



THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR CONTEMPORARY LITERARY STUDIES

Finding Open Access Scholarship: a quick guide for researchers and teachers

Open access resources are invaluable in helping researchers, students and teachers to get free and unrestricted access to peer-reviewed academic research that is accessible by all, regardless of location and circumstances – and at the present time, open access to research is perhaps more important than ever before.

There are several different types of open access (often simply referred to as 'OA'). To give a very brief overview of two common types that you're likely to find, 'gold' OA refers to content that is made open access at its source, or 'born-digital', while 'green' OA refers to content that is deposited after publication into an open access repository.

If your library allows remote e-text access, you may be able to get access to some of the texts that you need directly. However, this isn't always possible, and so there are some useful databases available with directories of open access scholarly research, and their lists are growing all the time.

CORE open access search engine: CORE is a not-for-profit service from The Open University and Jisc that offers an online search engine for open access research papers, with a search that covers over 200 million papers. Link: <https://core.ac.uk/>

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ): This is an online directory that indexes and provides access to peer-reviewed open access journals, listing over 5 million articles from more than 15,000 journals. Link: <https://doaj.org/>

Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB): This features over 30,000 academic peer-reviewed books at the time of writing, from more than 400 publishers. As well as a basic search, it also allows you to perform an advanced search for keywords, and is searchable by publication year. Link: <https://www.doabooks.org/>

Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR): This directory allows you to search open access repositories across the globe. For example, a search for 'literature' brings up seven entries at the time of writing, including the University of Greenwich Academic

Literature Archive, which gives free access to peer-reviewed articles, papers and book chapters by researchers at the university. Link: <https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/opensoar/>

Open Library: The Open Library is a project created by the non-profit Internet Archive with the aim of making all published works available to everyone in the world. Once registered, users can browse and borrow digital copies of books, which are searchable by title, author, and subject area. Link: <https://openlibrary.org/>

HathiTrust Digital Library: The HathiTrust Digital Library is a not-for-profit group of academic and research libraries, with 17 million digitised items, including over eight million books, and a range of searchable collections. Link: <https://www.hathitrust.org/>

Project Gutenberg: The Project Gutenberg website offers a library of over 60,000 free eBooks, including out of copyright texts and famous works of literature. Link: <https://www.gutenberg.org/>

Wellcome Library Digital Collections: The Wellcome Collection contains thousands of items that have been digitised and made freely available to view online, including books, pamphlets, archives, posters, photographs, and recordings. Link: <https://wellcomelibrary.org/collections/digital-collections/>

Google Scholar: Google Scholar searches can be helpful in taking you straight to open access versions of papers in your field. Just search for a topic, and if available, direct PDF links are shown down the right hand side of the page. Link: <https://scholar.google.com/>

Free web-browser add-on finds open access versions: Unpaywall.org offers an open database of over 27 million free scholarly articles, with a freely downloadable extension that you can add to your web browser. Once you've installed the add-on (this is quick and easy to do), browse articles as normal and a green tab will appear when an open access version is available, which takes you directly to the open access version. Link: <https://unpaywall.org/>

Check university open access repositories: Many universities have their own repositories where 'green' open access publications are archived and made available to all. This can be useful if you are looking for recent publications and already know the name and university of a particular academic specialist. Their institution may have a repository where these are already deposited and available, so try searching on their university's researcher pages.

Open access publishers: Individual open access publishers have lists of journal titles that you might try directly. The Open Library of Humanities, for example, is a not-for-profit scholar-led publisher which publishes 28 peer-reviewed open access journals, including *C21 Literature*, the official journal of the British Association of Contemporary Literary Studies. Links: <https://www.openlibhums.org/journals/> and <https://c21.openlibhums.org/>

Expanded open access to help during COVID-19

Some libraries and services are offering free access to selected content to help researchers and teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. These are likely to change (and hopefully grow!), and the latest information has been taken from each organisation's website at the time of writing.

Find digital archives, libraries and museums: Not-for-profit organisation the Museum Computer Network (MCN) has put together an ultimate guide to virtual museum resources, which includes a substantial list of digital archives, libraries, museums, online collections and virtual tours. Link: <https://mcn.edu/a-guide-to-virtual-museum-resources/>

The British Library: The British Library has a guide to help readers access its freely available digital collections, with a range of topics available, including selected manuscripts, maps, recordings and endangered archives. Link: <https://www.bl.uk/news/2020/march/access-to-the-british-library-during-temporary-closure>

JSTOR: Digital library JSTOR is offering expanded access to journals and primary sources for its participating institutions until 31th December 2020 at the time of writing. Link: <https://about.jstor.org/covid19/expanded-access-to-collections/>

Public Books Database: The Public Books database has a useful list of academic presses that have made titles freely available, and its website notes it will be updated as additional materials are made available. While some publishers only provided free content until summer 2020, others are still offering free content, so it's worth checking. Link: <https://www.publicbooks.org/public-books-database/>

Check individual publishers directly: Some publishers have opened up some of their content for a limited period. While many have now finished, a few are still providing access. These include:

- Cambridge University Press: <https://www.cambridge.org/about-us/covid-19/>
- Oxford University Press: <https://academic.oup.com/journals/pages/coronavirus>

There are others available, but hopefully this should help you to get started. Good luck!

Compiled by Dr Rose Harris-Birtill, Secretary of the British Association of Contemporary Literary Studies (BACLS) and Managing Editor of the Open Library of Humanities (OLH), October 2020. Due to the rapidly changing nature of the crisis the above information and links may change, so do check.