

Voluntary Principles for article sharing on scholarly collaboration networks: Post-consultation commentary

Background

STM undertook a community-wide consultation to gain a better understanding of the current landscape of article sharing through scholarly collaboration network sites. As part of this consultation STM produced a [draft set of 'voluntary principles'](#) and invited all interested stakeholders to provide feedback and share their views. Fifty submissions were received during the consultation period, and a [summary report](#) and [full details of all the submissions](#) are both now available. Based on the consultation feedback received, the SCN working group has now revised the voluntary principles.

Changes to the Voluntary principles

Clarifying the scope of the voluntary principles

Several consultation comments received indicated a current lack of clarity for how the voluntary principles fit into the existing Open Access framework. Whilst Open Access provides a direct path to enabling the sharing of scholarly materials, access routes to subscription and licensed content are inherently different. The voluntary principles are designed to address issues specifically around the sharing of subscription and/or licensed content. They are complementary of—not alternative to—Open Access, providing simple and uniform guidance for sharing where Open Access is not possible.

Changes to definitions

Content types

Respondents specified that all content types should be covered by the voluntary principles to ensure that 'the principles evolve in such a way as to be inclusive of all types of 'scholarly products''. The terminology of the principles has therefore changed from 'journal articles' to 'scholarly articles', and mention is made of both 'supplementary materials' and 'data'.

Groups and group sizes

Consultation respondents indicated that further clarity around the precise makeup and size of 'academic groups' was required. These inputs are therefore reflected in the following changes:

- Participation by members of the general public has not been excluded to reflect the realities of the scholarly community where researchers and lay persons interact for research purposes.

- The term 'academic groups' has been changed to 'research collaboration groups', to accommodate the possible inclusion of members of the general public and commercial researchers.
- Language was added to clarify that research collaboration groups although primarily meant for non-commercial purposes, can include commercial researchers.

Usage measurements

Whilst respondents expressed broad support for usage measurement, there were concerns around privacy and security of personal information and data. The voluntary principles now contain language acknowledging existing security laws and requirements, and therefore usage and activity data must be treated accordingly.