

## Open Access publication: set your research free

*An article by the Royal Danish Library*

The Open Access (OA) movement has taken off in the research world in recent years, including at Aarhus University. AU supports the national Open Access strategy and its ambition to provide free and equal access to research. However, there is still a long way to go. The most recent national Open Access Indicator shows that 68% of AU's Open Access-eligible publications have been published Open Access; within the health sciences specifically, there are a lot of Open Access-eligible publications that have not been Open published Open Access. So even though progress is being made, if the university is to meet the national target of 100 percent OA publication, we need to do more.

### Why publish Open Access?

First and foremost, because the value of research is realised when it is communicated to peers and the general public. Open Access contributes to this value creation by enabling researchers to offer free, equal access to their work. This means that your research findings are not only available to your peers, who can access your work through university or library licenses; you also reach practitioners and decision-makers who can put your research to work in society. OA also makes research more accessible for researchers and experts from less affluent countries in the Global South. OA is thus a step towards the democratisation of research: the general public that has helped fund research also gets access to the results.

In addition, OA publication increases your visibility. It goes without saying that publications that are not protected by paywalls can reach a wider audience. OA also has the potential to increase citations of your work, although the effect on citations is not entirely clear. And now that many funders have policies supporting OA publication, OA can even be a prerequisite for grant eligibility. For example, the European Commission now requires that all publications produced under Horizon European projects are made Open Access.

### How can you contribute as a researcher?

#### Prioritise Open Access

Researchers' publishing behaviour is crucial for driving the development towards even more Open Access, so it's important that as a researcher you actively consider the question of Open Access and prioritise it when choosing what journals you publish in. However, according to [the evaluation of the national Open Access strategy](#), Open Access is not the most important factor in researchers' choice of publication channel: only 4% of respondents selected Open Access as the most important factor, while 64 % cited the journal's target audience and 24% cited the journal's prestige as the most important factors. This indicates that there are other factors that are more important to researchers when it comes to publication - especially factors

#### Danish Open Access Indicator

The Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science publishes an annual indicator that tracks the implementation of the national Open Access Strategy 2018-2025. The indicator is calculated based on publications released two years previously, so the indicator for 2024 shows the level of OA implementation in 2022, for example. The indicator includes statistics on three groups of publications:

- **Realised:** the percentage of Open Access-published publications
- **Unused:** the percentage of Open Access-eligible publications that have not been published Open Access
- **Blocked:** the percentage of publications that are not eligible for Open Access

related to professional advancement and career development. In recognition of this, the national evaluation also recommends that Danish universities include Open Access in their professional advancement criteria, rewarding Open Access publication in connection with hiring and promotions. However, such criteria are potentially problematic for some groups of researchers, particularly early-career researchers, who may not be in a position to pay the high article processing charges (APCs) demanded by many prestigious journals.

### **Take advance of your unused Open Access rights**

As highlighted by the Open Access Indicator's statistics from 2024, there is a large untapped Open Access potential, especially in some subject areas - i.e. situations where the publisher allows parallel publishing as Open Access, but where these rights are not utilised. At AU in 2022 (the year analysed in the 2024 indicator), there were 1597 published articles with unused rights. This corresponds to 21% of AU's total publications in 2022. Clinical medicine, which accounts for the largest proportion of published articles each year, had a particularly large number of papers with unused rights. This means that there is huge potential in researchers taking a more active approach to taking advantage of the rights offered by publishers. Parallel publication can often be done through Pure, which offers an open archive. This is a simple process that AU's information specialists can assist with.

### **Avoid predatory journals**

The emergence of predatory journals has generated a lot of concern in the world of research in recent years. Unfortunately, because they often offer Open Access publication, these dubious publications have gained an unfortunate association with Open Access. However, it's important to emphasise that such predatory journals only account for a very small proportion of available Open Access journals. Several methods of vetting the quality of a publication channel before choosing it are available to researchers (read more about this on the [AU Library](#) website). In short, the fear of predatory journals should not block the democratisation of research.

### **Know your options**

Opportunities for Open Access publication are continually expanding, and the Royal Danish Library currently has agreements with eight of the major scientific publishers under which AU's researchers can publish accepted articles Open Access without having to pay an article processing charge (APC). AU and AU Library also offer the university's researchers support for Open Access publication. For example, there's an Open Access [webpage](#) on the AU website. Librarians at local branches of AU Library can also advise on the best choice of publication channel. And AU Library will soon be offering Journal Finder, a resource that provides an overview of the journals the Royal Danish Library has Open Access agreements with. So there are plenty of Open Access publication options to suit the different needs and requirements of AU researchers.