Ubiquitous Open Access: Changing culture by integrating OA into user workflows

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Nearly half of recently-published literature is Open Access (OA), and this percentage continues to grow. The real-world impact of OA, however, has until recently been limited by lack of integration into the workflows of actual users.

In the last year, this has begun to change, with a new generation of OA tools emerging that facilitate integration of OA content directly into user workflows. These tools make OA more relevant and impactful, potentially ushering in a new era of Ubiquitous Open Access (UOA).

We will discuss these tools and their potential to disrupt existing scholarly communication models, beginning with oaDOI. This system, which indexes legal OA copies of scholarly articles, launched in October 2016 and is now in use at over 700 academic libraries, serving half a million requests daily.

We will then turn to systems that have integrated oaDOI into user workflows, focusing on two case studies: Unpaywall and Web of Science. The Unpaywall browser extension automatically presents users with a link to legal OA copies when they view paywalled articles. Launched in March 2017, it now has 100k active users and has been extensively covered in venues like TechCrunch and Nature. Web of Science is integrating oaDOI into search results, so that users will be able to read OA copies of articles when their library does not subscribe. By connecting user with OA exactly when they need it, both Unpaywall and Web of Science act as "force multipliers" for Open Access, moving from "available Open Access" to Ubiquitous Open Access.

Finally, we'll discuss the wider world of UOA tools including browser plugins like Kopernia/CanaryHaz and the Open Access Button, search portals like 1science oaFinder, and recommendation/alerting services like Sparrho. We'll conclude with an extended audience discussion.