

How to get a copy of an academic paper



Written by Peter Bates

Contents

Introduction	1
Information about the paper you want to obtain	2
Search tools.....	3
Getting a hard copy of the paper.....	4
Publishers.....	5
How repositories differ from one another	5
Some repositories	6
Evidence synthesisers	6
Websites that have been criticised.....	7
Access is chargeable or denied	7
Finding a researcher.....	8
Single topic search tools	8
Textbooks, theses and artwork.....	8
Conclusion and final recommendation.....	9
Postscript: What is the status of this <i>How To</i> guide?	9

Introduction

In the past, publishers sold copies of their academic journals to individual subscribers and libraries, using copyright law to restrict access by anyone who did not pay. Things have changed with the advent of the internet, the growth of a conviction that knowledge should be available to all by open access¹, the involvement of Public Contributors in research and a growing realisation that parts of the developing world do not have equal access². However, it can still be difficult to obtain a legal, free copy of a specific paper as illustrated by the account below.

I submitted a paper for peer review some weeks ago. Last week, an email arrived indicating that the reviewers support publication, but I need to incorporate some recent work published by the same publishing house. The two papers they want me to look at are not Open Access and I am not an employee or student of a university. I have asked the authors, the publishing house and some colleagues who work for a university to get me sight of the papers, but a week has gone by with no response. I could rent access to the papers if I claimed to be a researcher when I am not – and if I paid the eye-watering fees. Public Contributors seem to be locked out.

Public Contributors are people who have lived through the illness or other circumstances being researched, cared for someone who has, or who take an active interest as a member of the public. They help health research to be more relevant and effective by advising research teams and sometimes coproducing each stage of the research. They maintain independence and so are not salaried by healthcare services or research institutions. It stands to reason that some Public Contributors may wish to read academic papers to augment their lived experience.

The problem of access to a specific paper may be resolved if an academic member of the research team uses their status to obtain a copy of the paper and then shares it with the Public Contributor³. This may be possible through the license agreement managed by CLA⁴. Unfortunately, this simple approach reinforces the power imbalance between academic and lived experience and takes the relationship in the wrong direction. Public Contributors should be able to initiate a search for papers and obtain their own copies as independent members of the team, and the following paragraphs explain how they might do so.

Linked questions, such as how to ensure that research findings are published rather than buried and published papers are written in plain language so that non-technical readers can understand them are discussed elsewhere⁵ and lie beyond the remit of this Guide.

Information about the paper you want to obtain

A paper goes through a long process before it is published. After several cycles of drafting, reviewing and editing within the research team, the paper finally reaches the preprint stage, where the team is ready to submit it to the publisher for external peer review, a final round of amendment, and, if accepted, publication.

Once a paper is published, it carries some key information to prevent it being confused with other papers – the name of the author, date of publication, title, name of the journal and so on. It would help with listing and finding a document if these items were presented in a standard way, referred to as the citation style. Unfortunately, this is not the case and different approaches are in use. The commonest citation styles are APA, MLA, Harvard, Vancouver, Chicago and Turabian. An increasing number of academic papers also carry a unique Digital Object Identifier or [DOI](#) number.

There are several ways in which academic papers can be offered to readers. Libraries and some individuals may take out a subscription for a journal, and publishing houses may also sell or rent individual articles to anyone willing to pay. Electronic copies of papers published in Open Access journals have the advantage of being free to the public, although they can also disappear from the internet if the journal closes without arranging continuity⁶. It is worth noting that some publishers attempt to sell copies of papers that are already freely available, while Open Access journals sometimes disappear. The difference is shown in the DOI number⁷, with the free version carrying a different prefix. Compare <http://doi.org/10.1038/ng.3260> with <https://unpaywall.org/v2/10.1038/ng.3260>.

Where a paper has been sold, either as part of a subscription paid for a whole journal, or as a time-limited rental for an individual paper, it may arrive with built-in barriers for readers with disabilities. The file may only open for those who have the publishing house's bespoke software, the access period may be too short for slow readers, copy and paste functions may be disabled, and text-to-speech and other assistive technologies may be inoperative⁸.

