

## Building a World Where Knowledge is Free

Matthew E. Johnson

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The last full week of October is much more than your last chance to plan out your ghoulish garb, load up on sweets to appease the trick-or-treating masses, and carve another creepy pumpkin for the front lawn. Amid the terrific (terrifying?) traditions that mark the end of October, it seems that Open Access Week is one that is here to stay. So maybe this year instead of candy, you might consider handing out open access academic papers to the costumed kids who ring your doorbell.

In response to the concern that academic publishing has been largely only available to active students and scholars and those who can fork out the cash for subscription fees, the first National Day of Action for Open Access was held on February 15 of 2007. In 2008, Open Access Day went global (<http://www.webcitation.org/62kGxDux1>) and was, due to its success and the interest it generated, expanded from a day to a week in 2009 (<http://www.sparc.arl.org/news-media/news/09-0305>). Finally, having established itself as an important initiative for the future of scholarship and publishing, Open Access Week announced in 2010 that in the future, it would be held annually on the last full week of October (<http://www.openaccessweek.org/profiles/blogs/open-access-week-2011-dates>). Now each year across the globe, countless institutions hold events to educate academic communities and the public about the contributions open access publishing can make to the future of innovation and scholarship.

This new open access approach to research has the potential to remove obstacles that inhibit the movement of creativity in scholarly work and to change the way we think about academic publishing. “‘Open Access’ – the free, immediate, online access to the results of scholarly research, and the right to use and re-use those results as you need,” explains Open Access Week’s ‘About’ page (<http://www.openaccessweek.org/page/about>), “has the power to transform the way research and scientific inquiry are conducted.”

All this is not to say, however, that simply introducing open access is the answer that cures all ills in the academic world nor that it will come about easily. Isabella Guthrie-McNaughton, librarian here at the Institute for Christian Studies, notes that though many publishers offer open access options for publishing, “they are in many cases applying a traditional business model to the open access system by transferring the traditional subscription based monies to monies obtained from the authors wanting to publish through open access.” This means that even open access publishing is cash-driven, which places limits on who can afford the steep fee involved in submitting an article for publication. While some organizations and institutions have begun to provide funding in answer to this constraint, it remains problematic to open access initiatives that much of academic publishing maintains itself as a money-fueled industry (<https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2013/10/open-access-week-2013-time-reform-now>).

Here in Toronto, Open Access Week is in full swing. The University of Toronto held a series of panels and talks from Monday to Wednesday to raise awareness on the changing world of

academic publishing (<http://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/oaweeek>). Continuing through the week, Ryerson University will be hosting student-oriented sessions (a workshop, a seminar, and a documentary film) that aim to educate students about the benefits of open access (<https://library.ryerson.ca/blog/2013/10/open-access-week-events-at-the-library/>).

Even more exciting for us at the Institute for Christian Studies, Open Access Week marks the launch of our open access Institutional Repository (<http://ir.icscanada.edu/icsir/>), which allows (with permission from the author and the publisher) free access to archived faculty publications, published student papers, Master's theses, and PhD dissertations. This is an important moment in the history of ICS because it makes the original and visionary work available to the public, to scholars and even to the casual Google search, allowing the unique voice of ICS to be shared with the world in a way that was not previously possible (<http://perspective.icscanada.edu/47-2/1>).

Open Access Week is a chance for students and scholars to pause and to ponder how our work has the potential to shape the world. It is easy to get lost in the "game" of academia and forget that there might just be a world outside that can benefit from academic research. It seems that the push for open access is the Occupy Wall Street of academic publishing. Open Access initiatives aim to take published research out of the elitist grip of the research-wealthy individuals and institutions and freely redistribute it.

This week is a healthy reminder for those of us in academia that our scholarly work has the potential to do more than just augment a CV. If we really believe that our scholarly pursuits matter to more than just a small slice of the academic world, open access is the best way to make our voices heard. With its potential to empower the next generation of researchers with more resources and easily accessible information, Open Access Week might just be the start of a new era of boundless innovation, invention, and creativity in academic publishing.