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Part of MIT Press’s *Essential Knowledge* series, Peter Suber’s *Open Access* provides an overview of a topic of growing interest to funders and legislators, as well as librarians and authors. Acknowledging that this book is built in part on earlier writings, Suber strikes a hopeful and encouraging note, and in general achieves his goal of a clear, concise description of “the basics” for busy people.

Suber begins by defining open access literature as that which is “digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions” and later defines related terms such as Green OA (material deposited to repositories) and Gold OA (open access journals). Gratis OA (free to read but not free of copyright constraints) and Libre OA (free to read and free of at least some permission barriers). Suber demonstrates how these “flavors” of open access are “complementary and synergistic” in shifting attitudes toward OA as the default for research dissemination.

**Open Access** points out that many conventional publishers are already experimenting with open access. Indeed, Suber describes the “blanket permission” for green OA that most conventional publishers agree to as one of the “best-kept secrets of scholarly publishing” (54-55). There is a difficult balancing act to strike with publishers, though, because their gate-keeping role related to peer review has been extended into access barriers to knowledge. Although Suber argues for OA as a benefit and not an attempt to “harm” conventional publishers, the problems he points out that OA can solve are primarily economically based, related to pricing and inflation, Big Deals, and library budgets. The barriers to access that OA fights were created and are maintained largely in order to protect publisher revenue.

A touchstone for Suber’s book is the power of authors in effecting open access — they control the volume and growth of OA because they decide where to publish their work and what to do with their copyrights. Suber champions the academic freedom of authors to choose where they publish, knowing that in most cases they can still reap the benefits of some sort of open access to their research. Authors also govern the scope of OA by determining what types of materials can be made OA, whether journal articles, ETDs, monographs, or research data. Open access is compatible with current copyright law and independent of peer review. Suber makes the point eloquently that all key players involved in vetting research — authors, editors, and peer reviewers — can consent to OA without losing any revenue. Not only that, Suber makes the case that distributing research freely is a public gift with both direct and indirect benefits to all.

Although it is treated at each necessary point on the way, copyright is also the subject of a short chapter. In addition to demonstrating the legality of open access, this chapter points out that existing mandates strengthen the author’s bargaining position with publishers who might want wholesale transfer of copyrights as a condition of publication. One issue not overtly explained is how libre OA, in removing barriers to use such as making multiple copies or redistributing, cannot also alleviate authors’ concerns about unscrupulous copyright infringement. Another issue not fully addressed is how OA may be perceived by promotion and tenure review committees, especially in light of how this process privileges traditional publishing for many tenured faculty members.

Other chapters provide detail on funding models for OA, describe OA policies for funders and institutions, and allay publishers’ fears that OA as a movement will result in subscription cancellations. Suber closes with a short helpful chapter letting interested authors know how they can make their work OA. A short glossary, extensive notes, a list of additional resources, and a comprehensive index round out the volume. Portions of *Open Access* are OA now, and the entire work will become freely available in June 2013, one year after publication.

*Open Access* joins C. Crawford’s ALA Special Report *Open Access: What You Need to Know Now* (2011) in introducing open access publishing, but whereas Crawford’s book is oriented primarily toward librarians, Suber’s audience is wider, and Suber offers more extensive resources for further reading. Neither of these books approaches the depth of John Willinsky’s *The Access Principle* (2006), or Neil Jacobs’ *Open Access: Key Strategic, Technical, and Economic Aspects* (2006), but then again, they aren’t designed to do so. If the readers of Suber’s book will take action on providing access to knowledge as a “public good,” we can indeed complete the “peaceful revolution” that Suber envisions.

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