

OPEN SCIENCE: A VIEW FROM ABROAD FROM EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL (ERC) GRANTEES

Za ECHO se ptala
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OTEVŘENÁ VĚDA: POHLED ZE ZAHRANIČÍ OČIMA DRŽITELŮ GRANTŮ EVROPSKÉ RADY PRO VÝZKUM (ERC)

The article offers an international perspective on open access through an email interview with three researchers who hold prestigious European Research Council (ERC) grants. The experienced scholars answered questions about their practical experience with open access and about the importance of publishing in subscription or hybrid journals compared to open access venues in the context of their home countries. Their replies are published with minimal editorial adjustments made for readability.

Daniel Miller, Professor of Anthropology at the Department of Anthropology at University College London and Principal Investigator for two ERC Advanced Grants

Daniel Miller, profesor antropologie na Katedře antropologie na University College London a hlavní řešitel dvou ERC Advanced Grantů

Článek přináší mezinárodní perspektivu na otevřený přístup prostřednictvím e-mailového rozhovoru se třemi vědci, kteří jsou držiteli prestižních grantů Evropské výzkumné rady (ERC). Zkušenosti výzkumníci odpovídali na otázky týkající se jejich praktických zkušeností s otevřeným přístupem a významu publikování v předplatitelských či hybridních časopisech v porovnání s publikováním v časopisech s otevřeným přístupem v kontextu jejich domovských zemí. Odpovědi jsou zveřejněny v původním znění, s minimálními redakčními úpravami provedenými z důvodu přehlednosti.

ECHO: WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH OPEN SCIENCE PRACTICES?

Miller: I have greatly benefited from the move to Open Access. A typical anthropology monograph sold around 600 copies in the past. My two-book series (twenty volumes in total) published with University College London Press, as Open Access, which mostly consist of ethnographic monographs, have now passed 2.25 million downloads. If universities combine to cover the costs of publishing books and journals, they would save a huge amount of money that currently goes to commercial publishers. After some negotiation we were also able to persuade the publisher Sage to publish *The Journal of Material Culture*, a journal that I founded, to also provide free to individuals.

ECHO: WHERE DO YOU SEE THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES THAT OPEN SCIENCE OFFERS TO SCIENTISTS?

Miller: As an anthropologist I want my work to be available to people in the countries where we do our studies, which are often quite low income. So, there is an ethical concern that they should not have to pay to see the results of our work. Books published by academic presses can now cost a very large amount, so it is even more important to have them available for free. Also, the universities in those countries cannot afford expensive journals run by commercial press.

ECHO: RESEARCHERS SOMETIMES PERCEIVE GREATER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES WHEN PUBLISHING IN PRESTIGIOUS SUBSCRIPTION-BASED OR HYBRID JOURNALS. HOW IMPORTANT IS PUBLISHING IN SUCH JOURNALS FOR A SCIENTIST'S CAREER IN YOUR COUNTRY?

Kristien Hens, Research Professor at the Department of Philosophy at University of Antwerp and Principal Investigator of the ERC Starting Grant

Kristien Hens, profesorka na Katedře filozofie Univerzity v Antverpách a hlavní řešitelka ERC Starting Grantu

ECHO: WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH OPEN SCIENCE PRACTICES?

Hens: I have published two monographs with Open Book Publishers. Towards an Ethics of Autism (2021) and *Chance Encounters. A Bioethics for a Damaged Planet* (2022). Together with my team, I also published a coursebook (*Bioethics: A Coursebook*) with them. I also was an editor of an Open Access Volume with Bloomsbury (*Advances in Experimental Philosophy of Medicine*, 2024).

I have very good experiences with Open Access Publishing. The books are peer reviewed just like with traditional academic presses, the editing and proofs were done very professionally. For the edited volume and for the monographs, it was an obligation that was part of my ERC Starting Grant to publish Open Access, but I also think it is a duty to publish academic output open access, in whatever form is possible, to help spread research that was paid by tax payers' money. For the Coursebook, it was very important to us that this was Openly available because we wanted to share our teaching materials with teachers and students who may not have access to paid teaching materials.

ECHO: WHERE DO YOU SEE THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES THAT OPEN SCIENCE OFFERS TO SCIENTISTS?

Hens: For me, the greatest opportunity is exactly that: being able to share your research and teaching with more researchers, for free around the world, rather than burying it in a 200 Dollar hardcover book. I guess with the advent of AI one could say that Open Access materials provide 'free' data for these models and their companies, which I guess could be considered a drawback. On the other hand, AI fuelled research will possibly be biased towards material and data that is openly available, so I guess one could argue that it is good that most research is openly available.

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Hens: I do think in some disciplines, like mine (philosophy), having published (closed access or not) with an academic press such as Oxford or Cambridge University Presses is still considered the *nec plus ultra* of academic achievement, and scholarly led initiatives such as Open Book Publishers are not well known or misunderstood. Same goes for Open access repositories such as those of the European Union (Open Research Europe) where papers become immediately available and are then peer reviewed just like in a normal journal. This is a mindset that has to change.

Miller: It is important that the Open Access books and journals that we publish in have the exact same processes of selection and rejection as that of commercial publishers. There is no difference in the quality. I also do not see any difference in the number of citations, as our Open Access work have received thousands of citations. In some countries, like the US, it seems the prestige of the publisher is an important factor, but in the UK, we judge the publication itself, not the publisher, so it would make no difference to a person's career.

