

Open Access, publishers and PhD theses.

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In my [first ever post](#) for this blog, I briefly touched on concerns that students and supervisors have regarding the online availability of the thesis, and whether that would impact negatively on their chances of securing a publishing deal. It is a common fear that if your research thesis is publicly available on an internet platform such as an institutional repository then publishers won't touch it with a bargepole and is one that motivates many requests for embargoes.

However, a quick survey of some of the most prominent monograph publishers shows that this is not actually the case. Uploading your thesis to an institutional repository doesn't constitute prior publication and does not automatically exclude it from being published in book form. Many publishers recognise that a book based on a thesis would undergo extensive revision, so the original thesis being available is not an issue. [Cambridge University Press](#), for example states 'A monograph based on a thesis would only be considered for publication after extensive revision. Therefore, an embargo on the original thesis is not generally an essential requirement.' [Palgrave Macmillan](#) and [Edinburgh, Liverpool and Manchester University Presses](#) similarly accepts proposals based on dissertations, even when they have been made available in online repositories, as to be considered ready for publication, those dissertations must have been significantly revised.

It is always advisable to contact each publisher directly to discuss electronic thesis availability and embargo length. Many publishers, such as Routledge, have no blanket policy but will look at each case on an individual basis. The [Office of Scholarly Communication](#) at Cambridge University and [Sheffield University Library](#) have useful pages on open access, publisher policies and PhD theses.

If you still have concerns about your work being made available on an institutional repository, you have the option to select a [Creative Commons](#) licence which clarifies the uses that others may make of your work. There are six core licences of varying degrees of permission. The most commonly applied licence for a thesis is the **Creative Commons-Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivative Works** licence, but you can choose another if you prefer. Two useful resources on choosing a license are available at <https://creativecommons.org/choose/> and <http://creativecommons.org.au/content/licensing-flowchart.pdf>

In a wider context, there are many benefits to making your research thesis fully and freely available. By making your work available in full immediately, it increases the visibility and exposure of your work, and can help you build your research profile. This can lead to higher citation counts, increased potential for international and interdisciplinary collaboration and funding and attention from publishers. Studies indicate that your research is more likely to be read and cited if it is available OA; Springer Nature, in their recent white paper [The OA effect: How does open access affect the usage of scholarly books?](#), note that 'Our open access books and chapters on average receive seven times more downloads, 50% more citations, and ten times more online mentions compared to non-open access books'. Hosting your thesis on a repository such as ORCA enables it to have a stable URL that you can use to promote and share your work and allows you to track citations and usage statistics, and allows long term preservation of your work – no matter how many times you move jobs or location, you will be able to find your PhD thesis! It also ensures you comply with the OA requirements of research funding bodies, and means you are better protected against any plagiarism of your research as internet-based software can be used to detect similarities.

