

17 Open Research: A Gateway to Scientific Outreach and Innovation

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For someone from Africa who is trying his best to participate in the modern realms of research, there is nothing like the feeling of being restricted from access to literature. In most cases of restricted access, what is available will only be the abstract, and the researcher would either have to think of citing the article by picking few points available in the abstract or move on and search for articles with full access. The former will create misrepresentation of research data and the latter will mean more chance for articles with full access to be cited.

There are also occasions where new information based on a scientific publication will appear in an online platform, which could be a magazine or some other website in which a link will be provided to the original article. Yet again, restricted access means that someone with a curiosity will be held back because he cannot access the scientific work. He would inadvertently be obliged then to solely depend on the views of the reporter.

For someone who has gone through both of the aforementioned experiences, open access will mean freedom and fulfillment. It will certainly create opportunities for more shared knowledge and skills. It will also give him/her the opportunity to look into the perspectives of people from another side of the world, learn from the methodologies they used and look for ways of applying them in his/her local context.

What about the researcher that publishes on an open access platform? Doesn't it mean more visibility for his work? Indeed, yes [1]. Since citation breeds citation, it means increased access and dissemination of his/her work, increased recognition in the wider scientific world, and perhaps a door for opening additional career opportunities. This will not be limited to people involved in research, but it also means open access to the public and more chances of public engagement.

Open access also means more transparency. In a time where more and more articles are now being retracted because of plagiarism, data fabrication, redundancy and ethical issues [2–4], open access will more or less help to ensure adherence to ethical principles and to monitor transparency.

What we often also forget is that most research funding comes from taxpayers' money [5] and restricting access means in some ways restricting the right of another researcher and the public to access something that has been produced with their own money. It is also through openness, public engagement and knowledge sharing that we can, in the end, affect policy changes and implementation of scientific outputs.

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Globally, open access therefore means increased knowledge sharing, networking, collaboration, innovation, prosperity and a better future for the world.

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