

PublisherInfo		
PublisherName	:	BioMed Central
PublisherLocation	:	London
PublisherImprintName	:	BioMed Central

## Open-access journals rank well

ArticleInfo		
ArticleID	:	4945
ArticleDOI	:	10.1186/gb-spotlight-20040428-01
ArticleCitationID	:	spotlight-20040422-01
ArticleSequenceNumber	:	297
ArticleCategory	:	Research news
ArticleFirstPage	:	1
ArticleLastPage	:	3
ArticleHistory	:	RegistrationDate : 2004-4-28 OnlineDate : 2004-4-28
ArticleCopyright	:	BioMed Central Ltd2004
ArticleGrants	:	
ArticleContext	:	130594411

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The impact factors of nearly 200 [open-access](#) journals are similar to those of traditional journals in the same fields, according to a [recent Thomson ISI report](#). The 58 open-access medical journals that receive impact factors fell, on average, at the 40th percentile of all medical journals, with all but 11 ranking higher than the 10th percentile. For life sciences journals, the 37 open-access journals were ranked, on average, at the 39th percentile.

Since the percentile indicates the journal's rank within its discipline, 50th percentile is literally average, according to James Pringle, vice president for Development in Academic and Government Markets for [Thomson ISI](#).

Pringle said that the results might also disappoint some proponents of open access, who believed that researchers would cite freely available information more often than papers published in traditional journals. The report may be "good news to all sides of the debate," Pringle told us.

Open-access journals "are not doing worse than the average ISI journal. And in some categories, they are doing better," [Peter Suber](#), an open-access advocate at Earlham College in Richmond, Ind., told us. For example, the [Journal of Psychiatry and Neuroscience](#) was ranked in the 70th percentile for the medicine category. Other high rankers in that category included the [International Journal of Molecular Medicine](#) and [Molecular Vision](#).

Suber said that many open-access journals are still relatively new, and as their reputation increases over time, people will read and cite them more often. "As the prestige sinks in, the citations will go up to match the quality that was already there," he said.

Jan Velterop, director and publisher of [BioMedCentral](#) said that he agreed that the future looks even brighter for open-access journals. "We are measuring something that has just crawled out of the egg," he said.

Velterop said that he believes the report addresses concerns that editorial quality would suffer from open-access models because it would be in the publishers' financial interest to publish more papers. The fact that open-access journals rank close to the 50th percentile within their fields suggests that they are "indistinguishable, from a quality point of view," Velterop said.

Pringle noted that ISI reviews the editorial quality of every publication before including it in its database. Consequently, all of the 200 open-access journals included in the report have passed ISI's "rigorous selection criteria," he said.

Lynne Herndon, president and chief executive officer of [Cell Press](#), cautioned that impact factor is influenced by many factors, such as the size of the market, the citation habits of a field, and the marketing efforts of a publisher. "I think we have to wait for more data" before deciding how open-access journals will fare in the long term, she said. However, these findings demonstrate that open-access journals are "players" in the market, Herndon said.

Gordon Tibbitts, president of [Blackwell Publishing](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/), a publisher that currently offers no open-access journals, agreed that it takes many years for a journal to become established, so it is likely "a bit too early" to predict the future of many open-access journals included in the report.

Tibbitts told us that Blackwell is considering adding some open-access publications to its roster, but would likely not rely on an "author pays" format, which he fears could exclude researchers from developing countries. He said that he welcomes the current conflict between open-access and traditional business models: "I'm a proponent of competition."

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