

University of California adopts open-access policy for research papers

August 5 2013, by Bob Yirka

The University of California (UC)—the biggest public research university in the world, has decided to adopt a university wide open-access policy for research papers produced by its faculty. The move marks a major victory for open-access proponents and a blow to professional journals who publish research papers behind a pay wall.

Open access, as described by Creative Commons [licensing agreements](#), essentially provide [free access](#) to anyone with an Internet connection. Going forward, all faculty at the university will be encouraged to post their [research papers](#) to the university's eScholarship web site. Under the agreement, posters will have to grant the University a non-exclusive license to their papers (per Creative Commons guidelines) and promise that their papers have been peer reviewed. The change doesn't force faculty to post to the university site rather than submit their papers to professional publications such as *Nature*, or *Science*, instead it provides a platform for publishing to an [open-access](#) site should the authors wish to go that route.

In its announcement, officials with UC indicated that the move to open-access was meant to send a message to the rest of the research community—that open-access to research material is vital to "the future of research."

UC is not the first research organization to institute an open-access policy—various reports suggest that as many as 175 other universities have done so as well, perhaps most famously, MIT. The movement

gained momentum after the White House issued a statement earlier this year announcing that all research papers that come about due to federal funds will be made available for free to the public within one year of being published in another journal.

Critics argue that the move to open-access publishing isn't what it would appear at all. They suggest that researchers will still want to publish in well known journals—the wide readership and established reputations make them the gold standard—plus there is the issue of peer review. Professional journals spend a lot of money to ensure papers are thoroughly reviewed before they are published—money they recoup by restricting access to the [paper](#) to only those willing to pay for it. Papers that are published on open-access sites, on the other hand, may or may not be as thoroughly reviewed.

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