

# **New Routes to Scholarly Communication**

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# The Public Availability of Scientific Information

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# What precisely do we mean?

- What information? (does this include all data?)
- Available to whom? (everyone? All data? Data protection legislation conflicts?)
- Available for how long? (storage formats? media lifetimes? )

# UCL draft “Guidelines for responsible practice in research”

- “Scientific integrity of research leading to publication requires that there should always be a robust and reliable audit trail...”
- “There is, therefore, an obligation on the researcher to maintain records in a state which can be investigated and understood by anyone with a legitimate right to enquire”
- “Good practice would therefore suggest that researchers in science based disciplines should record **all** experimental data meticulously and permanently in whatever way is appropriate to their research”

# Data Protection Act:

(personal data)

- “shall only be held for specified, lawful purposes”
- “be held no longer than is necessary for the stated purpose”

## Research Board discussion:

- Keep data “as appropriate to the discipline”
- What is appropriate? (SIDS study, Mendel, Millikan)
- Problems of data overload (HEP – petabyte/experiment)

# Discussions in “Nature” – “Scientific data must be made available to all”

- International Council of Scientific Unions – World Data Centre (WDC) set up in 1950’s ([www.ngdc.noaa.gov/wdc](http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/wdc))
- No international regulations requiring scientists to store results as raw data and meta-information
- Some journals and funding agencies encourage authors/PI’s to submit/share supporting data
- NSF is only funding organisation requiring this (Earth System History Programme)

# Available to Whom?

- Journal policies require access to fellow scientists
- Data represents considerable investment/IP (latter is patentable – should data be copyright/copyleft?)
- How long?
- Who is responsible?

# Drivers for Change?

- Public Library of Science, PubMed Central, Open Society Institute – little impact so far – who resists?

Publishers

Professional Societies/Institutions

- Role of Funders

IP protection

# Conclusions:

- In the end this is a matter of principle
- Personal belief – Scientific data/information belongs to all