Search tools

An increasing number of papers are available online, either in full or just the abstract (or summary). There are various places to search with the most popular described in more detail below. Some of these search tools also enable users to do other things too, such as organise, cite or share these papers with others. It may be these additional functions that shape the decision about which tool is best, but that is beyond the scope of this introductory paper.

[Google Scholar](#) has a number of helpful tools, as shown in the following worked example. Let's look for papers on care homes for adults. A search for care homes yields 3.16 million items and the return includes items on care and items on homes as well as the goal of care homes. Add speech marks around the phrase and Google Scholar looks for that exact phrase – so “care homes” cuts the yield down to 92,400. Add the word intitle and a semi colon (intitle: “care homes”) and it returns 4,590 papers that have the phrase ‘care homes’ in the title. As we are not interested in care homes for children, a minus sign will remove the unwanted words (intitle: “care homes” -child) reduces the return to 4,020 papers. An alternative term might be ‘children’, so we can remove that too (intitle: “care homes” -child -children) to reduce the yield to 3,560 papers. Now we can use the lefthand side bar on the screen to target papers published in 2019, and this reduces the return to 115 papers.

The returns from a Google Scholar search are shown on a screen that has two columns. If the righthand column has HTML, DOC or PDF next to the paper then we know it is available. Alternatively, if there is some text below the entry on the left-hand side of the screen that says something like "All 4 versions", then click on this to open a new page showing them all. One of these may be open access. The Google Crawler goes everywhere Google goes and can pick up papers posted on obscure websites as well as those lodged in major repositories and journal sites, and so will usually find more papers than other search tools.

The second place to look is [Core Discovery](#) – a service that searches for open access papers within and beyond its own archive, that is maintained as a not-for-profit service (see [Core](#)) and includes a range of other services, such as access to electronic PhD theses.

There are a range of other search tools, some of which are listed below, but these are unlikely to find additional open access papers.

- [Unpaywall](#) software is set up by its creators to search specific sites and find free, legal, open access copies of an academic paper and make them available to you online. This means that if you add the free Unpaywall extension to Chrome or Firefox on your computer some papers that previously only were available in abstract form can be read in full. Unpaywall provides access to some 20 million articles and is explained in a Youtube video [here](#). They harvest open access items from over 50,000 journals and open-access repositories and its software is activated when you reach a DOI page.

[Gettheresearch](#) presents the Unpaywall material in a format that may be more accessible for the general public rather than an academic audience. A similar service to Unpaywall but that is designed for universities is called [Kopernio](#) or, if you have the complete details of the paper you are seeking, you can install the [Open Access Button](#) which has the extra service that, when an open access copy is not found, the OA Button can contact the author directly. [BASE](#) is operated by Bielefeld University Library in Germany and provides more than 140 million documents from more than 6,000 sources. About 60% of the indexed documents are available as full open access. [Paperity](#) has many journals that are not available on Base. They index 3 million papers that are designated as open access and Paperity draws down the original file from the publishers'

website, so there is no risk of breaching copyright. [Semantic Scholar](#) enables users to search 170 million papers. [Scilit](#) has 120 million papers and allows users to filter the results to only see open access documents. Other sites exist too, such as [Refseek](#), and many more are listed at [Weblens](#).

Getting a hard copy of the paper

Librarians distinguish between a hard copy (a physical book or journal containing the article or chapter) and an electronic copy. If you want to get your hands on a hard copy, you may need to buy it⁹ or go and visit a library and find the book or journal on the shelves. A librarian will help, especially in a library that only presents part of its stock and keeps other materials in store. Not all hard copy documents held by the library will be available for loan, but for those that are, you will need to join the library if you wish to borrow it and carry it away from the library building for a time.

