

## *Understanding Core Elements of Open Access Mandates*

### **Introduction**

The ongoing drive toward transparency and accountability for publicly funded research has led to the increasing development and application of open access (OA) mandates research councils and institutions. The resulting OA policies and practices often employ language that establishes open access as a benefit to the public good and situates research results as belonging not only to researchers, but also to the public at large.

Beyond the development of localized policy needs and discussion of their impacts, there continues to be considerable work done across jurisdictions to define and establish a high-level understanding of what open access mandates should look like. Which elements should be included in national OA mandates? What requirements can be mandated, versus simply suggested or requested? What can be mandated at the funder-level but not at the institutional-level, and *vice versa*? Perhaps most importantly, how do we evaluate the effectiveness of an OA policy once it has been created and implemented? It is increasingly necessary for library and information professionals to examine and understand new and existing OA policies, to gauge their strengths and weaknesses, both internally and in relation to other mandates, to help researchers and institutions meet the accountability factor.

### **Approach**

This critical review a) analyzes existing literature, including policies, reports, and expert discussions, to identify the elements that consistently appear or are expected to appear in OA mandates and policies, and b) synthesizes these findings into a single, comprehensive framework for understanding funder-level OA policies. In doing so, this analysis outlines current criteria within OA mandates, and synthesizes key elements of several policies, publications, discussions, and reports that have collectively impacted the development of OA policies and mandates. These include those policies that Suber (2012) identifies as pioneering the adoption of open access mandates, through to more recent developments, such as the OA2020 Initiative (<http://oa2020.org>), all of which will define the criteria against which future policies will be developed and measured.

The author will identify and discuss the ten core elements that appear in OA mandates, and their importance in practice, providing clear definitions and a description of each. To qualify as “core”, each mandate element must appear in several of the expert sources or existing policies being consulted, within the past decade, and be supported by some rationale or consensus in the literature about its inclusion or importance for furthering open access. This paper will explore these elements in terms relevant to library and information practitioners and researchers.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

This review is particularly important to the library and information sciences (LIS) profession, since it is typically academic librarians who fill the leadership gap in their institutions by providing expertise on OA and scholarly communications issues, supporting the research mandate of faculty. In addition, the LIS discipline is heavily vested in the open access movement for both research and practice.

### **References**

Suber, P. (2012). Open access. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.  
<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/open-access>