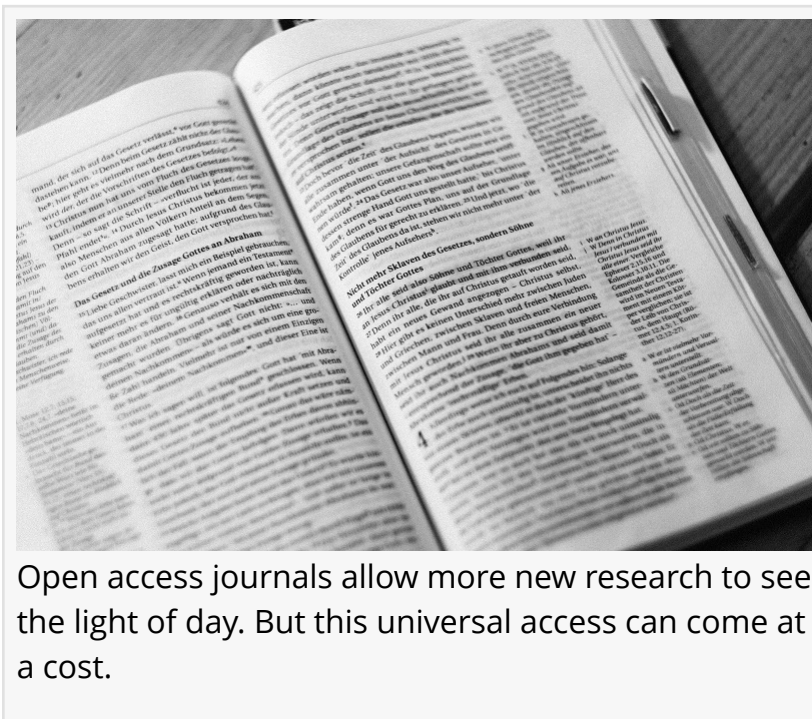


# Research Authors Weigh the Pros and Cons of Publishing in Open Access Journals

*Wordvice reporter and editor Andrew Kim assess the merits--and caveats--of submitting scientific research to open access journals.*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, September 2, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- An important feature of COVID-19, as a subject of scientific research, is that nearly all research on it is free to read. It is easy to dismiss this phenomenon as a temporary response to the pandemic, but it's unlikely that everything will go back to being [behind journal paywalls](#). This is because the transition to open access models has been underway decades before the COVID-19 outbreak; the pandemic has simply given the movement a strong boost forward.



Open access journals allow more new research to see the light of day. But this universal access can come at a cost.

This unrestricted access to academic material relevant to COVID-19 is making research on the virus faster and more efficient. But should open-access models be adopted by all journals in the long run? What are the benefits and drawbacks of open access? Here are the main pros and cons of open access as it relates to academic publication.

## THE PROS:

### 1. Widespread distribution

The most cited, and perhaps also the greatest, benefit of open access is the possibility of widespread distribution. Wider dissemination of scholarly articles means more new ideas for new studies, which makes academic research more nimble.

Studies have shown that authors are more likely to be cited when their articles are more visible. In 2018, nearly 19 million journal articles were open access and those publications earned a minimum 18 percent more citations than their closed access counterparts. This is proof that

open access gives studies more exposure, thus allowing them to have a greater impact.

Additionally, under an Open Access CC-BY license, authors own the copyrights to their works. This means an author is free to distribute a given work outside of a single journal, which can further increase a study's exposure.

## 2. Swift and straightforward publication

With traditional methods of publication, it can take six to nine months for a submitted manuscript to appear in a journal. In contrast, open access journals have significantly shorter wait times between acceptance and publication. And in the case of preprints, which have been gaining popularity with COVID-19 research, the wait time is virtually nonexistent. Shorter wait times can make academic research more efficient, allowing for a greater number of discoveries to be made within a shorter period of time.

## 3. Access across fields and economic boundaries

With open access, everyone can benefit from a scientific discovery. Articles published in traditional journals are typically accessed only by a select group of researchers. However, the far-reaching nature of science means that nearly everyone has [a stake in scientific research](#). Open access makes research available not only to scientists but also to students, businesses, and policymakers.

Furthermore, open access applies globally. Traditional journals have high paywalls, with some academic subscriptions costing as much as \$40,000 for full online access. Such steep prices have not only caused the libraries of even well-established institutions to cancel subscriptions but also makes many articles inaccessible to researchers in developing countries. Open access allows academics to be part of an international scientific discussion regardless of their access to funding.

## THE CONS:

### 1. Potential problems with quality assurance

While concerns about the quality of open access articles have largely diminished, it's not yet an obsolete issue. Many academics are still apprehensive about the accelerated publication process that's characteristic of open access.

COVID-19 has also led to researchers posting more early-stage research and [publishing more preprints](#), which are full drafts of research papers that are shared publicly before undergoing peer review. This, along with journals making all coronavirus-related research free to read, has made scientific communication faster and more efficient.

The issue with preprints, however, is that it can be difficult to assess the validity of a study and guarantee manuscript quality. New methods of evaluating research should be established if the scientific publication industry is to fully adopt open access models.

ESL researchers who wish to strengthen their manuscript quality may also consider online editing services. Such services employ professional academic editors with graduate degrees and backgrounds in a variety of disciplines. These editors are familiar with not only the English language but also academic conventions and formatting. The certificate of editing – that many companies provide free-of-charge for every order – demonstrates to readers that a manuscript has received professional English editing.

## 2. Can be expensive for authors

As mentioned previously, payment is necessary to read open access articles. However, virtually all journals – both traditional and open access – charge a fee at the time of submission to cover various publication costs. Traditional journals often charge about \$100-250 per page and/or \$150-1000 per color figure. Open access journals, on the other hand, charge a flat fee that can range from as low as \$8 to as high as \$5000. This means that it's possible for the costs of traditional publication to be less prohibitive for authors. Some newer open access journals that have a low processing fee also have a low impact factor (IF), which devalues the lower cost of publication. Authors should carefully compare various traditional and open access journals to choose the method of publication that best suits their needs.

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