If that library does not carry the item that you are wanting to see¹⁰, they may be able to borrow it from another library via the inter-library loan service¹¹, so you will be able to see it if you are prepared to join the library, wait for the loan to be arranged, and perhaps pay for the service.

Normally, membership of a University library is restricted to the university staff and its students. There may be provision to make photocopies, although copyright restrictions apply and you will need lots of change, because the library is unlikely to carry any. NHS Trusts may run a lending library of novels for patients to read, and a separate academic library for staff. Some of these specialist libraries may allow members of the public to enter and look at their resources.

As well as offering library access to staff and students, a University library may be willing to issue a library pass card to some other groups¹². This is likely to give access to printed materials held by the library and deny access to electronic holdings; and be for 'reference use' only (i.e. you can look at the item but not take it out of the library building). with the particular arrangements at individual universities explained on their website. Options may include:

- Alumni – people who have been students of that university in the past. This kind of library membership may not be free¹³.
- Associates¹⁴ who are recognised as contributing to the work of the university and who apply with the support of a sponsor¹⁵, who must be a university employee. Part of the application process involves creating a university email address. The Public Contributor will need to visit the University's security office¹⁶ to be photographed and be issued with a University Associate Card issued. The Card can be loaded with a range of resources - means of identification, access to university or public buses, sports centre access, library access, online library borrowing permit and photocopying authorisation.
- Community Researchers may be issued with a free External Borrower card¹⁷.
- Unusual arrangements may apply at particular places. For example, members of the public may view online material at one university, but not save searches or email e-copies of academic papers¹⁸.

In addition to giving access to hard copies, acquiring a library card may increase access to papers held in electronic form.

Some libraries belong to [Access to Research](#), an online facility enabling users to users to simultaneously search the holdings of over 3000 public libraries across the UK that total more than 15 million academic papers. Papers may then be available by attending the relevant local library or seeking inter-library loan. Facilities such as Open Athens (see below) may be available to people who

are members of a university library. University libraries also belong to a club called [SCONUL](#) but this is not open to the public.

Publishers

A 2014 study found 28,100 active, scholarly, peer-reviewed journals¹⁹ and this figure had grown to 42,500 by mid-2018²⁰, so finding a paper on a particular topic can be challenging. A growing number of journals are described as 'open source' which may mean that they derive their operating costs from charging a fee to the author rather than selling their journal to the reader. Supporters assert that open source papers provide access to readers who cannot afford to pay a subscription, while detractors claim that it has reduced the rigour of the academic press and permitted hoax papers and work that is of poor quality to be published by predatory journals²¹.

- [Directory of Open Access Journals](#) lists 13,000 journal titles that are open access and holds 4 million papers²². Over 5,000 titles are also available at [Free Medical Journals](#).
- [DOAB](#): Directory of Open Access Books (see below for a section on textbooks and theses)
- [Journal Table of Contents](#) offers a free service where you can register and then click on individual titles. They will then send you an email containing the table of contents of each new issue of the journals you have chosen as it is published.
- Individual publishers sometimes run their own repository of papers and may allow the public to search them. For example: [Science Direct](#) allows users to search all 16 million papers published by Elsevier; [BioMed Central](#) is run by Springer Nature who publish around 300 peer-reviewed, open access journals covering science, technology, engineering and medicine; [Cambridge Core](#) have 36 open access journals and a further 246 that contain some open access papers; the Public Library of Science ([PLOS](#)) publishes 7 journals that are all open access, and [Psychiatryonline](#) provides access to six journals.

Publishers sometimes grant free access to their output for people in lieu of payment. For example, in 2021, Emerald Publishing offered free access to up to 40 new papers over a three month period to its peer reviewers²³.

