

NECS - Statement on Open Scholarship

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NECS Publication Committee in collaboration with NECS membership:*

* *Greg de Cuir (Independent Researcher), [Miriam de Rosa](#) (Ca' Foscari, University of Venice), [Victoria Pastor-González](#) (Regent's University London), and [Jeroen Sondervan](#) (Utrecht University)*

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1. Introduction

The scope of open scholarship is potentially broad and represents a new approach to all stages of the research process: from open access to publications, sharing of research data sets, developing new research evaluation systems, to public engagement and citizen science. In essence, the development of open scholarship practices entails a cultural shift in academic research and teaching.

The benefits of open access to publications and research data--F.A.I.R. (*Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable*) open data--for the Humanities, and in this case more specifically for media scholars, echo the benefits for all academics: the spread of knowledge itself, relief for overstretched library budgets, and increased readership and a citation advantage. As some have argued, media scholars have particular reasons to embrace open access:

The topics that media scholars write about are inescapably multimedia, so our publishing platforms should be capable—at the very least—of embedding the objects that we study;

media studies, owing to their fragmentation and marginality, can sidestep the prestige “penalty” that drags down other disciplines’ open access efforts; and our rich research traditions on popular media dynamics are begging to be applied (and perhaps rethought) in the context of scholarly communication (2016 Pooley, p. 6148)

The shift towards open scholarship is becoming more common practice. As the network of reference for a significant number of scholars and practitioners in the area of film and media studies, NECS should take an active role in informing, supporting and guiding its members where necessary in this transition and, to the extent feasible, within the resources of the organisation. In addition, NECS has always stood for openness and inclusiveness, principles that are important pillars in open scholarship.

The aim of the present document is to outline the underlying principles of NECS’s current stance in regards to open science and scholarship. In keeping with the open and inclusive spirit of the organization, the document is the result of the combined efforts of the NECS Publication Committee and several members of the network, whose input was collected as part of a focus group at the 2019 Conference in Gdansk.

2. Statement of Principles

2.1. Open Access publications

NECS endorses the principles of the [Fair Open Access Alliance](#), which are here translated to the media studies field of research:

- A media studies journal is ideally a transparent ownership structure, and is controlled by and responsive to the scholarly community.
- Authors of articles in the journal should retain copyright.
- All articles are published open access and an explicit open access licence (Creative Commons) is used.
- Submission and publication should not be conditional in any way on the payment of a fee from the author or its employing institution, or on membership of an institution or society.

- Any fees paid on behalf of the journal to publishers are low, transparent, and in proportion to the work carried out.

These principles would benefit from adaptation to the humanities and media studies context of NECS, notably by including:

- (1) the monograph and edited collection forms so vital to humanities fields;
- (2) and multimedia forms like practice-based research outcomes such as films or the video-essays produced and published by film and media studies scholars;
- (3) film clips archives;
- (4) databases and datasets.

2.2. Peer review

Along with open principles in media studies publishing goes an engaged and dedicated stance to the publication peer review process. If we believe in the benefits of open access and embrace the ethics supporting it, then we should also advocate for enthusiastic and dedicated engagement in the peer review process (e.g. open peer review, open annotations, etc.) and be open to new initiatives to enhance quality control and review procedures deployed across the technical infrastructures making access itself possible.

Furthermore, if we believe in open access we should also act accordingly and not consider the peer review process a financial opportunity (or burden) but rather something above financial concerns that ultimately contributes to the good and benefit of the discipline that we have all dedicated our lives to in one way or another. Acts of peer review should be considered on par in importance with acts of engagement with students, because of course it is those students who will rely on and interact with the discipline as it is ultimately shaped by peer review. Also, the very method and content that is taught to students is dependent on the quality of material that is shaped by peer review. Policies in both the industry and academia are drawn from the content that is honed by peer review. Our stance is that the peer review process is grossly undervalued in the wider scheme of academic activity in media studies and humanities in general, and it should be embraced and practiced not only as a duty but also as a direct democratic principle that affects all of our work and the way our work is perceived by the broader society. To make

this possible we advocate for a fair acknowledgement of the value of the peer review process and the peer reviews labour. We should encourage making these efforts more visible.

