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RLUK Research Libraries UK



Outbreak of the COVID-19 virus and implications for teaching and research

Over the last week we have seen publishers, aggregators and suppliers of digital content and software come forward in offering a range of solutions to help institutions maintain their teaching and research activity during this time of crisis. On behalf of our members, we would like to thank you for providing open access to research in support of Coronavirus/Covid 19 and putting in place access options that remove limitations on use and users.

We encourage all providers of digital content and software to follow this example to help our members reduce the impact on their communities and manage with reduced staff during this time of crisis.

We have provided below a list of actions that publishers, aggregators and vendors can take to support institutions and colleges. These measures, in combination with what our members and their users are permitted to do under domestic and international copyright law, are closely aligned with statements from [colleagues across the world](#) and will support the provision of research, teaching and learning at this time and remove unnecessary distractions from the core mission of institutions.

Actions that would help institutions maintain teaching and research activity:

1. Make any relevant content and data sets about COVID-19, Coronaviruses (regardless of species affected), vaccines, antiviral drugs, etc. currently behind subscription-only paywalls Open Access immediately to facilitate research, guide community public health response, and accelerate the discovery of treatment options. The removal of technology that limits text and data mining is also requested in support of research.
2. Remove and waive all simultaneous, concurrent user or credit limits to an institution's licensed digital content during this period when universities are going all online in order to allow research, discovery, and learning to proceed.
3. Remove, waive or pause triggers associated with evidence based or demand driven models in recognition that there will be a higher use of online content as courses are being delivered online.
4. Lift existing contractual Inter Library Loan restrictions or photocopying limits temporarily so that universities and colleges may assist their students to complete their studies.

5. Temporarily waive costs associated with the digitisation of second extracts under the CLA licence and engage with the CLA and other collective management organisations to increase extent limits to ensure teachers can provide students with the content they require.
6. Extend trial access periods to 90 days in the first instance to provide institutions and colleges with a monitored and managed route to access content they may require but have been unable to subscribe to previously.
7. Lift any restrictions on remote access, so that teaching activities and research can continue online and remotely, despite institutional closures.

In addition, we recommend that publishers, aggregators and vendors:

8. Allow flexible renewal periods and lengthened payment due dates as we do not know the future impacts on health or business operations. If the regular renewal cycle is disrupted, we ask that publishers keep access on for institutions, even though the current agreement may have expired.
9. Delay or minimise any planned price increases until the upheaval and disruption that we are seeing in our user communities, public health systems, and stock markets all over the world calms. The financial impacts on institutions of higher education and the global economy are as yet unknown, and price increases will add even more pressure to already-stressed universities and colleges.
10. Develop plans to temporarily lift paywalls or develop alternative methods of authentication to allow access to subscribed content if traditional authentication mechanisms are overloaded under the increased traffic.

We recognise that this is a challenging time, for all of us, and we hope that by putting these actions in place and by continuing to work together, we will be able to support the millions of students, teachers and researchers here in the UK.