

Challenges and Opportunities in Open Research: Webinar Report

MODERATOR:

Ginny Herbert
Frontiers

SPEAKERS:

Guy Jones
Chief Editor of Scientific Data
Springer Nature Group

Rebecca Grant
Head of Data and Software
Publishing
F1000

Tiago Barros
Managing Director
Faculty Opinions

Tom Ciavarella

Relationship Management,
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Frontiers

Tracey DePellegrin

Executive Editor
GENETICS & G3

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Jessica McEwan
Managing Editor
Entomological Society of America

In January 2023, moderator Ginny Herbert of Frontiers gathered a panel of industry experts for a Q&A about open research. She kicked off the webinar with a deceptively easy question—What is open research?

Chief Editor of Scientific Data at Springer Nature Group, Guy Jones, took on the task of answering. Open research, he says, has a “reasonable amount of fluidity and diversity in the definition ... depending on your domain or your area.” Jones went on to explain the two primary definitions of open research. The *unified definition*, Jones says, broadly relates to “maximizing the availability, accessibility, visibilities, or transparency of scientific endeavors in general, without being too prescribed on which particular activities,” with the wider goal of maximizing the value of research to those who need it, those who fund it, and humanity in general.

Jones continued by explaining the *collective definition* with “open research/open science as being the sum of its constituent parts. ... Open access, the removal traditionally of paywalls and barriers; open data, which is more about open sharing; open source or open code, which is a little bit of both. Then you’ve got open protocols and open peer review, which are more about transparency on the administrative side.”

Rebecca Grant, Head of Data and Software Publishing at F1000, agreed saying, “There is a kind of conflation or absorption of the concept of open science into open access. So, often ... if you’re working for a bigger publisher, ... you hear people talk about open research quite a bit. But, actually, they do just mean open access and not the other more slightly obscure parts of it.”

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Next, Ginny Herbert asked the panel, “What do you make of the perceived friction between the open research movement and commercial sustainability?”

Tiago Barros, Managing Director, Faculty Opinions, laughed at the idea that there are still organizations with business models “with foundations that are anti-open science” and expressed that it is time for evolution toward “new business models that will be aligned with open science ... rather than permanently trying to fight something that is of benefit to the community. And trying to get too attached to a business model that may no longer be tenable as research and science evolves.” Barros offered an example of how removing paywalls naturally increases the number of people viewing content, and a larger audience of people interested and interacting with information increases business opportunities.

Tom Ciavarella, Relationship Management, Business Development, and Content Strategy at Frontiers, agreed saying, “No one is really against Open. If there’s friction anywhere, it’s open fast versus open slow. It’s, ‘I have a business model that’s built on subscriptions or built on something else, and I know the world is going open, I just don’t want it to go there yet.’” He continued by asserting “Wiley would not have spent \$300 million to buy Hindawi if they didn’t think there was something sustainable about the open infrastructure.”

Tracey DePellegrin, Executive Editor, GENETICS & G3, spoke up saying “I always want to caution people about using loaded words like anti-open or even commercial versus non. I think we set up these false dichotomies, we take part in them, we see them, and we sometimes have to check our own biases and check ourselves because nothing is free. All of us could probably agree on that.” She went on to describe society members who may have negative feelings about commercial/capitalistic activities, but who are affiliated with major educational institutions charging huge amounts of tuition and how we all pay for a good or service and “it would be helpful for everybody to find the commonalities and not pit one against another.”

It was informative to hear the perspectives of people actively working to further open research in all its forms. The panelists made some interesting points, which can be accessed from the Council of Science Editors past webinars page here: <https://www.councilscienceeditors.org/past-webinars>

For a commentary on the topics discussed in this webinar, please see the Webinar Commentary article by Johanna Hoyos at <https://doi.org/10.36591/SE-D-4602-02>.