

## **NATIONAL SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS FORUM 25: *Improving Access to Australia's Research – Policy Frameworks***

**Improved access to Australian research is essential to maximise economic, cultural, social and health benefits and to affirm the effectiveness of public investment in research.**

The 25<sup>th</sup> National Scholarly Communications Forum (NSCF) took place at the Australian Academy of Science in Canberra on 31 August 2017. Invited participants (35 in total) from Australia's Research Councils, libraries, Government Departments, Learned Academies, national institutions and universities discussed the need for an improved framework for the creation, distribution, access and impact of Australian research.

The event featured presentations from [David Sweeney](#) on scholarly communication issues in the UK; [Virginia Barbour](#) and [Jill Benn](#) on a F.A.I.R (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) model for Australia's research outputs; [Kylie Emery](#) on the Australian Research Council's open access policy; [Ellen Broad](#) on open infrastructures for making data interoperable and reusable; [Nicholas Gruen](#) on refashioning a new ecology of public and private endeavour in academic publishing; and [Tom Cochrane](#) on possible next steps for this collective agenda.

See [our website](#) for copies of select presentations. Key points that emerged from the NSCF are outlined below.

### **Public policy**

- Policy leadership is paramount to achieving long-term change to improving access to publicly funded Australian research. Coordinated Australian public policy in this area has lagged behind initiatives globally, [especially the UK](#) and Europe.
- Australian government and university approaches to scholarly communication frameworks are fragmented. Multinational publishers are increasingly providing scholarly analytical infrastructures and *de facto* research evaluation frameworks.
- 'A Fair Go for Australian Research?' – Australian libraries spend over \$200 million Australian per annum on multinational subscriptions to buy back publicly funded research. There is a strong case, perhaps through referral to the Productivity Commission, for a national examination of cost transparency in the use of public funds involved in scholarly publishing.
- The Productivity Commission's [Report on Intellectual Property Arrangements](#), Recommendation 16 on Open Access, provides a framework for relevant organisations to collectively discuss unlocking Australian research.

## Research and publishing practices

- Motivation and incentives are essential for scholarly communication change. This requires a cultural shift – optimising the scholarly communication system for researchers to overcome the reliance that journals and associated metrics have as ‘the symbolic currency of scholarly value’.
- The academic community is often confused by the various models of open access publishing and are increasingly distanced from the economics of digital scholarly publishing.
- In the UK, Gold Open Access article payment initiatives, following the [2012 Finch Report](#), have not seen any dramatic transformation of the existing subscription model, which has often led to double payments for articles, and has arguably enshrined higher prices for articles by multinational publishers.

### Scholarly communication is a big issue for early-and mid-career researchers (EMCRs)

*“For starters, they know that they must publish or perish. Some are starting to embrace social media, altmetrics and the impact agenda, but there is also some resistance and considerable uncertainty over how these changes will play out in job and grant applications.*

*EMCRs have mixed feelings about the current publishing model, with its voluntary work from researchers and high profit margins for publishers. Some EMCRs are vulnerable to predatory operators that make publishing seem easier but come at a high cost.*

*EMCRs are supportive of efforts to make science and research more accessible, such as open access. There is a strong sentiment, particularly amongst public sector scientists, that any publicly funded research must be made publicly available, but this is not always resourced or prioritised.”*

Dr Hamish Clarke, University of Wollongong

## Open means data as well as text

- Implementation of open data standards is a priority, particularly in relation to reusability/integration. The open sharing of non-sensitive research data:
  - Increases reproducibility of research
  - Promotes future research growth
  - Supports research integrity
  - Prevents duplication and loss of research
  - Provides opportunities for collaboration
  - Strengthens the economy and increases the opportunity for innovation
- The F.A.I.R. principles are sound principles for general data management and other research outputs.

## Workshop outcomes

- In order to address the challenges of the evolving global scholarly communication landscape there needs to be improved coordination across Government Departments, Research Councils, universities and advocacy groups, ensuring that such coordination is fully aligned with national principles and frameworks.
- In particular there is a need for:
  - Support for key OA infrastructure such as maximising the interoperability between repositories
  - An examination of the issues confronting researchers in scholarly communication issues, especially for early career researchers
  - Support for exploration of new models of research communication
  - Exploration of incentives for academics which support publishing mechanisms that maximise access to publicly funded Australian research
  - Linking of both individual and institutional research evaluation to the accessibility of outputs.
- A F.A.I.R. approach to Australian research outputs should be supported, one component of which is an Australian Scholarly Communication Licence initiative similar to the [UK Scholarly Communications Licence](#), currently in development. This is a means by which a university and its authors can more effectively ensure open access to research produced within the university. It is an implementation of the approach first introduced in the US by Harvard University in 2008.

---

## About the NSCF

The National Scholarly Communication Forum (NSCF) provides an opportunity to exchange information on changes and challenges to the context and structures of scholarly communication in Australia. Since 1993, the Forum has brought together Australia's Research Councils, libraries, Government Departments and agencies, Learned Academies, national cultural and archive institutions and universities to explore these issues.

[Read more >](#)