



Open Data

What is Open Data?

Open Data is research data that can be freely used, reused and redistributed by anyone—subject at most to the requirement to attribute and share alike.

Why is Open Data important?

During the past several years, Open Data has become a field of urgent interest to researchers, scholars, and librarians. With the amount of scientific data doubling every year, issues surrounding the access, use, and curation of data sets are increasing in importance. The data-rich, researcher-driven environment that is evolving poses *new challenges and provides new opportunities in the sharing, review, and publication of research results*. Ensuring access to primary research data will play a key role in seeing that the scholarly communication system evolves in a way that supports the needs of scholars and the academic enterprise as a whole.

Increasingly, institutions that support research – from public and private research funders to higher education institutions – are exploring policies that require researchers to produce data management plans that explicitly cover how they will make their data available, and under what terms.

Broadly communicating results and making research data broadly accessible and fully available for reuse *encourages new research through the reanalysis of existing data*, further leveraging the value of a research investment. Providing access to data that is made accessible in formats and under terms that enable full reuse promotes interoperability, and allows the data to be mined using cutting-edge computational tools across huge amounts of data to find connections, trends and patterns that can't be uncovered when data is closed or siloed.

How does Open Data work?

The process of making data truly open can seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. To help simplify the process, it may be helpful to think about enabling Open Data through two basic routes:

Making Data Technically Open Ensuring that data are made available as a complete set in a machine-readable format on an easily accessible platform is key to enabling Open Data.

Making Data Legally Open Ensuring that data are made available under legal terms that allow users to redistribute and fully reuse the data is the second key step to ensuring Open Data. The only way to be sure that data are adequately covered is to put a license on it that conforms to the full Open Definition of Open Data. Many options for such licenses are available, such as those produced by Creative Commons.

Key requirements for Open Data

Availability Data should be made available in whole, and at no more than a reasonable reproduction cost.

Access Data should be available for downloading on the open Internet in a form that is both convenient and modifiable.

Redistribution & Reuse Data must be provided in a format and under terms that permit full redistribution and full reuse of the data.

While we recognize that the principles of Open Data can be applied to many types of data, SPARC's primary focus is on data produced as a result of the scholarly and scientific research process.