How repositories differ from one another

Repositories²⁴ store copies of papers in digital form. Over 4,000 of these repositories are considered open access and are listed at [Open-DOAR](#) (although some store no more than the articles published in a single journal). The holdings of individual repositories may overlap with one another. Some of the differences between these collections will be as follows:

- Some hold only free, open access papers while others include material that is behind a paywall.
- Some carry full text, while others only have the citation details of author, title etc. Some, such as [bioRxiv](#), contain preprints (the author's version before peer review) rather than the final version.
- Some cover a single academic discipline, such as physiotherapy, while others are much broader, and cover all health sciences, astronomy and so on. This *How To* guide has a bias towards health and social care for disabled people.
- Some confine their collection to journal articles, while others include artwork, books, conference papers, theses or policy declarations by Governments or professional bodies.

- Some will include an archive of raw data that was collected by one team of researchers and can be interrogated by a new team at a later date, and so is designated as open data. This may include collections of firsthand accounts by patients, perhaps captured in video or audio format. Examples are [AgeInfo](#), [UK Data Service](#), [Urban Big Data Centre](#) and [Office for National Statistics](#). A data repository search engine is available at [re3data](#).
- Some include publications in all languages while others confine themselves to the English language.
- Some store their material in a format that most search engines can read, while others make the title legible and restrict access to the content.

Some repositories

Below you will find the most significant repositories in the health and social care sector. Other listings are available²⁵.

- [Be part of research](#) is an online database that allows the public to search current research studies that are known to the UK National Institute of Health Research. A research team may have useful information or papers that you would like to see.
- [COPAC](#) allows simultaneous searching of the holdings of over 100 university and specialist libraries in the UK and Ireland. From 31st July 2019 Copac will be replaced by the new [Jisc](#) Library Hub Discover service. This means you can find out where hard copies of documents can be found.
- [Europe PMC](#) includes 35.7 million abstracts, 5.4 million full text articles, 881 NHS clinical guidelines and other materials, all meeting copyright obligations. Since 2013, any UK research funded by the Medical Research Council must archive a copy of all published outputs with Europe PMC and make it freely available as soon as possible, or within six months of the first on-line publication. Searching Europe PMC also checks everything that might be accessible via [PubMed](#), [PubMedCentral](#) and Unpaywall.
- Other sites include [Social Care Institute of Excellence](#), [Social Science Research Network](#), [eScholarship](#), [arXiv](#) (physics, mathematics, computer science, quantitative biology, quantitative finance, statistics, electrical engineering and systems science, and economics,

Evidence synthesisers

The following organisations process published evidence. Some bring the findings from several papers together into a careful summary and publish the evidence synthesis on a specific topic. Others translate academic papers into lay summaries that can be understood by the general public.

- [Campbell Collaboration](#) is an international organisation which publishes systematic reviews on the evidence for social interventions in society, including lay summaries.
- The [Cochrane Library](#) publishes systematic reviews on health interventions.
- The Current Awareness Service for Health ([CASH](#)) is run by the NHS and concentrates on recent publications that synthesise evidence on a particular topic. See it at <http://cash.libraryservices.nhs.uk/>

- [Social Care Online](#) was called Caredata. Links to full text on some records. Abstracts of recent literature on social and community care from books, journal articles, reports and publications of voluntary organisations. Also summarises the latest news items and practice developments in social care.

Websites that have been criticised

[Sci-Hub](#) operates from Kazakhstan, where copyright law is different, and lost a court battle in the US²⁶. The conclusion was that Sci-Hub had infringed copyright of some papers by distributing them but reading such papers does not constitute an infringement. In January 2021, Twitter closed their account.

[Researchgate](#) has 15 million researchers signed up and 118 million academic papers. Authors who upload their publications to Researchgate often infringe copyright to do so²⁷. This may be because copyright arrangements vary with each publisher and one suspects that few authors keep track of the exact permissions relating to each of the papers that they have written. Researchgate has also been criticised for collecting information about people from around the web and then creating unauthorised profiles and sending unsolicited emails. As a result of these concerns, Unpaywall and Core (but not Google Scholar) do not search Researchgate in their hunt for papers. Alternative sites include [Mendeley](#) and [Humanities Commons](#).

