

## Open Access and Middle East Studies

JOHN RUSSELL

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY

**T**he simplest definition of open access (OA) is access to scholarship and academic research that is freely available to all. Open access advocates speak of two approaches: the “green” road and the “gold” road. Green OA involves the deposition of pre- or post-print academic literature in online institutional or subject repositories. These repositories become points of access to scholarship without seeking to bypass current publishers and publishing models and thus many publishers allow authors to submit their articles to repositories. Gold OA seeks to change models of scholarly communication by publishing journals the contents of which are freely available to all. Some publishers have recently started experimenting with OA models for their journals, offering authors the option of paying for open access to their article. Another path taken by some publishers is delayed OA, where articles are made freely available after a period of embargo (generally six months to two years) which provides incentive for subscribers to continue to pay for current content while opening up the archives to anyone.

There are three main arguments in favor of open access. The first is that electronic dissemination of scholarship increases citation and use of scholarship. In general, most scholars want their work to be read; and the more readers, the better. Having one’s articles readily available online increases the likelihood of discovery and more easily facilitates scholarly communication. The second argument, the one favored by librarians, relates to the increasing costs of serials. Libraries are increasingly faced with subscription costs that annually increase at a rate that far outstrips rates of inflation. Generally, the worst offenders are in science and medicine publishing and, in general, subscription costs from for-profit publishers are significantly higher than subscription costs from society publishers or university presses. As library budgets do not, and usually cannot, keep pace with the rising cost of journals, many libraries are forced to cut subscriptions or are simply unable to subscribe to new journals. Open access initiatives are a corrective to exorbitant subscription costs and allow for access to scholarship without breaking the budget. The third argument focuses on tax-funded scholarship. If government money is used to produce

scholarship, then why should taxpayers have to pay a second time to access the publications that result? In the United States, Congress has tried to pass legislation mandating open access to federally-funded research in medicine and the sciences (The Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006 – FRPAA). This argument could also be applied to research produced by Middle East Studies faculty who receive funding via Title VI.

### Learn More About Open Access

- Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), “Create Change,” <http://www.createchange.org/>
- Peter Suber, “Open Access News,” <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/fosblog.html>
- Peter Suber, “Open Access Overview,” available online at: <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm>
- John Willinsky, *The Access Principle*, (MIT Press, 2005); download a PDF of the entire book: <http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?ttype=2&tid=10611>

### Open Access Middle East Studies Journals

This list includes peer-reviewed, English-language (or primarily English-language), currently active journals that have some aspect of Middle East Studies as their focus. There are a number of other open access journals published in Middle East countries (covering topics ranging from librarianship to medicine to ecology), as well as a number of non-English language Middle East Studies journals, but these will have to wait for another time.

1. *Arab Bank Review* <[http://www.arabbank.com/user\\_rev\\_home.asp](http://www.arabbank.com/user_rev_home.asp)>  
Sponsored by the Arab Bank (it is their funding that provides for open access), the *Arab Bank Review* is an independent journal that seeks to present theoretical and empirical research covering economics, finance, and bank management. While the focus is on the Arab countries of the Middle East, there are some articles that stretch beyond those boundaries.

2. *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan (BMSAES)*  
<<http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/bmsaes/index.html>>  
The British Museum created this journal to take advantage of the benefits of electronic publishing and distribution (color images at no extra cost; quicker turnaround for scholarly dissemination; enable use of digital media). Articles that make extensive use of photos are offered at two different file sizes and resolutions: one for screen reading and a higher-quality file for printing. Frequency of publication has not been regular and the journal will publish an issue whenever it has at least one article ready. Website also includes the journal's MARC record.
3. *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal*  
<<http://cdli.ucla.edu/pubs/cdlj.html>>  
The *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal (CDLJ)* is one of the publications sponsored by the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (a joint project of UCLA and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science). *CDLJ* cuneiform textual analysis; early writing systems, languages, and mathematics; and studies of contemporary editorial processes for cuneiform. Articles are chosen both for their scholarship and for their use of digital media. Some articles make use of media (such as 3-D modeling) that are dependent on browser plug-ins; links to such plug-ins are provided in the article.
4. *Electronic Journal of Oriental Studies*  
<<http://www2.let.uu.nl/Solis/anpt/ejos/EJOS-1.html>>  
Covers humanistic scholarship relating to Arabic, Persian and Turkic languages and civilizations. What is unusual about this journal is that it publishes both articles and monographs; additionally, some of its volumes are devoted to publishing the proceedings of conferences (e.g., Vol. VI presents the proceedings of a conference on Central Asian Studies). While many of the articles and monographs are in English, Turkish and most of the major Western European languages are represented.
5. *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*  
<<http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/index.html>>  
Published twice a year (in January and July), *Hugoye* has regularly appeared since 1998 in both electronic and print versions. Issues include articles, reviews, and other miscellaneous offerings (e.g., conference and project reports, announcements, and obituaries).

6. *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal*  
<<http://www.biu.ac.il/JS/JSIJ/>>  
Although *Jewish Studies* seeks to publish articles relating to any aspect of Jewish Studies, the focus of the articles published to this point has been on Judaic theology. The journal is put out by the faculty of Jewish Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel and can be read in English or in Hebrew. Published annually.
  
7. *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* <<http://www.uib.no/jais/>>  
The *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* is unusual in that it publishes articles initially online and then publishes a print version (through Edinburgh University Press). Volumes generally come out every two years with, on average, five articles per volume. Topics range across the span of Arabic/Islamic Studies scholarship, though it is dominated by research in language and literature.
  
8. *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* <<http://www.jhsonline.org>>  
Articles in the *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures (JHS)* are indexed in *ATLA*. *JHS* is published annually and contains book reviews in addition to articles.
  
9. *MERIA: Middle East Review of International Affairs*  
<<http://meria.idc.ac.il/>>  
*MERIA* is a quarterly journal covering contemporary Middle East politics and international relations. It is indexed by *Index Islamicus*, *Worldwide Political Science Abstracts*, and Wilson's *Social Science Index*.
  
10. *Middle East Technical University Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* <<http://jfa.arch.metu.edu.tr/>>  
The *Journal of the Faculty of Architecture* is published twice a year (in June and December); articles are in either English or Turkish. Issues contain articles, book reviews, and exhibition notes; while there is a lot of Middle East content, articles do range further afield. There are author and subject indexes for each volume, and it is also indexed by the *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*.

11. *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies (MIT-EJMES)*  
<<http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes/intro.htm>>  
*MIT-EJMES* was launched by graduate students in 2001 as a multi-disciplinary journal focusing on the modern Middle East. The journal features scholarly articles (primarily by faculty), review essays, and book reviews, as well as less-traditional submissions such as photo essays. Recent issues have focused on Israel's Invasion of Lebanon, Islam and Arabs in East Africa, and Arab/Arab-American Feminist Perspectives.
12. *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal*  
<<http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/wjudaism/index>>  
*Women in Judaism* is both historical and contemporary, touching particularly (but by no means exclusively) on representations of women in literature and in the Bible. Some of the earlier issues include bibliographies or notes about research collections. Indexed by, among others, *ATLA* and *MLA Bibliography*.

