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By freeing our journal from the ghetto of academic library subscriptions we will foster discussion and impact

by Blog Admin

March 13, 2012

A growing body of evidence suggests that open access articles are cited more frequently than their locked-up counterparts. [Matt Lingard](#) explains how 'gold' open access publishing offers one solution to the questions of guaranteeing access and ensuring impact.



The [Association for Learning Technology](#) (ALT) published the first Open Access issue of [Research in Learning Technology](#) (RLT) earlier this year having made the journal, including back issues, Open Access on 1st January. Why would a relatively small, scholarly membership organisation, receiving income from subscriptions to its peer-reviewed journal start giving it away?

Before I answer, you should know that the following words are not all my own; many of them have been unashamedly copied from the web, pasted here and re-phrased.

This is not an attempt to pass them off as my own, far from it. I'm simply taking advantage of the publishing model and copyright licence of the original editorial to RLT 20(1), '[Going for gold](#): Research in Learning Technology makes the switch to a fully Open Access publishing model' by Frances Bell, Seb Schmoller & Rhona Sharpe.

Open Access Publishing & Research Impact

ALT has had an interest in the Open Access movement for a number of years. Open Access publishing, the model adopted for RLT, delivers online articles to readers free of charge. Neither individuals nor libraries are charged a penny. The costs are picked up by either the authors, their employing/funding organizations, or by another sponsor, such as a scholarly society in the case of RLT.



Open Access publishing is known as the 'gold road' in contrast to the 'green road' of Open Access self-archiving, [discussed elsewhere on this blog](#). Open Access (both publication and self-archiving) is seen as a solution to the *research article-access/impact problem*. A key driver for ALT in making the switch to Open Access publishing is to enable wider readership by making RLT available to anyone, anywhere. By releasing RLT from the ghetto of UK universities and colleges with their purchased access to specified journals, ALT hopes to increase discussion around RLT articles & ultimately their impact. There is a growing body of evidence that Open Access articles are [cited more frequently](#) than those that are closed.

Copyright Compared

The final issue of Volume 19(3) of RLT, a special issue on [Theory in Learning Technology](#), was originally published under the traditional subscription model; it included the following copyright information:

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, transmitted or disseminated, in any form, or by any means, without prior written permission from Taylor & Francis, to whom all requests to reproduce copyright material should be directed, in writing.

This is pretty standard stuff. However, with the agreement of the publisher ALT's policy had been to upload back-issues of the journal to its own repository 18 months after publication. This was a step down the so-called 'green road' of Open Access self-archiving, albeit with a significant time-delay, and a management

cost to ALT.

In the event, 19(3) remained closed for a few weeks only. The new Open Access issues published by [Co-Action Publishing](#) and all of the previous issues in the Archive are made available under the terms of the 'Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported (CC BY 3.0) Licence'. What does this actually mean? Simply that anyone is free to copy, adapt, distribute & transmit the work as long as they attribute it to the original authors. ALT have opted for the most open of the [Creative Commons](#) licences, which includes permission for commercial re-use. It is the Creative Commons licence which has enabled me to write this blog post without the need to contact Co-Action, ALT or *Frances Bell et al* (For the record, I did, and must additionally thank them for their comments on my draft post!).

The Network Effect

ALT has been tweeting as [@A_L_T](#) for a couple of years and in the early days my fingers were behind many of those tweets. The tweets regularly included links to the journal and specific articles but I never felt wholly comfortable doing so, knowing that only a subset of our followers would be able to get beyond the abstracts.

Through Open Access publishing ALT will be better placed to take advantage of social networks: blogs and services such as Twitter & Google+, to develop interest and conversation around its articles, thereby promoting their use & impact. ALT hopes to observe this impact, initially through 'retweets' and '+1s', and subsequently through increased downloads of and citations to articles.

At ALT, we would love to hear your comments on our Open Access strategy for RLT. Will it make a difference to you? What else can we do?

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Note: The author is a both an elected Trustee of the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) and the Vice Chair of its Publications Committee.

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