[Academia](#) is another alternative to Researchgate. It is a private company that has a high percentage of lapsed members, some of whom have complained that they were signed up without proper consent²⁸, had their personal information misrepresented and were then sent unsolicited emails. Non-members can search but not download fulltext papers. Academia and Researchgate webpages provide a button to request a full-text pdf from the author.

#icanhazpdf can be used to tweet a request for paper from someone who has it. It is their responsibility to comply with copyright laws when passing on a copy to an individual or, indeed, to a repository. An alternative site is provided by [Reddit](#).

Access is chargeable or denied

The following websites do not allow free public access –

- [The Knowledge Network](#) was the NHS e-library. You need to register online for a password, be part of NHS for Scotland, a student or part of a voluntary organisation which partners with the NHS – so this is not accessible to the general public.
- [Open Athens](#) is not available to the public. Although many UK students speak about Open Athens as if it was a search tool, in fact it is an identity and access management system. In the UK, the NHS uses it to authenticate the identity of users and permit them to access the journals for which that NHS Trust or affiliated university pays a subscription. A list of eligible roles in the NHS is found [here](#) and includes NHS volunteers who have the support of their local Open Athens [administrator](#)²⁹. In addition, NHS patients who have permission to access NHS library premises may use the Open Athens service whilst in these premises.
- The following sites are examples of places where access is behind a paywall (i.e. users must pay to see material). [Scopus](#) is run by Elsevier, charges users and does not have full text access but only holds abstracts and citations. [TRIP \(Turning Research Into Practice\)](#) is a free database covering advice on evidence-based medicine and patient information leaflets, but its published papers are behind a paywall, as are [Web of Science](#) and [Zetoc](#).

- Other sites are normally open access but may be inaccessible for short periods for maintenance or other reasons. For example, staff at OpenEdition closed down their service for 24 hours on 17 December 2019 as part of a campaign to block the French Government's pension reforms.

Finding a researcher

Some publishing houses allow each author of a paper to give away a limited number of copies, so it may be worth contacting the author. Where there are several authors who have collaborated on a paper, there will normally be an identified 'corresponding author' who can be contacted to discuss the paper's contents. They are usually (but not always) the first named author, and usually offer an email address for correspondence as well as their unique Open Researcher and Contributor ID (ORCID)³⁰ that helps to distinguish authors with identical names. You can search the [ORCID database](#) to see the titles of all the publications listed by that particular author. If the abstract of the paper you want does not include an email address it may be possible to find the author's webpage at their university or elsewhere and look for a list of their publications – hopefully one of their entries will include their contact details as corresponding author. Some of these requests fail either because the author has moved or does not respond.

A more general inquiry for information on a topic may be sent to individual researchers in the hope that they will point to relevant literature. A more efficient way to send out this sort of inquiry may be to send your inquiry to a network of researchers such as [Mendeley](#) or Researchgate (but see above), or post it on a website such as the [Cochrane Task Exchange](#).

Single topic search tools

Some repositories and search tools aim to collect together resources that are relevant to a particular topic. There are many examples, including the ones listed below:

- Health sciences - [Mednar](#) (medicine), [OTseeker](#) (occupational therapy) [PsyArXiv](#) (psychology), [PEDro](#) (Physiotherapy).
- Education - [ERIC](#).
- History - [Wellcome](#) (historical resources on healthcare dating from the 15th century onwards).
- Geography – [Sabinet](#) (African electronic journals and the African Journal Archive).
- Shared ownership - [Digital Library of the Commons](#) (shared ownership of property or resources such as grazing land or fish stocks) and shared intellectual property)

Textbooks, theses and artwork

These products are beyond the scope of this *How To* guide, so a brief comment will have to suffice.

