"Institutional Repositories” offer many possibilities
IRs also offer many possibilities for use by other systems, for example to visualize research in a
certain field, latest additions, proceedings of congresses organised at a university, ...
Furthermore repositories, while they themselves contain no peer review or quality judgement,
can play a role in a peer review system other than the traditional journals. For example field-
specific portals with referee system can be created, attaching a quality label to publications from
institutional repositories.

Interesting links:
- Berlin Declaration & list of signatories: http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-
  berlin/berlin_declaration.html
- DRIVER: http://www.driver-repository.be/
- Open Archives Initiative: http://www.openarchives.org/
- RoMEO (Rights MEtadata for Open archiving): Publisher copyright policies & self-archiving:
  http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php ; Self-Archiving Policy By Journal:
  http://romeo.eprints.org/
- Self-Archiving FAQ: http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/self-faq/
- OAISTER (harvester / search engine): http://www.oaister.org/
- "Study on the economic and technical evolution of the scientific publication markets in
  Europe" (ULB & Université des Sciences Sociales à Toulouse, January 2006,
  , rapport for EU DG-Research)
  Systems: Open Access Institutional Repositories (in press), Bergen, Norway. Jeffrey, K.,
  Eds.; http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/12093/01/harnad-crisrev.html.
  http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.0040157
- Wellcome Trust position statement in support of open and unrestricted access to published
  research: http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_WTD002766.html
- Open Humanities Press: Temporary placeholder http://rime.tees.ac.uk/OHP/