OpenCitations Mission Statement

Mission

As a key infrastructure component for global Open Science, the mission of OpenCitations is to harvest and openly publish accurate and comprehensive metadata describing the world's academic publications and the scholarly citations that link them, and to preserve ongoing access to this information by secure archiving. We provide this information, both in human-readable form and in interoperable machine-readable Linked Open Data formats, under open licenses at zero cost and without restriction for third-party analysis and re-use.

Vision

Our vision is that OpenCitations will provide an enduring open and fit-for-purpose source of comprehensive high-quality scholarly bibliographic and citation metadata. By enabling integration with complementary sources of open scholarly information, we will provide the basis for the collaborative development of an integrated global network of open knowledge services that meet the practical requirements of scholarly institutions and their members, in terms both of fundamental community-curated scholarly information and of interpretive academic analytical metrics, thereby facilitating free access to such crucially important information and indicators for scholars, academic administrators, research funders and other interested parties across the globe.

Ambition

Our ambition is that, within the next five years, OpenCitations will be routinely used by the global community as its primary source of comprehensive scholarly bibliographic and citation metadata, surpassing alternative sources in both coverage and accuracy. We thus aim to become, specifically for such information, what Wikipedia is presently for general knowledge, thereby democratising access to scholarly bibliographic and citation metadata for both academics and the public at large.

Description

OpenCitations is an independent not-for-profit data-centric infrastructure organisation based at the University of Bologna that is working to promote and facilitate open scholarship. By being academia-based, we are free from commercial influences, and by being small and nimble, we are able to publish new data, initiate new services and respond to new opportunities swiftly.

Context

Bibliographic citations – the conceptual directional links from a citing bibliographic entity to a cited bibliographic entity – are one of the most fundamental types of bibliographic information and are central to academia, knitting together independent works of scholarship into a global endeavour and providing authors with a mechanism for assigning credit to other researchers for their work.

The open availability of aggregated citation data is a crucial requirement for scholarship, for bibliometrics and scientometrics research, and for academic analytics, namely the creation of transparent and reproducible metrics of academic merit and research performance. However, during the second half of the 20th Century, academia failed to establish free access to its own aggregated citation data, leaving that provision to commercial organisations that charged subscriptions for access to their proprietary citation indexes. That situation is antithetical to the aims and vision of Open Science, as enunciated for example in the UNESCO Recommendations on Open Science, and it is the disruptive mission of OpenCitations to change that situation both radically and permanently by providing open access to bibliographic metadata of all types, thereby facilitating scholarship and enabling academic metrics to be as transparent and reproducible as possible.

Core values

For OpenCitations, 'open' is the crucial value and the final purpose. It is the distinctive mark and founding principle of OpenCitations that everything we provide – data, services and software – is open and free, and will always remain so. OpenCitations fully espouses the aims and vision of Open Science, as enunciated in the UNESCO Recommendations on Open Science, complies with the FAIR data principles proposed by Force11 that data should be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable, and promotes and practises the recommendations of the Initiative for Open Citations that citation data in particular should be Structured, Separable, and Open.

Aims

OpenCitations aims to harvest, preserve and publish open metadata describing the the world's scholarly publications and bibliographic citations linking them, with the greatest possible global coverage and subject scope, encompassing both traditional and non-traditional publications, and with a breadth and depth that surpasses existing sources of such metadata, while maintaining the highest standards of accuracy and accompanying all our records with rich provenance information.

Advocacy

OpenCitations engages actively in advocacy for open citations, and for open bibliographic metadata more generally, particularly in its role as a key founding member of the Initiative for Open Citations (I4OC) and of the Initiative for Open Abstracts (I4OA).

Stakeholders

The OpenCitations stakeholder community includes universities and research institutions, academic and national libraries, scholarly publishers, research and data infrastructures, national governments and international organisations, research funders and philanthropic organisations, companies working in the scholarly ecosystem, software and service developers, academic policy-makers, independent scholars and ordinary citizens.

Coverage

References contained within the majority of the world's scholarly publications are not presently available in any index, because the majority of publishers using Crossref DOIs fail to deposit the references for their publications along with other bibliographic metadata, because other publishers use DOIs from alternative DOI registration agencies or use no DOIs at all, and because the reference lists of many publications are presented by their publishers as plain text within PDF documents, without machine-readable markup.

For these reasons, OpenCitations, while already indexing citations based on those references that *are* open at Crossref, has a long way to go to achieve comprehensive coverage of the global academic literature. It is our long-term aim to extend our coverage to include references from publications using non-Crossref DOIs, references extracted from PDF documents, references provided by preprint repositories, and references relating to data citations and other non-textual research outputs.

Value proposition

Our stakeholders require access to aggregated scholarly bibliographic and citation data for a variety of purposes, including research, the development of data services, the determination of academic performance, and the evaluation of grant targeting, namely value for money in terms of research outputs per funding dollar. At present, scholarly institutions are paying large sums for access to such information. Academia is thus likely to value highly the alternative free availability of such information, provided it is sufficiently accurate and comprehensive.

It is the potential of OpenCitations for increasing its coverage over the next five years, our ability to provide safe long-term preservation of such comprehensive provenance-enriched high-quality bibliographic and citation data, and our ability to maintain enduring access to such open data and thus guarantee the transparency and reproducibility of analyses based upon it, in a way that commercial organizations cannot guarantee, that constitutes the real value and uniqueness of OpenCitations.

External financial support is required from the stakeholder community to support OpenCitations and enable it to expand its delivery of high-quality comprehensive open bibliographic and citation metadata, but the cost of this is a fraction of current subscription costs for access to proprietary sources of such information.

Wider benefits

Since OpenCitations data is published under a Creative Commons CC0 Public Domain Waiver, it may be freely reused for any purpose, including commercial purposes. Thus third parties may develop user-friendly interfaces using underlying information obtained from OpenCitations to meet the specific needs of end-users, and existing not-for-profit *and* commercial providers of citation indexes may themselves use OpenCitations data to expand their coverage and to enhance the value of their charged-for added-value services built over their data holdings.

Community engagement

We believe in the power of the scholarly community to change existing practice and, by reclaiming ownership of its own data, to create an open and inclusive future for science and research. As a key component of the Open Science infrastructure, we are working hard to ensure that OpenCitations plays a major role in achieving this change, and that our stakeholder community is fully engaged in that process.

Community engagement in OpenCitations has three aspects:

Collaborative partnerships with like-minded individuals, infrastructures, services and data providers, including involvement of third parties (for instance by university librarians) in the direct provision and curation of OpenCitations data.

Community crowdfunding to provide financial support for OpenCitations.

Community participation in the development and governance of OpenCitations.

As OpenCitations Director Silvio Peroni recently stated:

"**OpenCitations is a plural. Together, we are OpenCitations**."

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