Textbooks. An open textbook is a textbook that is licensed under an open copyright license and made available online to be freely used by students, teachers and members of the public. Open textbooks may be available in a variety of formats, including print, e-book, or audio formats that may be downloaded or purchased at little or no cost. There are over 200 providers listed in the [Open Access Directory](#), and some of these publish textbooks, including: [Google Books](#), [BC Open Textbook Collection](#), [eCampus Ontario](#), [Manitoba Open Textbook Initiative](#), [NCBI Bookshelf](#) (life sciences and healthcare), [Oapen](#), [OER Commons](#), [Open Book Publishers](#), [Open SUNY Textbooks](#), [Open Textbooks](#), [Openstax](#), [Orange Grove](#), [PDX Open](#), [UCL Press](#), and [Wikibooks](#).

Theses. [Ethos](#) enables you to search 500,000 doctoral theses.

Images. Free-to-reuse images are available at [Unsplash](#) and [Pexels](#). Flickr has lots of content that can be reusable as long as you check the copyright license, eg. the British Library's [Flickr account](#) is massive. Creative Commons' [CC Search](#) is a useful shortcut tool as it aggregates various image databases' search results for free-to-use content including Flickr, Wikimedia Commons, Europeana, Google Images, Pixabay and more.

Infographics. Websites where you can create your own infographics for free include [Canva](#), [Piktochart](#), [Infogram](#) (good for displaying statistics) and [easel.ly](#).

Conclusion and final recommendation

There are obviously too many options here to suggest that readers may wish to use them all. A personal recommendation is to use Google Scholar and install Unpaywall first, and only move on to some of the other options if these fail to deliver the results you need. In combination with this, cultivate your friendship with a local librarian.

Of course, once you have a copy of the paper the next challenge beckons, which is to make sense of it. That is beyond the scope of this *How To* guide, but others have offered advice³¹.

Postscript: What is the status of this *How To* guide?

Most of the documents we read are finished pieces of work, carefully crafted and edited in private before being shared with anyone else. This is a different kind of paper – it was shared online [here](#) from the first day, when the initial handful of ideas were incomplete, poorly phrased and tactless. The work has been edited many times, and on each occasion a revised version has replaced the earlier material online. This process is still under way, and so this paper may still be lacking crucial concepts, evidence, structure and grammar³². As readers continue to provide feedback³³, further insights will be used to update it, so please contact peter.bates96@outlook.com with your contributions³⁴.

It is one of a suite of over 30 documents available [here](#) that try to open up debate about how in practical terms to empower disabled people and share decision-making in health and social care services – in research, implementation and evaluation.

This way of writing is risky, as it opens opportunities to those who may misunderstand, mistake the stopping points on the journey for the destination, and misuse or distort the material. This way of writing requires courage, as an early version can damage the reputation of the author or any of its contributors. At least, it can harm those who insist on showing only their 'best side' to the camera, who want others to believe that their insights appear fully formed, complete and beautiful in their simplicity. It can harm those who are gagged by their employer or the workplace culture, silenced lest they say something in a discussion that is not the agreed party line. It can harm those who want to profit from their writing, either financially or by having their material accepted by academic journals.

In contrast, this way of writing can engage people who are not invited to a meeting or asked for their view until the power holders have agreed on the 'right message'. It can draw in unexpected perspectives, stimulate debate and crowdsource wisdom. It can provide free, leading edge resources. It can stimulate others to write something better than this.

¹ Open Access was first defined by the Budapest Open Access Initiative in 2002 and the guidelines were updated in 2012. See them at <https://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/boai-10-recommendations>. Coalition S is a collaboration of research funders that are working together to deliver Plan-S which will ensure that by 2021, all publicly funded scientific research will be published as open access papers. See a manifesto for open access at <https://ojs.unica.it/index.php/anuac/article/view/4215/3816>. The National Institute of Health Research has committed to open access from 2022 – see [NIHR Open Access publication policy - for publications submitted on or after 1 June 2022](#).

² Many publishers have waived their fees and charged nothing or low-cost fees to universities in low income countries. See <http://liblicense.crl.edu/licensing-information/developing-nations-initiatives/>. Despite this, the new arrangements have increased the inequality of access to publication between low income and high-income countries – see Smith AC, Merz L, Borden JB, Gulick CK, Kshirsagar AR & Bruna EM (2022); Assessing the effect of article processing charges on the geographic diversity of authors using Elsevier’s “Mirror Journal” system. *Quantitative Science Studies*; 2 (4): 1123–1143. doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/qss_a_00157.

