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Copyright as a Path to Open Research: Enabling Global Access and Learning







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A different type of barrier

- Copyright is often perceived as a barrier to access
- Unequal access to research
- Barriers: costs, permissions, legal uncertainty
- Can be used as a tool for censorship



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But is it?

- Copyright applies automatically, granting specific rights to the rights holder
- Rights holder have control over reuse and sharing
- Rights holders have the key to openness



The Artemis II crew captured this view of Earth setting on April 6, 2026, as they flew around the Moon. *Image credit: NASA*

Copyright: The foundation for Open Research

- Licensing (Creative Commons)
  - Enables reuse, adaptation, even translation
  - Clear, global permissions
- Open Access publishing routes
  - Gold, Green and Rights Retention approaches
- Institutional and funder policies
  - Support copyright retention and openness



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Licence URL	Sum of Item count	Sum of Percentage (%)
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/	17963	67.8
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/	6049	22.8
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/	883	3.3
https://library.midwestern.edu/copyright_statement/home	776	2.9
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/	560	2.1
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/	68	0.3
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/	62	0.2
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/	55	0.2
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/	30	0.1
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/	21	0.1
http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC/1.0/	20	0.1
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/	16	0.1
https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/	7	0
https://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-3.0.html	1	0
Grand Total	**26511**	**100**

Overview

LICENCE	ITEM COUNT	SHARE (%)
CC BY-NC-ND 4.0	17,963	67.8
CC BY 4.0	6,049	22.8
CC BY-NC 4.0	883	3.3
Rights Retention	20	0.1
CC BY 3.0	560	2.1
All other licences (combined)	280	1.1

Global impact: Access, Equity and Openness

- Benefits:
  - Access for researchers in low- and middle-income countries as well as educators, students, policy-makers, and practitioners
- Impact:
  - Translation = higher dissemination
  - Use in teaching, training, public policy

Open licensing reduces knowledge inequality



Webb captured this new image of galaxy Messier 58, in both the near and mid-infrared, as part of a treasury of 55 massive, star-forming galaxies. Credit: NASA, CSA, ESA, and A. Leroy (The Ohio State University); Processing: Gladys Kober (NASA/Catholic University of America)

Call to action

- Let’s act:
  - Retain author rights
  - Use open licences
  - Support interoperable repositories

If knowledge is a public good, copyright must serve the public, openly and globally.

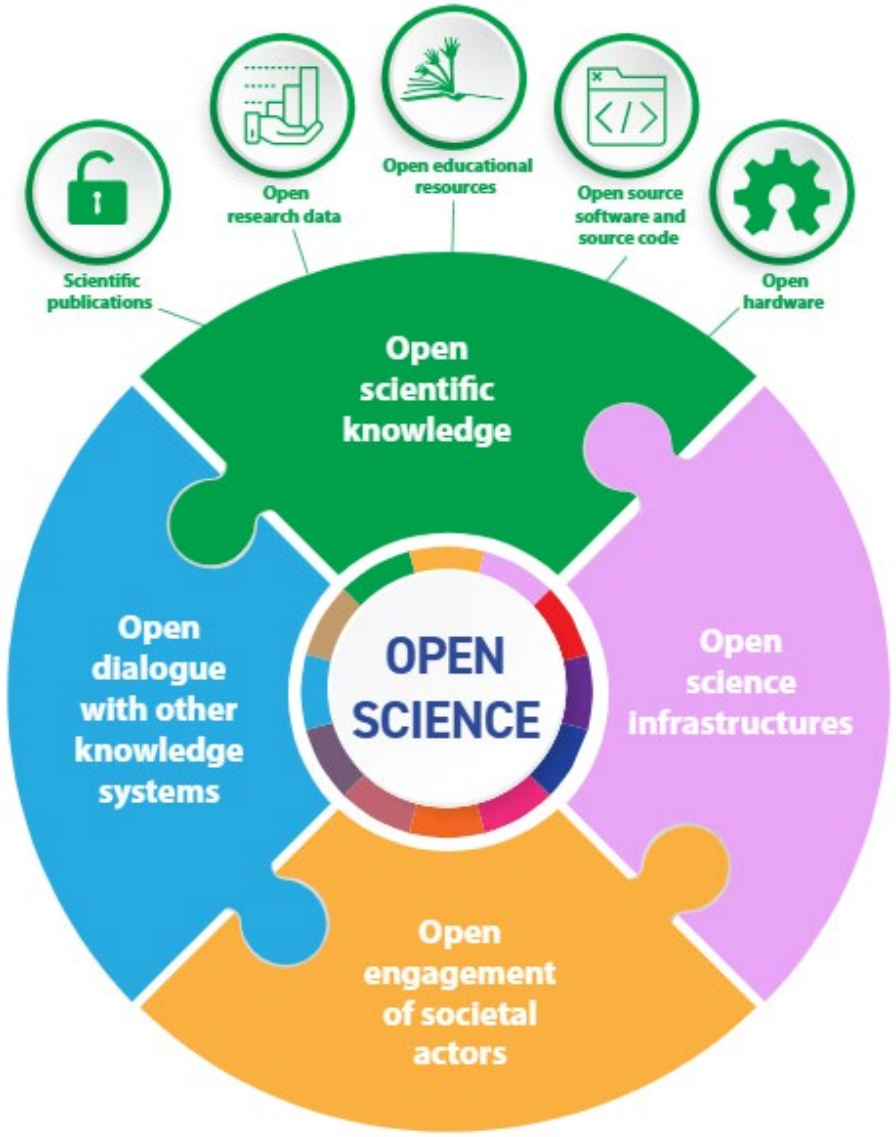

Image: UNESCO Model of Open Science, © UNESCO, 2024, CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO [14029] https://doi.org/10.54677/MNMH8546

When copyright is used intentionally, research becomes a shared global resource.



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