2.3. FAIR & Open Research Data

Reuse and verifiability are the main purposes of having research data available. Access to research data (which includes textual and multimedia data) and accompanying documentation makes scholarship more efficient and more trustworthy. This is particularly important for the field of the humanities where, in comparison to the sciences, research documentation and data most often require a qualitative body of work in support of research claims and conclusions. How research data is being managed and shared, depends greatly on the kind of data (observational, experimental, simulation, derived etc.) and the culture within different disciplines and domains. Making relevant data fully F.A.I.R. and also open wherever viable (duly respecting constraints of privacy, sensitivity and intellectual property rights) has many additional advantages and is also required by some funders and (data) journals. Very often these practices may run counter to the principles of open scholarship as we are arguing for here, this is why this statement aims at raising awareness about F.A.I.R. The adage “as open as possible, as closed as necessary” is valid here, at all the above-mentioned levels.

Striving for open data could help media studies in aligning to an open scholarship practice that is already widespread in other disciplines such as in the areas of physics and biomedicine, and as for the humanities, in the field of archaeology where in European countries it is mandated to archive archaeological research data in (national) institutional repositories. Both well-established and emerging practices in media studies such as practice-based research ranging from artistic filmmaking or the creation of critical video-essays, software, code, immersive technologies, and source material will benefit of a F.A.I.R. status in ways that impact on the actual content as the availability, accessibility and reusability of scholarship and research material is procedurally embedded in the research practices typical of the field. This impacts in significant ways on the signature pedagogy of this field of knowledge, where the above-mentioned practices are increasingly employed as assignments across curricula and, as such, ‘inform the fundamental ways in which future practitioners are educated for the new professions’ (Shulman 2005, p 52). This is the responsibility of the whole academic community and NECS advocates for an explicit support of open scholarship and open education pedagogy,

i.e. supervisors encouraging students and peers to publish on Open Access journals and publications; policy-makers taking concrete action to make data F.A.I.R. and promote a culture of inclusiveness by supporting grants and projects that include provisions for Open Scholarship outcomes. At an institutional level, more clarity is required about funding sources allocated for Open Scholarship, both in terms of how they can be accessed and how they are managed.

3. Final thoughts and future actions

As an association, NECS has been a proud standard-bearer for open science and scholarship. This statement is but one example of this commitment, which in the past has taken the form of post conference events (i.e.

<https://oamediaudies.com/postconference/post-conference-open-media-studies-2018/>) and

focus groups, with the establishment of its own open access journal [NECSUS](#) as its most illustrious example. However, if NECS truly seeks to become a byword for open science and scholarship it must maintain and expand these forms of activism. Therefore the Steering Committee will:

- support the organisation of a workshop on open scholarship at the NECS yearly conferences.
- encourage hosting institutions to include on the programme a statement about open science and scholarship, possibly detailing what actions they are taking to promote it amongst staff and students.
- invite senior members of the network to support these initiatives and mentor junior members and create safe environments to practice Open Scholarship.
- request that stands at the publishers forum include information about open access publication initiatives (open monographs, open journals etc).

Finally, as a European association, NECS also intends to consult and get involved with various national initiatives (see e.g. Germany's NFDI - Nationale Forschungsdaten-Infrastruktur) and transnational endeavours (European Open Science Cloud), thus helping to shape the future landscape of academic practice.

4. References and further (selective) readings on the subject

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5. Educational resources

The Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society (<https://www.hiig.de/en/>) was founded to research the development of the internet from a societal perspective and better understand the digitalisation of all spheres of life.

Audiovisualcy (<https://vimeo.com/groups/audiovisualcy>) is an online forum for video essays or works of audiovisual screen studies that have an analytical, critical, reflexive or scholarly purpose; fully attribute all sources used; are made according to Fair Use principles; are non-commercial in nature.

Documentary Filmmakers' Statement of Best Practices in Fair Use

(<https://cmsimpact.org/code/documentary-filmmakers-statement-of-best-practices-in-fair-use/>) makes clear what documentary filmmakers currently regard as reasonable application of the copyright Fair Use doctrine

Film Studies for free (<https://filmstudiesforfree.blogspot.com/>) provides access and comments on freely-accessible, published scholarship or research in various forms: from film and media weblogs, through online peer-reviewed journals and film/video archives, to other forms of web-based scholarly writing, as well as online works of film/moving-image research by practice.

The Internet Policy Review (<https://policyreview.info/>) is a peer-reviewed online journal on internet regulation in Europe. It tracks public regulatory changes as well as private policy developments which are expected to have long lasting impacts on European societies. The journal is a resource on internet policy for academics, civil society advocates, entrepreneurs, the media and policymakers alike.

Open Humanities Press (<https://openhumanitiespress.org/>) is an international community of scholars, editors and readers with a focus on critical and cultural theory. They have operated as an independent volunteer initiative since 2006, promoting open access scholarship in journals, books and exploring new forms of scholarly communication.