

Position statement: scientific publications, novelty and institutional repository policy

Posicionamento: publicação científica e ineditismo frente à política de repositórios institucionais

Posicionamiento: publicación científica y calidad de inédito ante la política de repositorios institucionales

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The exercise of good editorial practices imposes on science publishers the ethical responsibility of publishing unpublished texts, ensuring originality and academic integrity. Novelty refers to submitted works that have yet to be published and has promoted the adoption of criteria to curb redundant publication, a practice that undermines the credibility of science.

However, the application of novelty criterion by editorial teams has led to the rejection of articles derived from theses and dissertations made available in institutional repositories, characterizing them as self-plagiarism. This problem has been discussed in postgraduate programs and postgraduate coordinator forums without questioning similarity criteria

adopted by journals. The concrete repercussions of this stance demand urgent reflection and positioning.

Repositories were created to make the intellectual output of a given institution available to the institution itself and to society as a whole. Their purpose is to record, preserve and promote the wider dissemination of this output through various types of open access documents¹. Adding barriers to publishing the full content of theses and dissertations interferes in an incoherent and retrograde manner in information and institutional memory policies designed to disseminate scientific knowledge and goes against the principles and concrete actions that defend knowledge as a public good that should be made available to society.

Abrasco's Public Health Publishers' Forum thus understands that rejecting articles on the basis of textual similarities between works and theses and dissertations made available in institutional repositories weakens open access policy and hampers the dissemination of research, which is largely publicly funded and can contribute to tackling social, economic and cultural problems – especially in periphery countries.

Given the social significance of the information and open access policies adopted by institutional repositories, we might ask: what do students, teachers, researchers, information professionals, managers and society in general gain from this practice?

The rejection of articles derived from theses and dissertations made available in repositories runs counter to the current dynamics of science communication, which encourages the publication of preprints (preliminary versions of articles that have not been peer-reviewed), and to structuring theses and dissertations in article format.

This restrictive stance drives the search for non-peer-reviewed accelerated publishing journals, many of which are predatory and come with high costs for both authors and institutions. Furthermore, the practice of embargoing a thesis or dissertation until an article is published disregards the differing nature and forms of circulation of these types of documents: the production of an article does not impede the circulation of a dissertation, nor does it diminish its relevance, or vice versa. It is possible for a diversity of documents and forms of descriptive and thematic representation of scientific knowledge to coexist².

As science publishers, our commitment to transparency and unrestricted public access to the knowledge contained in theses and dissertations deposited in institutional repositories should prompt us to adopt alternative measures. Journals can and should:

- Encourage authors to declare the thesis or dissertation that gave rise to the article, ensuring transparency and facilitating access to the full context of the research.
- Adopt novelty criteria, recognizing that the fact that the full-text version of a thesis or dissertation is available in a repository does not nullify the academic value of a derivative article.



- Align with open science and open access practices, rejecting measures that weaken repositories or favor exclusionary publishing models, such as predatory journals.

In the light of these arguments, Abrasco's Public Health Publishers' Forum opposes editorial practices that pose barriers to depositing academic output in institutional repositories, since they undermine the democratization of knowledge, favor predatory journals and contradict the principles of open science. We argue that – far from being an obstacle – free access to theses and dissertations is an essential element of best practices in research, teaching and for promoting the social impact of science, which are the foundations of science communication.

Finally, in line with these recommendations, the member journals of Abrasco's Public Health Publishers' Forum undertake to incorporate the above measures into their editorial policies and practices.

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Data Availability

Not applicable.

Authors' contribution

All authors actively participated in all stages of preparing the manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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