

SEH News

Free access to scientific papers: towards an improvement of Open Access policies in opening archives

Since the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) in 2002, there has been an increasing trend in the scientific community to claim for a free dissemination of research results. This has taken multiple forms, often linked with production mode, specifically whether the journal is or not published by a professional publisher. A first boost for Open Access (OA), known as green OA, is the permission led to authors for providing their articles in online repositories. Some of these repositories are now inter-connected with other databases and well indexed, now often integrated with tools such as Google Scholar, allowing an easy access to full texts. Depending on publisher restrictions, some journals had yet put in place embargoes, preventing fast disseminations. Some governments have yet limited the extent of embargoes while some universities and funders have made mandatory the immediate self-archiving of publications. These strategies have pushed up the number of works becoming freely available. As a consequence, citation rates largely increased, benefiting authors as well as publishers given the increased interest for their journals by authors and readers. An alternative mode of OA is currently in full development: gold OA. By this system, authors pay for publishing and can distribute the publisher version (i.e., the version with the final layout of the publisher) immediately and freely. Although this system has been advocated in favour of free research dissemination to the public while counter-acting the high cost of the classical subscription model (i.e., paying to access journals), the cost of this

OA publication mode has become unaffordable for many researchers, particularly those from institutions or countries not paying for these costs. Whereas authors can continue to publish in hybrid journals, they may often be prevented to access some full gold OA journals due to these costs. Finally, some journals manage to provide cheap or even free OA (diamond OA mode) but they have to cope with difficulties associated with typesetting, dissemination, indexation, inter-operability, and permanent archiving. It has been argued that governments should better found the publishing of publicly funded research, but this target is far to be reached.

Amphibia-Reptilia, the flagship journal of *Societas Europaea Herpetologica*, the European herpetological society, is published by Brill. Forty three volumes (with around 4 issues each) have been so far published as the journal started to be printed in 1980. Since 2009, it has been also provided online, and available for subscribing SEH members, institutions or in a “pay per article” mode. Additionally, the journal has been distributed through varied packages, then accessible to many institutions worldwide. Authors have always been able to provide freely their papers online but with changes of policies over time, particularly since the development of broad scale online institutional repositories. It became thus evident that, as a society-based scientific journal, *Amphibia-Reptilia* should be more freely distributed while keeping the benefits of working with a professional publisher.

Following preparation with Brill Senior Acquisition Editor (Stefan Einarson) and as part of a new contract signed by SEH and Brill representatives in January 2022, two new advances were made in this matter. First, authors can self-archive immediately the accepted, peer-reviewed author version of their article online. Second, and this is the most important advance, all papers published in *Amphibia-Reptilia* will be provided in free access five years following

date of publication and this at no cost for authors or SEH. These papers are currently made available in free access in Brill website. Authors that will publish in *Amphibia-Reptilia* have therefore now the guarantee that their work will be available freely to all after some time.

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