The Rise of Preprints

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Traditional publishing is a time-intensive process. Authors often wait months for their manuscript to wind through the process of submission, acceptance, peer-review, revision, and finally, publication. In academia, the published peer-reviewed article in a quality journal has been a long-accepted measure for ensuring career advancement, recognition of effort, and advancement of knowledge. Increasingly, preprints and preprint servers are gaining prominence. These servers store versions of research papers prior to peer-review and publication in a journal. In providing opportunities for expedited dissemination of new work, they can open access to wide audiences, and can yield engagement as well as feedback in non-traditional ways. For early career researchers or those seeking to advance their career, these options are major motivations for using preprint servers.

How do preprint servers promote open access?

Many preprint servers are indexed by major search engines (such as Google and Google Scholar), and search results yield preprint records with links to full-text manuscripts. Most preprint servers allow authors to retain their copyrights. However, it is strongly advisable for the author to include a rights statement or creative commons license when posting their work; the license tells others how your content can be used. There are several licenses to choose from and [resources](#) to help you choose the best one for your purposes.

Can a preprint posted to a server be considered for publication in a journal?

Each publisher has guidelines that may vary slightly, so you will need to consider if and where you might submit your preprint for final publication. To find a publisher's policy, search the name of the journal and the terms pre-print, preprint, prior publication, or first publication. Below are policy examples from JAMA Network, Circulation, and Nature Research.

Circulation

Posting of un-refereed manuscripts to a community preprint server by the author will not be considered prior publication, provided that the following conditions are met … [See more information here](#).

JAMA Network

Public dissemination of manuscripts prior to, simultaneous with, or following submission to this journal, such as posting the manuscript on preprint servers or other repositories, will necessitate making a determination of whether publication of the submitted manuscript will add meaningful new information to the medical literature or will be redundant with information already disseminated with the posting of the preprint. [See more information here](#).

Nature Research

Nature Research journals encourage posting of preprints of primary research manuscripts on preprint servers, authors' or

institutional websites, and open communications between researchers whether on community preprint servers or preprint commenting platforms. Posting of preprints is not considered prior publication and will not jeopardize consideration at Nature Research journals. [See more information here](#).

What resources are available at Northwestern for preprints?

Researchers interested in posting a preprint can use [DigitalHub](#), Feinberg School of Medicine's online repository of scholarly outputs, which strives to make it easier and faster for you to upload and share your various outputs online. DigitalHub accepts a wide range of research products, from preprints to presentations and publications, datasets, reports, educational materials, images, and conference materials. DigitalHub assigns a unique persistent identifier (DOI) to each deposit, making each one citable in CVs, NIH progress reports, research articles, and more. DigitalHub is also indexed by Google for increased discoverability and wide dissemination of research products online. Uploading your items to DigitalHub helps to increase your digital footprint and get your research into the most influential spaces.

What is the NIH Preprint Pilot?

Preprints are playing a key role in the pandemic era. The U.S. [National Institutes of Health preprint pilot](#), launched June 2020, will run a minimum of 12 months. It builds on PubMed Central's repository aiming to explore approaches to increasing the discoverability of early NIH research results posted to [eligible preprint servers](#), initially targeting reprints that report NIH supported COVID-19 research.

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