Open Access

Access to information and knowledge is essential for the progress of teaching and research but also for the sustainable development of society. Therefore, the conditions of access to scientific information needs to be improved significantly. The general trend towards the digital publication of research results, observed in recent decades, represents a fundamental change from the era of "old paper" and makes major changes to its disclosure.

It has been widely recognized that the signature system of scientific journals, which predominated in recent decades, establishing limits on the dissemination of research results and up, with regard to research financed by public funds, issues relating to good use and impact of such funding . The difficulty of access imposed by the price of subscriptions has been aggravated by the rising cost of annual subscriptions to be, since the mid-90s, several times the inflation rate. The situation is obviously more severe in poorer countries where many institutions can not afford the cost of journal subscriptions, thus impeding the access of their community to the research results. While some publishers are taking special measures for such cases, it does not address the central question that lies in the concept that the results of publicly funded research should be freely available to the public.

Open access seeks to answer these problems by making available the research results free of charge and online, through institutional repositories, open access journals and websites. This process has significant advantages for individual authors, for researchers, institutions and the research process in general and addresses the concern of many funding agencies that have recognized that the research work is incomplete if the results do not reach a wider audience - including small businesses, science journalists, professionals and the general public. In Europe, this movement led to the pilot project for Open Access from the European Commission and the guidelines of the European Research Council.

Open access in Portugal

In Portugal, as in most countries, the first open access initiatives occurred in 2003, but only since 2006 the issue gained widespread attention. The University of Minho pioneered this way, with the formation of its institutional repository, the
 RepositóriUM
in 2003, the definition of a policy of self-archiving in 2004 and the realization of an Open Access Conference in 2005. This year there was also the first initiative to publish open access journals, with the provision of Portuguese portal project
 Scielo
(Scientific Electronic Library Online).

Until September 2006 RepositóriUM and Scielo Portugal remained as the only open access initiatives in Portugal. The situation began to change in a significant way the last quarter of this year, with the appearance of ISCTE Repository , the Declaration of the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities (CRUP) on Open Access to Knowledge and organization of the 2nd Open Access Conference.

In early 2007, the CRUP established a working group on open access, and over this year, several institutions have initiated and / or completed the creation of their repositories, a process that continued in the first half of 2008.

In July 2008, a national initiative on open access was born - the Scientific Open Access Repository of Portugal (RCAAP), sponsored by UMIC and operated by FCCN with support from the University of Minho, which came to be presented and officially launched in December the same year.

Since then, there has been remarkable progress in the open access movement in Portugal: expanded significantly the network of repositories of educational and research institutions, provided an extensive portfolio of electronic services and there was a considerable increase in mobilizing the academic community. In less than two years, the RCAAP project asserted and gained visibility and recognition nationally and internationally.

The service model by which it decided to guarantee the realization of joint work by the team of project experts, freeing the institutions to carry out core activities. As a result of applying this model, there is a low cost of operation (due to economies of scale and specialized work), a deadline to implement new services also reduced and allows the managers of repositories and their teams to focus on nuclear activities.

The project also seeks to consolidate RCAAP a holistic and integrated view of the movement promoting open access dissemination, training and developing national and international partnerships for the expansion of services provided.