

Checking out open access

January 30 2013

From Wikipedia to shareware, the Internet has made information and software more widely available than ever. At the heart of this explosion is the simple idea that information should be open and free for anyone. Yet with publishers charging exorbitant fees for subscriptions to academic journals, university libraries are struggling to keep up.

Writing in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Concordia collections librarian Geoffrey Little says that a key way to meet that challenge is through the use of [open source](#) technology. "In order to make information freely available through [open access](#) policies, it's important to look beyond traditional and expensive methods of dissemination and turn instead to open source software," he says.

Open source software is non-proprietary software for which source code (the instructions that make computer programs work) and documentation are freely available. "It's an ideal way for libraries to avoid having to pay large amounts of money to commercial vendors for new products or ongoing maintenance and access. The ability play with source codes in order to modify the program also means that tools can be customized to meet a library's needs and the specific community of users," says Little.

Open source technology is already being used in academic libraries across the country. Tools such as archival management software and course management systems rely upon open source software to disseminate information to a wide public. As journal prices continue to increase, new online scholarly journals are being created outside of traditional commercial publishing channels and are hosted independently

rather than by an academic press or commercial publisher.

Here at Concordia University, a landmark Senate resolution on open access encourages all faculty and students to make their peer-reviewed research and creative output freely accessible online through an institutional repository, called [Spectrum](#). In fact, Concordia is the first major university in Canada where faculty members have given their overwhelming support to making the results of their research universally available.

Little hopes the infrastructure and support that is necessary to ensure sustainability of the long-term future of open access projects and initiatives can be guaranteed. "Librarians need to be advocates for open access to ensure that institutional support does not evaporate after a few years. Our mission is to help the users of our libraries access resources that will enable them to write their papers, craft their survey instruments and conduct their lab experiments – and open access is a big part of that."

"Thinking about our work through a lens of open access and using open source technologies where and when they make sense can help academic librarians in our mission to support the scholarly enterprise," continues Little. "Open access is an audacious and evolving initiative that presents us with a unique set of opportunities and challenges. We should not be afraid to experiment, investigate, and be bold in our thinking about the ways in which we can incorporate open access into our work and mission."

More information: www.sciencedirect.com/science/...ii/S0099133312001802

Provided by Concordia University

Citation: Checking out open access (2013, January 30) retrieved 20 March 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2013-01-access.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.