

My open science story

Jonathan Tennant¹

¹Imperial College London

April 17, 2023



My open science story

JONATHAN TENNANT¹

1. Imperial College London

READ REVIEWS

WRITE A REVIEW

CORRESPONDENCE:

jon.tennant.2@gmail.com

DATE RECEIVED:

August 30, 2015

DOI:

10.15200/winn.144140.04988

ARCHIVED:

September 04, 2015

KEYWORDS:

ARCS2015

CITATION:

Jonathan Tennant, My open science story, *The Winnower* 2:e144140.04988, 2015, DOI: [10.15200/winn.144140.04988](https://doi.org/10.15200/winn.144140.04988)

© Tennant This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and redistribution in any medium, provided that the original author and source are credited.



It never really occurred to me not to be open. From the moment I started my PhD, I made a promise to myself that everything I did would be open and transparent. By this, I don't just mean access to published papers – I wanted the data, and the information that I was generating to be freely available, and understandable to everyone. Apparently, this makes you a 'radical', but to me the alternatives just didn't appeal. I didn't see the sense in paywalls, in not sharing, in doing things for any reason but the benefit of the commons.

I remember during my Masters, back in 2011, vowing that my first paper would be published in PLOS ONE – I couldn't fathom the idea that research I'd spent so long on wouldn't be freely available. It took 3 years, but I eventually made it happen. My next paper was in [PeerJ](https://www.peerj.com/) – I wanted to show that publishing open access early on in your career doesn't cost anything, and is the easiest approach that benefits the most people. That's when I really started to get into open science. Hitting paywalls when trying to do your research, or not knowing where the data was to support the conclusions of papers – these are huge impediments to researchers at all levels, and frankly I didn't understand why it was the norm.

Everything took to a whole new level before my PhD, where I was fortunate enough to work as a policy intern with the Geological Society of London. There, I learned about the broader role of science in society, and about how science is about so much more than, well, science. Science really affects every aspect of our daily lives, from the water we drink and the air we breathe, to getting to work, and being able to write this essay.

It seems to me to be wholly unreasonable that one of the underpinning facets of society – knowledge – is treated as a business commodity, and not something that is equally, democratically, and freely available to every person on this planet. I think this matters inside and outside of the academy, be you a teacher, and engineer, a doctor, or a cook.

Since starting my PhD, I've been involved in many aspects of increasing our understanding of open science. The most popular one of these appears to be the publishing of the [Open Research Glossary](https://www.openresearchglossary.com/), designed to help inform academics about the broad range of things that falls under the umbrella of 'open scholarship'. I helped lead the open community against poor publishing practices regarding open access by the AAAS, which culminated in an [open letter](#) to the Editor in Chief and substantial media coverage. Alongside these one off projects, I continuously try to raise awareness of the issues regarding open science, and science communication more broadly. I try to practice what I preach by engaging in open practices, and communicating about science to broader audiences. Mostly, this has been via blogging and tweeting about science, and some of the issues that are most close at heart for me, such as open science. I use tools like [Figshare](https://figshare.com/) to share my research as soon as it's ready, and

only publish in open access venues (when I have influence on the choice). Ultimately, this has led to numerous guest posts in popular online venues, and my personal invitation to several prestigious conferences, including SciFoo Camp, and Open Con two years running. I like to think that invitations to give talks, participate in workshops and panel discussions, and being interviewed about open science for international media venues, is a sign that what I'm doing at the very personal level is the right thing. Or at least interesting enough that others can learn from it!

Honestly, I don't consider what I've done to be a success story. I don't do this for myself, but what I do see are little victories, little nudges that show that as a practising scientist, advocating for openness throughout the system is the right thing to do. I don't have data to support this, but I have experience. The exact moment I knew that the open science community was right, was during Open Con 2014 in Washington DC. I have never known such passion, such drive, such desire to come together as a global community and advocate for something so simple, yet so hard to obtain – knowledge equality. For me, whether this translates into career success is yet to be seen – I'm still only coming to the end of my PhD. But what I do have are skills and experience that will hopefully provide me increasing options to transfer to the next level.

I think at the end of the day, we really have to consider what science is. It's about knowledge generation, about sharing the wonders of our mystical universe. Somewhere along the way, we've lost this – as a system, as a global community. Open scholarship, or open science, is the bridge we need to return science to its origins.

In 5, 10, 15 years, I don't want to be talking to people about open science: I want this to just be science.