Improving Open Access Discovery for Academic Library Users

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OCLC Research partnered with two Dutch library consortia—Universiteitsbibliotheken en Nationale Bibliotheek (UKB) and Samenwerkingsverband Hogeschoolbibliotheken (SHB)—to investigate ways that academic libraries can improve the discoverability of scholarly, peer-reviewed open access (OA) publications for their communities.

Dutch academic libraries have been instrumental in the progress toward full open access to publications for all educational institutions and research domains in the Netherlands. Many are investing heavily in making scholarly, peer-reviewed literature freely accessible. Making OA publications discoverable within users' workflows is equally important. Although OA content does not have a paywall, there might be a gap between being freely available and being discoverable to be accessed, evaluated, and used.

This report offers insights into library efforts and user behaviors at seven institutions in the Netherlands. The results can also serve as a starting point for academic libraries worldwide to discuss approaches for improving the discoverability of OA publications given local contexts and user needs.

OCLC Research is one of the world's leading centers devoted exclusively to the challenges facing libraries in a rapidly changing information technology environment. OCLC Research works with the community to collaboratively identify problems and opportunities, prototype and test solutions, and share findings through publications, presentations, and professional interactions.

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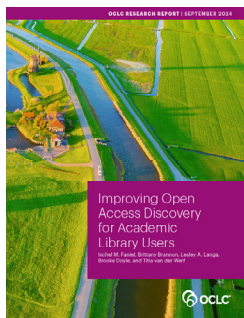
Noteworthy research outcomes

- OA publications were the most common type of open resource that users searched for. Users did not describe them as very easy to search for or access, which may be partly due to users' uneven knowledge about OA.

- Library staff's outreach and instruction primarily focused on increasing users' awareness of publishing OA. Users needed additional instruction on discovering, evaluating, and using these new types of publications.

- Users' most common response to encountering access barriers was to look for an OA version. In general, they preferred access options that were free, could be taken immediately, and did not require help from another person.

- Enhancing the discoverability of OA publications required reliable and consistent metadata beyond the basics, including persistent identifiers, licensing and versioning information, and peer-review status.

- Library staff called for more transparency and collaboration around metadata standards and system interoperability to make OA publications easily visible and keep them at the top of users' minds.

- Library staff wanted OA publications representative of the research published in the Netherlands. They primarily got this content from institutional repositories but wanted to add OA publications from small Dutch publishers to their library collections more easily.

KEY FINDINGS

Highlight what library staff were doing to facilitate the discovery of OA publications and users' experiences with scholarly, peer-reviewed publications and OA.

Show where library staff's efforts and user experiences were aligned and where improvements can be made.

Identify key OA stakeholders and suggest ways they can improve OA discovery.

Download this free report at oc.lc/oa-discovery.

Read this report to initiate and support conversations about the best approaches for improving the discoverability of OA publications in academic libraries given local context and users' needs.

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