Ioana Feodorov, Senior Researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest and Principal Investigator of the ERC Advanced Grant

Ioana Feodorov, seniorní výzkumná pracovnice v Ústavu pro jihovýchodoevropská studia Rumunské akademie věd v Bukurešti a hlavní řešitelka ERC Advanced Grantu

ECHO: WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH OPEN SCIENCE PRACTICES?

Feodorov: Since July 1, 2021, I have led the TYPARABIC project, which has received an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council (ERC) as part of the Horizon 2020 program: AdG Contract no. 883219-2019, Project title: TYPARABIC. *Early Arabic Printing for the Arab Christians. Cultural Transfers between Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Near-East in the 18th century.* The project will be completed on June 30, 2026. An international team of historians, philologists, art historians, and theologians conducts the projected research, based on specific tasks attributed to each specialized job. The team has varied in size from 9 to 18 and then to 14 members. From the beginning, when the proposal was submitted to the ERC (2019 Call), we have budgeted a large amount for Open Access publishing.

The TYPARABIC project's outcomes are published in Open Access in a De Gruyter (Berlin/Boston) series titled *Early Arabic Printing in the East (EAPE)*. I am the editor of this series [1]. Ten volumes will be published before the project's completion. *EAPE* has reached volume 6, released earlier this year. Volumes 7 through 10 are in various stages of preparation. Two of the six published volumes are collective works resulting from the proceedings of three conferences held by the TYPARABIC team in 2022, 2023, and 2024. A third volume of collected works will be released in Open Access in a couple of months (*EAPE-7*).

I have published Volume 1 of the *EAPE* series, as well as two articles in *Scrinium*, a Brill journal [2], with fees covered from the ERC grant. I also published one article in *MELA NOTES* [3] and other texts in various Open Access publications. Other team members have published

monographs in the *EAPE* series (Mihai Țipău, Orlin Sabev, and Habib Ibrahim), articles in Open Science academic journals and chapters in Open Access volumes of collective works or conference proceedings.

On March 17 and 18, 2026, the TYPARABIC team will hold its 5th and final conference in Bucharest. We have agreed to collect the conference papers and submit them for publication in Open Research Europe [4].

ECHO: WHERE DO YOU SEE THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES THAT OPEN SCIENCE OFFERS TO SCIENTISTS?

Feodorov: Open Science has offered the TYPARABIC team important benefits. The team's research outcomes are available to the largest audience possible, allowing for maximum visibility of our efforts to fulfil the tasks outlined in the project contract.

Open Access has enabled the team to receive feedback from the academic community through reviews in specialized journals and direct contact with interested readers. Information circulates freely among specialists and students of the history of printing and Arabic-type books. This helps us confirm our survey results and obtain new data that is helpful to our work.

As we are studying a corpus of rare Arabic-type books printed in the 18th century in the Romanian Principalities, Istanbul, and Ottoman Syria, it is essential to communicate with library staff and researchers who have access to catalogs and collections in the Middle East that are difficult to access from Europe (such as Lebanon and Syria). The possibility they have to learn about our team's work helps the contacts and data exchanges.

As Open Access publications are generally peer-reviewed and mostly available in English, they give readership a sense of rigor and professionalism that may be absent from limited-circulation publications. There is a general feeling that when an author's work is freely available for the whole world to read, he feels bound to take on increased responsibility when conducting his research and presenting his findings and conclusions.

Open Access has connected the TYPARABIC team with other European humanities projects, such as ORTHPOL, hosted by the Austrian Academy in Vienna (Principal Investigator: Dr. Ovidiu-Victor Olar), and *Travelers on the Margins: Mobility of Arabic-Speaking Christians in the Ottoman Empire*, hosted by the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (Principal Investigator: Dr. Vevian Zaki).

The free circulation of our research outcomes can inspire younger teams and emerging research groups to recognize the importance of our work and the themes we address. Consequently, new projects inspired by our TYPARABIC activities may be proposed to the ERC.

In the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, new generations of students especially (but not only) prefer downloading an Open Access book to using a library reading room.

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Feodorov: In Romania, Open Access publishing has become a criterion for career advancement in university teaching and research. Open Access publications are carefully considered when applying for academic jobs, Ph.D. programs, and government-supported grants. When choosing where to publish a conference contribution or Ph.D. thesis, authors tend to opt for Open Science publications rather than an established academic journal or series.

There is a consensus that Open Science is the premier vehicle for research in all scientific fields, with an increasing number of academic journals striving to be freely accessible online. Open Access suggests modernity, state-of-the-art dissemination, and wide international recognition.

There are few periodicals in Romania in the Humanities that are available in Open Access. Therefore, interested authors are compelled to publish abroad, to seek the widest dissemination possible for the results of their work. One consequence of this situation is that Romanian research is disseminated in foreign languages – English, mostly, but also German or French – and receives greater recognition from the international community.

This has benefits for scientific contacts, academic exchanges, and invitations to conferences and contribution to foreign publications. This is especially significant for countries that lived under communism for half a century, which had little contact with foreign academic societies and virtually no foreign scientific publications reaching local researchers, university staff, and academics.

Open Science undoubtedly helps balance the level of scientific research methods and processes across Europe, which is also one of the targets of the European Research Council's grants program.

REFERENCES

- [1] The series titled *Early Arabic Printing in the East (EAPE)* is accessible here: <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/serial/eaape-b/html>
- [2] *Scrinium* is accessible here: https://brill.com/view/journals/scri/19/1/article-p5_3.xml?rskey=PNKntj&result=2
- [3] *MELA NOTES* is accessible here: <https://www.mela.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/MELA-Notes-94-2021.pdf>
- [4] Open Research Europe (ORE) is accessible here: <https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/>