When they are introduced to the concept of Open Access, authors generally voice a number of concerns. The main ones are below.

Copyright

They worry most about whether they are allowed to make their work Open Access because of copyright restrictions imposed by their publishers. These conditions vary with the publisher. Open Access publishers do not have any copyright restrictions at all: they allow the copyright to remain with the author of an article and they permit the author to do anything he or she wants with the article, including making unlimited numbers of copies for distribution, using them for teaching and so forth. This is quite unlike the restrictions imposed by many traditional publishers who require the author to relinquish copyright to the publisher and lay down strict rules about how the article may be used by the author and others. So with respect to self-archiving in repositories, authors worry that the publisher, who in most cases holds the copyright, will not permit this activity. In fact, over 60% of journals do allow self-archiving of the final, peer-reviewed version of an article (the ‘postprint’) and a further 32% allow the author to self-archive the ‘preprint’, the article before it has been peer reviewed.

Process

Authors also worry about how easy it might be to deposit an article in their repository. The process is very simple, consisting of a series of steps for filling in a form that the repository software provides. Details required include the article metadata (authors’ names, affiliations, title of the article and so on) and some other information about the type of article it is and whether it has been peer reviewed. Then there is an uploading step where the article file is sent to the repository. The whole process is not unlike the procedure for submitting an article to a journal through the publisher’s online submission system. Researchers who were surveyed about this told us that they found the process generally easy. We also know from an examination of log files at one large repository that it takes just a few minutes to do.

Peer review

Some people mistakenly think Open Access equates to vanity publishing - that you can pay to have an article published. This is not the case. Open Access journals employ the same peer review practices as traditional, Closed Access journals.
Other worries and concerns

There are many other common concerns voiced by authors. A list of 35 of them, plus the answers to them, has been prepared by Stevan Harnad at Southampton University.