

User Guide for Declaration of Researcher Rights in Negotiating the Future of Scholarly Communication

The “Declaration of Researcher Rights in Negotiating the Future of Scholarly Communication” is a principles document written by a FORCE11 working group in 2021 that outlines core rights of researchers with respect to scholarly communication. The purpose of this project is to offer a template for researchers when articulating their values related to the publication or dissemination of their scholarly works. It is also a template for guiding universities, research institutions, and other stakeholders to ensure researcher rights are a central part of decisions concerning their contracts and strategic partnerships.

Getting started

1. Download the “Declaration of Researcher Rights in Negotiating the Future of Scholarly Communication” at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5013929>.
2. Consider the specific context and needs for your use of the document and then refine and adapt the language as needed. Please read through the FAQ below and reach out if you have further questions.
3. Use the document in discussions and/or negotiations with stakeholders (e.g., during publisher contract negotiations). Be sure your team members have copies, you’ve discussed the articles, and there is strong consensus on what they mean and how they will inform and define your negotiating strategy.

FAQ

1. What is the purpose of the “Declaration of Researcher Rights in Negotiating the Future of Scholarly Communication”?

The world of scholarly publishing and research communications is rapidly changing. There are many ideas about how to best transition from closed subscription business models to those that ensure free and unrestricted access and enable discovery. Many research communities want to be more involved in these discussions, but they lack a clear way of describing their priorities and so their voice has not been a part of key negotiations. The purpose of this project is to offer a template for researchers to use to articulate their values.
2. Who should utilize the “Declaration of Researcher Rights in Negotiating the Future of Scholarly Communication”?

Any researcher or administrative persons wanting to ensure core researcher rights are incorporated into strategic policy or contract decisions.



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3. When should this be used?
Before negotiations with a publisher or vendor begin. It's important to build consensus among all stakeholders early in the process and to decide what items are or are not negotiable.
4. What if I want to change or don't agree with some of the listed principles?
That's fine! Please repurpose this list as you see fit. The document is a template that is meant to be adapted based on your specific use case.
5. Is it okay to change the document to suit our needs?
Yes! Please do. If you need any help, support, or would like you share your draft, please reach out to one of the leaders listed on the [FORCE11 working group page](#) and please cite our project using <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5013929>
6. Are there examples of successful uses of these principles?
Principles documents have been a very effective tool in some of the most high stakes publisher negotiations in recent years, including publisher negotiations conducted by the [University of California \(UC\)](#) and by [Massachusetts Institute of Technology \(MIT\)](#).
7. Are these applicable to the Global South?
Yes, these principles are intended to be a template for researchers around the globe. In certain regions and contexts, however, some articles may not be needed. Additionally, other important principles may need to be added, depending on your situation.
8. What process and/or source documents were used to develop these principles?
These articles were distilled from a wide variety of [source documents](#) produced by universities and research institutions across the world, with particular attention focused on:
 - i. AmeliCA: [Principles and Values](#)
 - ii. OA2020: [Listing of Negotiation Principles and Roadmaps Implemented by Members of our Global Community](#)
 - iii. MIT: [Framework for Publisher Contracts](#)
 - iv. FORCE11: [The Scholarly Commons Principles](#)
 - v. University of California: [UCOLASC OA Principles](#)
9. Who is included in your definition of "researcher"?
The term "researcher" is defined broadly as anyone that produces any form of scholarly works.



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The articles, explained

Article I. Researchers have the right to access all scholarly works including all supplemental content and data immediately, freely, and openly.

When an author publishes a scholarly work, the world should be able to see and use it. Building on prior work is perhaps the most fundamental feature of scholarship, and this cannot be done if you do not have access to prior work.

Article II. Our right to access scholarly work includes the right to discover and use content and metadata without special licenses or restrictions, immediately, freely, and openly. This requires ensuring the machine-readability of both content and metadata.

Access to an article is not just being able to read it on a website, it's also making it machine readable so it can be accessible and actionable in a variety of ways.

The mention of 'special licenses' is in response to a practice by many publishers to arbitrarily block certain types of access, for example via API, and then requiring additional licenses for each type of access.

Article III. Our right to access and use scholarly work extends to previously published content, which requires the ability of researchers to regain copyrights of their prior work(s).

This speaks to "lost literature" prior to embargoes and other OA policies, and means that authors have a right to ensure that their prior work is accessible, too. This article simply extends the rights enshrined in Article I and II to previously published scholarly works. This is important because scholarship is additive and fundamentally depends on a full, unrestricted corpus of scholarly work.

Article IV. Future generations have the right to access published scholarly work including all supplemental content and data. This requires long-term preservation of scholarly content in libraries and/or other independent repositories and infrastructure entities to preserve all content freely and independently.

Preservation and safe-guarding of the larger corpus of scientific literature is essential to ensuring research is available for future generations. This is an active area of optimization and innovation.



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Article V. Researchers have the right to use an open license by default (e.g., CC-BY or CC0) so that they can present, post, and share all of their scholarly work. This requires all publishers to offer open licensing at time of submission with no caveats, exemptions, or added expense.

Researchers should always be able to assign an open license when publishing their work. This is important to ensure that basic academic functions like sharing and reusing their own work are possible and legal. It should never be illegal for a researcher to use their own figures in lectures or when interacting with colleagues in public spaces.

Article VI. Researchers have the right to deposit any version of their scholarly works into public or institutional repositories without legal or technical barriers. This right should apply at time of submission with no caveats, exemptions, or added expense.

Researchers should be allowed to submit a copy of their scholarly work in an institutional repository (IRs). IRs are often free of restrictive licenses and other barriers to core academic needs. This right should apply not just to “informal” versions of content such as drafts, but also to published PDFs and other formatted, finalized content.

Article VII. Researchers have the right to freely and openly access metrics and other metadata that are essential to interpreting the impact and context of scholarly works. This requires that all citations, usage, and other content interaction metrics with content are made immediately, freely, and openly available.

While sometimes overlooked, the connections between articles are a fundamental feature of the complete corpus of scholarly works. These citations and other metrics signal context, meaning, and reliability of the content itself. For that reason, key interactions such as citations and usage statistics must be openly available to support basic use and interpretation of scholarly content.

Article VIII. Contracts with publishers and other service providers should be fully transparent, free of any non-disclosure agreements, and posted in public so that they can be independently assessed by researchers and the general public.

Contracts that your institutions sign should be open for the community to review. This is to ensure transparency to help understand how business models and business decisions impact the broader enterprise of science.

Article IX. Researchers have the right to disseminate their work without financial barriers (article processing charges and other publishing fees) through established, and preferred dissemination channels for their community.



Increasing costs to publish can be a barrier to scientific research and the advancement of scholarship.. While many challenges remain to overcoming this challenge, reducing and/or eliminating fees must remain prioritized as our ultimate goal.

Article X. Researchers, institutions, and libraries have the right to prioritize relationships with academic publishers and other service providers that align with their mission and support basic researcher rights.

This article speaks for itself - it is essential to prioritize working with groups, organizations, and companies that share these values and respect these core rights and principles.