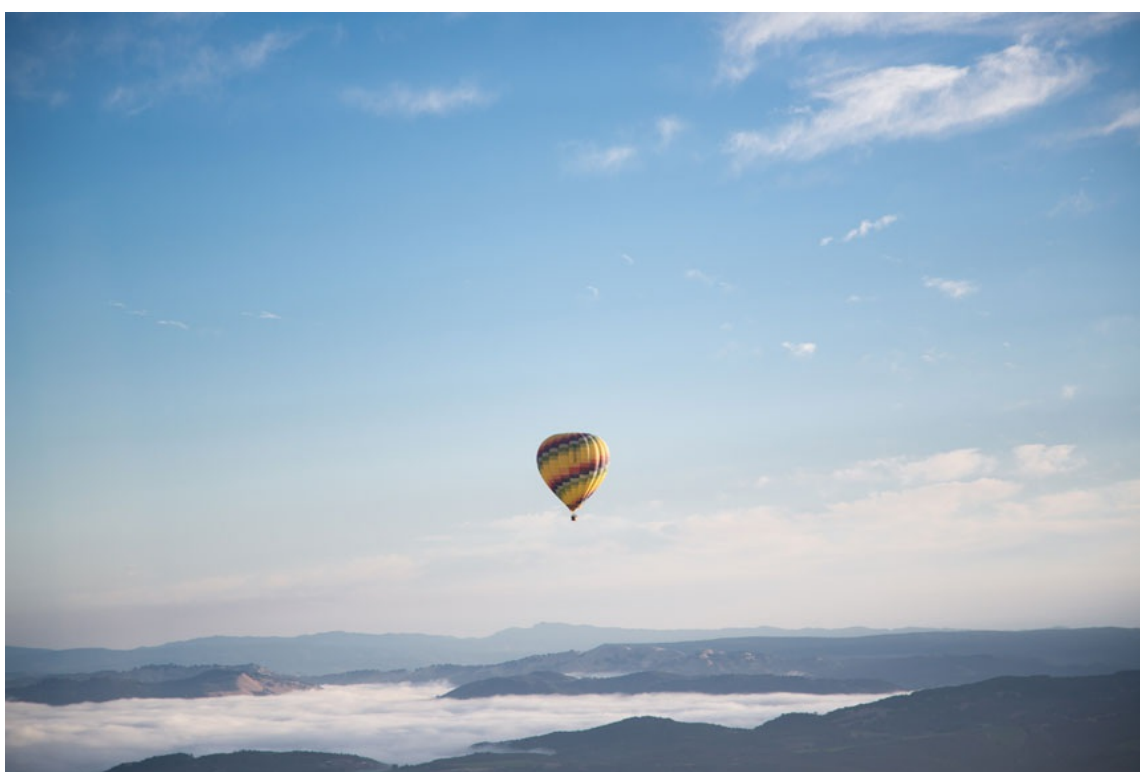# Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications

by Caroline Winter | 3 October 2017 | English, Observations, Observations and Responses | 0 comments

Lisez-le en français

This observation was written by Sarah Milligan.

At a glance

Title	Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications
Creators	Government of Canada via funding councils: CIHR, NSERC & SSHRC
Publication date	2015-02-27
Keywords	Canadian government; funding agencies; open access; publishing

In 2015, the Government of Canada published the "Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications" which lays out its official approach and attitude toward research sharing and dissemination, funneled through the Tri-Agency (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research [CIHR], the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada [NSERC], and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research

Council [SSHRC]). The document formalizes the Government's position on open access:

> "The Agencies strongly support open access to research results which promotes the principle of knowledge sharing and mobilization—an essential objective of academia" (n.p.).

The stated objective is to "improve access to the results of Agency-funded research, and to increase the dissemination and exchange of research results" (n.p.). The policy requires grant recipients to make sure that any funded research is freely accessible, allowing for a 12-month embargo period if necessary. There is the additional requirement for recipients of CIHR funding to deposit bioinformatics, atomic, and molecular coordinate data into appropriate public databases, and to retain original data sets even beyond the end of the grant period, for a minimum of five years. The policy is flexible enough to accommodate different publication forms: researchers may make their output accessible via Green OA (repositories), Gold OA (journals), or a combination thereof. Beyond the formal requirements of the policy, there is also a strong encouragement for all researchers, funded or not, to follow such a publication policy.

Members of the Canadian research community provided feedback on the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy between October and December 2013 while the policy was still in draft form. NSERC and SSHRC received "201 submissions from various individuals and groups from the research community, institutional libraries, scholarly associations, non-governmental organizations, publishers, and journals" (n.p.). (Summary of the responses here; collection of publically available responses here.) Once the policy was released, the response was largely positive. In the *University Affairs* article, "What does the new tri-agency open access policy mean for researchers?", Michael Donaldson, Jenny Ryan, and Tanya Samman celebrate the policy as allowing the

> "public, whose tax-dollars help to fund tri-agency research, [to have] unprecedented access to scholarly publications" (n.p.).

Donaldson, Ryan, and Samman also write that the policy provides "more choice for authors than ever before" (n.p.) since it does not dictate the route to achieve OA and the number of OA journals continues to grow.

Many have applauded the Government's stance that publically funded research should be publically available. In a media release following the policy's announcement, Antonia Maioni, then president of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, said: "We were pleased to participate in the consultation for this policy and will track closely its implementation and effects on behalf of our members, to identify the opportunities and challenges for scholarly journals in the humanities and social sciences" (n.p.).**The Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL)** pledged **to "ensure that every researcher receiving Tri-Agency funding has access to an open repository" (n.p.)** through their "adoptive repository" (*ibid.*) concept, a proposal where eight CARL member libraries provide repository services to external researchers. CARL has also developed resources to help researchers learn about open access and comply with the new policy. The University of Victoria Libraries and Simon Fraser University Library did the same, as did many other universities across Canada (see University of Toronto Libraries, Dalhousie University Libraries, University of Waterloo Libraries, and Université de Québec à Montréal Libraries.

The Tri-Agency Open Access Policy sits within a much broader movement towards open access and open scholarship as a whole. Canada was not the first country to require open access for its publically funded research. Indeed, the 2015 policy brought Canada in line with public funders across the world who had already established their own policies, including the U.S. Federal Government (2013), the European Research Council (2012), and the Research Councils of the UK (2013), among many others.

Some of these policies have requirements similar to the Tri-Agency Policy—that is, they do not specify between green or gold access and they allow 12 months to comply to the policy. Other policies insist upon either the green route or gold route and/or require either immediate open access, or else within 6 months to allow for publisher embargo periods.

In his article "Optimizing Open Access Policy," Stevan Harnad, one of the most vocal advocates for open access, argues that open access policies from both institutions and funders should mandate immediate deposit in an institutional repository, with access to that publication being granted as soon as possible. Harnad argues that this mandate model should be "adopted by funders and institutions worldwide [and] universal OA will soon follow" (n.p.). Policies implemented by private funders—including the Wellcome Trust, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Ford Foundation—often tend to have much more strident mandates such as mandatory repository deposit, immediate access, and creative commons licensing of output. Often, institutions will also take stronger stances than government funders, partly because enforcing policies is much easier at an institutional level. For instance, the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences Open Access Policy—implemented by faculty vote in 2008, making it the earliest institutional policy of its kind in the United States—gives the university "a standing nonexclusive right . . . to make their future work OA through the institutional repository" (Suber, 80).

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