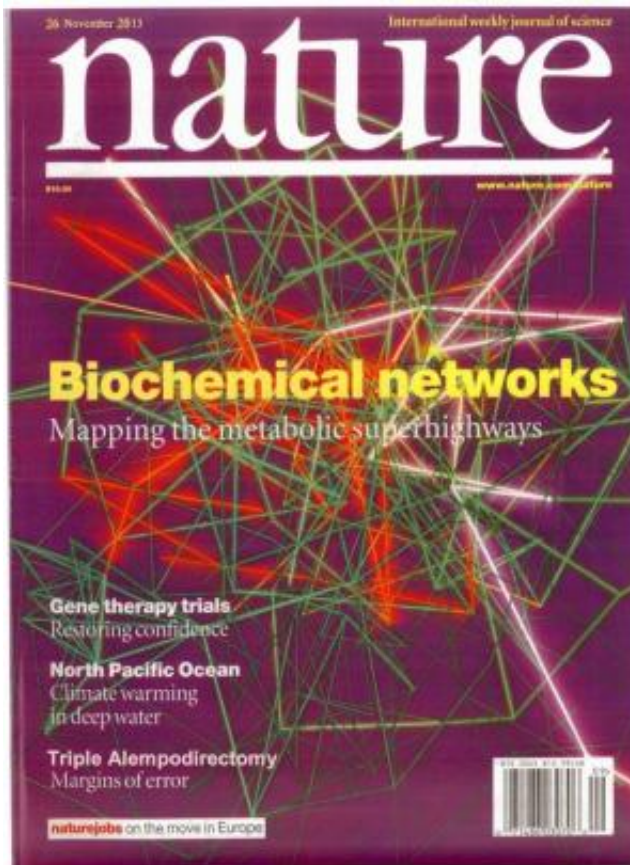


Some can jump research paper paywall thanks to Nature group

December 2 2014, by Nancy Owano



Nature cover. Credit: NPG

Great things happen when scientists share, collaborate, build on one another's work. Big frustrations occur when walls prevent that from happening easily. Another generalization is in order: Where there's *will*

there's way.

"Scientists routinely share papers from journals that require a subscription with people who haven't paid up. It's easy: A subscriber just downloads a PDF [copy](#) and e-mails it out, or drops it into a shared Internet folder," said John Bohannon, contributing correspondent to *Science*, who also writes for *Wired* and other magazines. On Tuesday, a significant turn affecting a prestigious member of the publishing world, Nature Publishing Group, was announced that will mark a turn in no-sharing roadblocks. Macmillan, the NPG parent, announced on Tuesday that "Subscribers to 49 journals on nature.com can now legitimately and conveniently share the full-text of articles of interest with colleagues who do not have a subscription via a shareable web link on nature.com." Nature reporter Richard Van Noorden said, "All research papers from *Nature* will be made free to [read](#) in a proprietary screen-view format that can be annotated but not copied, printed or downloaded." In addition to Nature, other well-known journals affected include *Nature Physics*, *Nature Genetics*, and *Nature Medicine*.

Under the policy, subscribers can share a paper through a link to a read-only version of the paper's PDF that can be viewed through a web browser. Personal subscribers get access from 1997 on. There's more: An initial group of 100 media outlets and blogs will be able to share links to read-only PDFs (though they cannot be printed). PDFs can be saved to a free desktop version of ReadCube, backed by Digital Science, a division of Macmillan Publishers and a sister company of Nature Publishing Group. ReadCube software is focused on making research literature accessible and connected; in this initiative, the ReadCube platform will be used to host and display the read-only versions of the articles' PDFs.

Why the move to make sharing easier and now? Timo Hannay, managing director of Digital Science, a division of Macmillan, said, "We know

researchers are already sharing content, often in hidden corners of the Internet or using clumsy, time-consuming practices." Steven Inchcoombe, CEO of Nature Publishing Group, said, "In today's global, internet-enabled world, we think we can meet the needs of science and society better. We know researchers are already sharing content, but not always optimally."

This is, after all, a much wider, always beckoning, Internet-sharing knowledge universe, and publishers are confronted with new discussions on how to stay responsive but viable. Bohannon wrote in *Science* that the "initiative seeks to provide an alternative to—and potentially end—so-called dark sharing, a practice that some scientific publishers find problematic."

Annette Thomas, chief executive of Macmillan Science and Education, was quoted by Van Noorden as saying that the publisher intended the policy as a pilot and will be evaluating it over the coming year. According to Macmillan's announcement, the "content sharing principles and a new policy to support this sharing initiative" released by NPG "will be refined based on usage and community feedback over a one-year period." Inchcoombe said, "We are conducting our own 'experiment' to understand how best to help sharing of knowledge in a sustainable way. Working with authors, readers, libraries and journalists, we hope to learn a lot."

Stephen Shankland of CNET commented on Macmillan's news on Tuesday: "It's an important [shift](#) for a community that has struggled to balance the restrictions of the publishing business with a centuries-old scientific culture based on information sharing."

More information: — www.nature.com/news/nature-mak...free-to-view-1.16460

— www.nature.com/press_releases/...-nature-content.html

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Citation: Some can jump research paper paywall thanks to Nature group (2014, December 2)
retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-12-paper-paywall-nature-group.html>

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