



GET INTO... **Open Access Week**

24-30 October 2022

[Open Access Week](#) is already in its 15th year, serving to celebrate progress towards a model of scholarly communication that ensures no-one faces barriers to knowledge because of a lack of resources.

The week is an opportunity also to discuss links between Open Access and other key policy areas, as well as issues within the OA movement itself, and to build wider understanding among students, researchers, policy-makers and beyond.

This year's theme falls into the first category – [Open for Climate Justice](#) – with a major focus on how better and broader access to knowledge can help overcome the inequalities exposed – and deepened – by climate change.



Why should libraries get involved?

This is of course quite an easy one to answer, given how well-aligned the broad open access movement and libraries are.

Clearly the movement itself is not a single bloc, or one where there is complete consensus on every point. There are also important geographical differences in approach which can shape positioning. There are many key open questions, with ongoing discussions about what the answer may be.

However, the fundamental commitment to supporting access with minimal restrictions is one held in common. Indeed, librarians often have a leading role to play in driving forwards OA within their institutions, countries and regions, and providing the practical support to researchers necessary to help them make their work openly available.

The [IFLA Statement on Open Access \(2022\)](#), ten years on from the original, includes commitments to:

- *Raise awareness about the rights-based dimensions of OA and how it contributes to intellectual freedom and freedom of expression*
- *Advocate at an international level including rights retention in favour of researchers and their institutions, permissive licensing practices, and sustainable business models*
- *Build partnerships and coalitions with other organisations and utilise existing advocacy opportunities to advance these positions*
- *Collaborate to promote sustainable investment in the infrastructure underpinning OA*
- *Lead by example, and complete the transition of IFLA's publications to OA*

It therefore makes sense for libraries to bring their insights and perspectives, and to be visible in doing so. There is particular value in demonstrating the value of libraries in open access scholarly communications, through work to promote discoverability and curation, help scholars, and ensuring the preservation of OA materials.

This advocacy in particular can be helpful. There are supposed to be processes at the national level to follow up on the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, including around the development of plans and other reporting. It will be important to see that libraries are fully recognised there.

A second goal will be around showing the importance of the work of librarians to those involved in decisions about research and library

funding. A more sustainable approach ensures not only broader access to knowledge, but also provides an opportunity to invest in infrastructure like repositories and alternative publishing models.

To support this, IFLA updated its own [Open Access Statement](#) in July 2022. This is of course available to the field as a key resource and reference, even if only as a catalyst for further discussion.

How can libraries get involved?

Below are just a few ideas of things you could do to make the most of OA week both to promote OA itself, and the role of libraries within it.

- Organise events linked to OA week (and in particular to the theme of it) in order to campaign for OA and raise awareness of libraries' role
- Take a look at the resources on the [OA Week website](#), which includes graphics in many languages that you can use in communications
- Take a look at the materials on the [old site](#) as well, given that this has some valuable explainers about different questions.
- Check out the [background briefing about OA and climate justice](#), and use it as a basis for internal discussions in your institution, association, or group.
- Talk with others in your association about future action – can you work together to take action around Open Access?
- Talk with colleagues has provide practical stories how OA has been a game-changer for individual researchers, and society.
- Talk with colleagues in order to understand barriers to OA, and what libraries could do to overcome these, alone or working with other groups.
- Be innovative in your ideas – quirky or eye-catching ones can be particularly powerful as a means of changing perceptions, and of course having fun while doing so!
- [Record your actions](#) on the OA Week website!



More on Open Access Week

[Open Access Week](#) was first held in 2008, organised by the OA advocacy organisation [SPARC](#), just seven years after the [Budapest Open Access Declaration](#). At the time, it was a collaboration between them and groups of students.

Since then it has grown hugely, with activities taking place around the world, and an advisory committee supporting this work made up of NGOs, funders, researchers and beyond.

Its stated goal is to connect relevant actors, and to build on existing momentum. It should help to educate more people about OA and why it needs to be fought for, as well as maximising participation. Thanks to this it becomes easier to find the energy and resourcefulness to overcome blockages and challenges to OA.

The week itself is very much a platform for activities which fit with local priorities and needs, rather than having a strict programme and guidelines imposed on participants.


This has allowed for a very wide range of active participation, including from universities, colleges, research institutions, funding agencies, libraries, think tanks and beyond.

What happens in Open Access Week?

As highlighted above, the range of activities undertaken during Open Access week is diverse. Looking back at those that took place in 2021, it's possible to get an idea of what initiatives are being taken.

One obvious category is workshops, webinars or conferences. These offer opportunities to explore issues, including of course the key theme of this year's week – Open for Climate Justice – from a particular local or institutional perspective.

This is an interesting opportunity to bring together discussions around OA with those around climate action, and how we can use knowledge not only to enable research, but also support mobilisation.



These activities can of course be valuable in themselves as an opportunity to bring key thinkers together, but are also very important as a means of raising awareness in a wider community. As mentioned, this is indeed a goal of the Week, recognising that there remains a lot of misunderstanding of OA and what it means.

Many institutions use OA week as a training opportunity, organising sessions in different formats to build understanding, ranging from the basics to the most recent developments and unsolved questions. These can be longer events, or much more bitesize pieces of teaching.

Furthermore, the Week has also provides an opportunity for launching new initiatives, such as funds or policies. With so much else going on at the same time, this can offer a welcome buzz for highlighting concrete steps to promote openness.

There are of course a wide range of activities outside of this as well, such as quizzes and games, placing posters in libraries, or using new backgrounds for Zoom meetings.

Holding congresses and debates, online and in person, exploration of related issues, briefings and trainings, quizzes and games, highlighting existing support and resources, create zoom backgrounds, virtual escape room, critiquing open, a question a day for a week etc.

