How open access (OA) boosts the societal impact of humanities and social sciences (HSS) research

By examining our OA partnerships in the UK and Europe, we’d like to highlight the impact of enabling open access for HSS research, where funding sources are typically less accessible. With a greater reach within and beyond academia, open access supports enhanced collaboration and interdisciplinary research. It also helps engage the broader public, policymakers, and practitioners, fostering a more informed society and helping solve real world problems.

Significant increase in the number of published OA articles from HSS authors

Growth in In Year Citations for HSS articles under Three Northern European TAs, before and after the agreements started

Many HSS subjects were cited by global policy documents.

For example, under the Jisc agreement in the UK, many subject areas by policy documents were in HSS subject areas, including:

- Sociology and political science: 90
- International relations: 67
- Geography, planning, and development: 57
- Educational research: 55
- Environmental sciences: 36
- Development: 35
- Law: 32
- Economics: 30
- Cultural studies: 28

Impact beyond academia: policy and news engagement

1. "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?" (Luhrmann 2019)
   - Published OA under the BIBSAM Transformative Agreement.
   - Mentioned by 100 news stories from 57 outlets.
   - Shared widely on social media platforms.

2. Addressing socio-economic challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic: "The impact of long COVID on the UK workforce" (Reuschke & Houston 2022)
   - Published OA by the University of Southampton through the Jisc Agreement UK in July 2022.
   - Provides evidence of the profound impact of Long COVID on national labour supply.
   - Cited by at least one policy document published jointly by the think tank Demos and The Physiological Society (Dawson & Phillips 2022).
   - Shared widely on social media platforms.
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3. Investigating the socio-cultural impact of UK gendered school sport uniform: "Practical, professional or patriarchal? An investigation into the socio-cultural impacts of gendered school sports uniform and the role uniform plays in shaping female experiences of school sport" (Howard 2023)
   - Published OA by Durham University through the Jisc Agreement on 6 April 2023.
   - Explores how school sport uniform directly impacts female sporting experiences and participation in physical activity.
   - Mentioned in 26 news stories, including in the UK, Germany and Australia.
   - Led to changes to domestic sports kit regulations in the UK following parliamentary debate, a process that was expected to take years rather than months.

We believe a diversity of approaches is fundamental to achieve the OA transition, from article types, to data sharing, to publication models and venues. It’s critical for all stakeholders to work together to explore creative solutions and support a sustainable transition to open access.