

Board position statement on open access

12 September 2024

As the peak body for the leaders of university libraries in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, the Council of Australian University Librarians plays a critical role in advocating for open access and open science more broadly and in enabling Member institutions to further their open access work.

This statement from the CAUL Board broadly outlines the Board's commitment to open access.

Definitions

Open Access Australasia defines open access as 'a set of principles and a range of practices through which research outputs are distributed online, free of cost or other access barriers. Through licensing via an open license (usually a Creative Commons License), freely available outputs can also be legally shared and reused. Hence, open access is more than just free access' ([Open Access Australasia](#), 2021).

Open access is a critical component of the broader open science (or open research) movement, serving as a foundational element in pursuing more transparent, collaborative, and accessible research practices. By making research outputs freely available to all, open access directly supports the core principles of open science, including transparency, reproducibility, and the democratisation of knowledge.

Position

The CAUL Board is committed to negotiating open access agreements to advance the goal of ensuring universal, immediate and perpetual open access to the version of record (the final, official, published version) for journal articles, and to negotiating the most favourable pricing and licensing conditions for these agreements.

Since 2020, CAUL has negotiated 25 open access (read and publish) agreements for Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand university libraries, resulting in 45,764 papers being published open access, representing a cost avoidance of more than \$222 million. In 2023 alone, these agreements facilitated open access publishing for 22,942 research articles, representing a cost avoidance for universities of over \$113 million in a single year. These agreements have significantly impacted the volume of open access publishing in Australia. Australia's open access publishing is now in line with Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States, with approximately 64.1% of current publishing (2023) being open access ([Open Alex](#))¹.

While agreements such as those CAUL has negotiated have driven increased open access publishing, internationally, it has been acknowledged that open access agreements alone are not a complete solution. Other strategies must be adopted to bridge the gap between total research output and what is published directly to open access, and to realise the transformation of the scholarly communication ecosystem. It is the CAUL Board's view that a broader approach is required so that the negotiation of open access agreements works in tandem with support for community-driven publishing and rights retention.

It is the CAUL Board's position that:

¹ Viewed 9 September 2024

- university libraries have a long history of enabling and advocating for open access, are integral partners in open access initiatives at all levels, and must be involved in the development of open access and open science strategy
- open access strategy – local, national and global – should be positioned within the broader context of the open science movement and reflect the values enshrined in the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#): quality and integrity; collective benefit; equity and fairness; and diversity and inclusiveness
- in developing policy and strategy related to open access, governments and other agencies should apply the principles set forth by the [International Science Council](#) and [cOAlition S](#) to support the development of robust, collaborative and globally aligned positions
- there is an urgent need for transformation of the academic publishing industry in pursuit of the dual goals of ensuring universal, immediate and perpetual open access to the version of record (the final, official, published version) for journal articles, and creating a more equitable, efficient, and open scholarly communication system that prioritises the widespread dissemination of knowledge
- all routes to making research outputs free to access, read, share and reuse play an important role in progressing the open access agenda
- repositories are essential infrastructure for open access, including for archiving and making non-traditional research outputs accessible, and to facilitate 'green' open access
- community-driven and scholar-led routes to open access, or 'diamond' open access, play a critical role in making scholarly outputs openly accessible, and these require investment in terms of infrastructure and support
- there is a diversity of disciplinary publishing norms that must be considered in formulating strategic approaches to open access and these norms require a variety of approaches to open access
- open access policy and strategy should pursue multiple routes to open access in tandem, as no single route is a complete solution
- retention of authors' rights when publishing scholarly works is essential to support authors in freely sharing their work, thereby maximising accessibility and impact, fostering innovation, accelerating scientific progress, and advancing the broader goals of open access and open science
- the [CARE principles](#) should be applied to research outputs related to Indigenous knowledges, and the rights of Indigenous people related to their knowledges may take precedence over the imperative to make research outputs open access.

About CAUL

The Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) is the peak collegiate body for the leaders of university libraries in Australia and New Zealand. CAUL facilitates connection and collaboration, and optimises its collective knowledge, expertise, and resources, to achieve strategic outcomes at scale in priority areas for the university library sector. CAUL is the trusted voice of the university library sector in the region. CAUL is committed to advancing open access in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, through strategic content procurement, advocacy, and programs of strategic activities.

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