³ This was the advice from one researcher in Wales, who wrote: “If they are officially part of an NHS Wales group or committee then they are included under the tertiary user terms of NHS Wales and are covered by the NHS Wales copyright licence. They would not be given direct access to resources but could be copied into papers which were required for the group meetings etc. Personal communication, August 2019.

⁴ See [Copyright Licence for NHS and Health & Social Care Staff | CLA](#).

⁵ See, for example, the consultation document at https://www.hra.nhs.uk/documents/1753/HRA_Make_it_public_strategy_for_consultation.pdf.

⁶ Laakso and colleagues found 176 open access journals that had disappeared from the internet between 2000 and 2019, along with another 900 that are currently inactive and so at risk of vanishing. The Directory of Open Access Journals has just over 14,000 entries. See Laakso M, Matthias L, Jahn N (2021) *Open is not forever: a study of vanished open access journals*. Available at <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/2008/2008.11933.pdf>

⁷ Academic papers that have not been submitted to a recognised journal may be assigned a DOI number through the Figshare website. Figshare maintain a repository of such papers and free accounts are available to authors. They also permit authors to submit an updated version, while retaining the DOI and the old version on the site. See <https://figshare.com/>.

⁸ Recent policies introduced in the UK should gradually improve this situation, including the [NISO](#) standards for machine-readable metadata and text which ensures that content is compatible with assistive technology, the ‘[UK Public Sector Bodies \(Websites and Mobile Applications\) Accessibility Regulations 2018](#)’, and the rules for the public sector at [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#).

⁹ While buying access to a single paper can be expensive, there are cheaper alternatives, such as Deepdyve see <https://www.deepdyve.com/> that offers access to multiple papers for a single monthly fee.

¹⁰ The availability of open access copies has increased market pressure on universities. For example, in January 2019, the University of California cancelled its \$10m subscription with Elsevier. See <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/03/01/university-california-cancels-deal-elsevier-after-months-negotiations>.

¹¹ The largest physical repository of hard copy publications in the UK is the British Library. Other libraries may be able to borrow materials from there via the inter-library loan service.

¹² ‘Members of the public may require access to university/NHS Trust libraries, IT services, access to research relevant to the topic they’re engaged with and so on. There may not be a cost for such access but you may need to account for staff time in setting up the arrangement.’ NIHR (2021) *Payment guidance for researchers and professionals* page 12.

¹³ See, for example, <https://www.kent.ac.uk/library/visitors/membership.html>

¹⁴ At the University of Nottingham, the precise subcategory of Associate that applies in this context is ‘Special appointment’ – see [here](#). Kim Scarborough at UWE has worked closely with the university librarian to establish a system for her PPI group, so those who contribute to the programme 30+ hours a year can have a log in and password and can access all appropriate university systems including the library. Other libraries may have similar arrangements for granting access to a small number of people under particular circumstances.

¹⁵ At the University of Nottingham, the responsibilities of the sponsor are set out [here](#).

¹⁶ At the University of Nottingham, this is located at the rear of the Hallward Library on University Park.

¹⁷ For an example, see <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/services/visitors>.

¹⁸ <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/libraries/services-and-support/walkin-access-electronic-resources>.

¹⁹ See

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229062236_Article_50_million_An_estimate_of_the_number_of_scholarly_articles_in_existence

²⁰ See https://www.stm-assoc.org/2018_10_04_STM_Report_2018.pdf. It is not clear whether the 2014 and 2018 figure were derived from identical definitions or search strategies.

