

October 10th: Worldwide Open Access Day

On October 10th we held the first celebration of the International Day of Open Access to Scientific Knowledge. The enterprise was led by the Public Library of Science (PLoS), the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resource Coalition (SPARC) and by the Students for Free Culture (SFC).

The organizers' intention was to provide a moment of reflection for the higher education and scientific research community to consider the opportunities and benefits of wide and free access to scholarly information. After all, it is known that the access to scientific knowledge faces several barriers, especially economic ones, due to the high costs of scientific journal subscriptions. The Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities movement arose in the past decade aiming precisely to remove such barriers.

According to Peter Suber, "Open-access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. What makes it possible is the internet and the consent of the author or copyright-holder. OA is entirely compatible with peer review, and all the major OA initiatives for scientific and scholarly literature insist on its importance. Just as authors of journal articles donate their labor, so do most journal editors and referees participating in peer review" (1).

A common mistake regarding open access is dissociating it from the peer review process, whose importance drives all the open-access initiatives to the academic and scientific literatures.

The open access movement is based on two main strategies: the green and the golden roads. In the former, universities and research institutions are encouraged to build their own repositories and to establish information policies that stimulate researchers to deposit copies of their peer-reviewed published works. In the golden road, the purpose is to support the creation and/or conversion of scientific journals into open access journals.

In Brazil, the Brazilian Institute of Information on Science and Technology (IBICT) has been developing several actions based on both aforementioned strategies. In this manner, the institute has been prospecting, identifying, absorbing, customizing and distributing technologies that support the creation of repositories and scientific electronic journals. At the moment, more than 530 national scientific journals employ one of these technologies, the Electronic System for Journal Publishing, a customized version of Open Journal System. IBICT also developed and established the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD), which nowadays integrates 78 universities and comprises more than 75,000 electronic theses and dissertations. Additionally, all the information is freely accessible.

Furthermore, IBICT has been raising the consciousness of many segments of the higher education community in relation to the importance of open access to scientific knowledge. At the beginning of the past year, IBICT, with the aid of Federal Deputy Rodrigo Rollemberg, introduced a bill (Projeto de Lei n. 1120/2007) that stimulates the green road and the discussion about a national policy for free access to scientific knowledge.

For further information about this subject, access the blog: <http://kuramoto.wordpress.com>.

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Reference

1. Suber, P. Open access overview. Richmond: Earlham College; 2004 [cited 2008 Oct 15]. Available from: <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm>.