

'Open Access to Journal Content as a Case Study in Unlocking IP'

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The Internet has brought with it both means to disseminate and access content, and an enhanced expectation of open access. This has threatened entrenched for-profit activities, which have long prospered on closed, proprietary approaches to publishing, facilitated by anti-consumer provisions in copyright laws.

A litmus test of the extent to which openness is being achieved, despite the power of copyright-dependent corporations, is the accessibility of refereed papers published in journals. A specification of the requirements for 'Unlocking IP' is presented and applied, leading to the conclusion that a great deal of progress has been made. The copyright arrangements applied by many publishers enable authors to self-deposit PrePrints of their papers, in many cases including the final PrePrint of the completed paper, on their own web-sites, and in open repositories.

The theoretical success of the OA and repositories movement has not, or at least not yet, resulted in success in practice. This is because only a small proportion of papers are actually self-deposited, and a large proportion of refereed papers continue to be accessible only through highly-expensive subscriptions to journals and journal-collections controlled by for-profit publishers. The Unlocking of IP in refereed papers is still very much a work-in-progress. Moreover, the gains may be ceded back to the for-profit publishing industry, unless concerted efforts are made within academe.