²¹ See <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/342/6154/60.full> for a report of how in 2014 John Bohannon submitted 304 versions of a hoax paper littered with basic errors to peer-reviewed journals and half of them were accepted for publication. Partly to challenge reviewers to do a thorough job, some journals are publishing the reviewers' comments alongside the paper. A definition of the term, 'predatory journal' was published in December 2019 – see <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03759-y> and the results of a survey showing that awareness is low amongst researchers and strategies to avoid predatory journals are rare – see Akeroyd J, Herman E, Nicholas D, Watkinson (2020) *Assessing Journal Quality and Legitimacy* Published by CIBER Research in Cabells International. Downloaded from http://ciber-research.eu/download/20200902-Assessing_Journal_Quality.pdf 10 September 2020. General advice about predatory journals is available at <https://www.smcore.com/y92md-find-the-right-journal>.

²² This was the number in November 2018. These figures will change rapidly.

²³ When a manuscript is submitted to a journal, the editor invites relevant people to review it and this helps the editor to decide whether to publish it. Some journals engage Experts by Experience as peer reviewers – see *How to involve the public as co-authors*. Reviewers are unpaid but may benefit in kind.

²⁴ A formal definition of a repository has been agreed and can be found at <https://scholarlycommunications.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2016/10/14/in-the-context-of-open-access-policies-in-the-uk-what-is-a-repository/>. Crucially, it includes access 'without the need to log in' and so the public may have access, although some libraries also hold items that are restricted.

²⁵ See, for example, <https://simonbatterbury.wordpress.com/2015/10/25/list-of-decent-open-access-journals/>.

²⁶ In December 2020, three of the world's largest journal publishers—Elsevier, Wiley, and the American Chemical Society—filed a lawsuit seeking to block public access to Sci-Hub in India because of copyright infringement.

²⁷ <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11192-017-2291-4>

²⁸ There is provision on the Academia.edu website to sign up with your email address, but it is tiny and obscured in comparison to the option that allows Academia.edu to harvest data from your Facebook account.

²⁹ Indra Jones has been granted access via this route, as she volunteers at an NHS Ambulance Trust.

³⁰ On 4 November 2018, ORCID had 5,529,789 registered members.

³¹ See, for example, Greenhalgh T (2010) *How to Read a Paper: The Basics of Evidence-Based Medicine*. Wiley. See also the series of guidance papers at <https://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-readers/publications/how-read-paper>.

³² As a result, the author assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions in the content of this paper. The information contained is provided on an "as is" basis with no guarantees of completeness, accuracy, usefulness or timeliness. Whilst every reasonable effort has been made to comply with UK legislation, if you believe that the public display of this document or any of its contents breaches copyright please provide details to the author, and public access to the offending work will be removed immediately.

³³ Contributions and challenges to this discussion have been offered by Shahnaz Aziz, Toni Bewley, Briony Birdi, Helen Blanchett at JISC, Antony Chuter, Jane Cooper at CASH, Education and Training Centre library at the countess of Chester NHS Hospital Trust, Europe PMC, Sheena Foster, Amanda Griffiths, Bec Hanley at the Shared Learning Group on Involvement, Health Research Authority Public Involvement Team, Petr Knoth at Core, Knowledge Network, Iryna Kuchma, Anthony Locke, MRC, Barbara Moore at Health and Care Research Wales, Paperity, Kim Scarborough at UWE, Scopus, Derek Stewart, STM, Ruth Stubbings at SCONUL, Peter Suber, Aaron Tay, Kaycee Tolentino at Elsevier, Richard Turner at PLOS, UC Berkeley library, Unpaywall, John Vincent, Web of Science, Paula Wray at NIHR Involve, Liz Wright, Dave Waldram and Aneela Zaheeralli. Request sent but no response as yet from Nicola Ager, Be part of research, DBMI, Kings's Mill knowledge service, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Nottingham Central Library, NTU library, NUH library, Open Society Foundations, Rupy Pandaal, Olga Rak, Science Direct, Scopus, SPARC, University of Nottingham library, Kerry Walton at WCUPA and Sandra Wright at Hartlepool College of FE.

³⁴ Undated or early versions should be replaced with the most recent, available [here](#).