

Open Access and Open Educational Resources

A drawing conversation with a 6-year-old

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Preface

- In March 2020, schools, universities and many other workplaces were closed down in Norway due to the outbreak of the [Coronavirus disease 2019](#) (COVID-19). At the time of writing, 15 March 2020, it is not yet clear how long this situation will last.
- Sharing your home office with your kid is not easy – so I tried to get mine busy by helping me with my work.
- This resource about Open Access (OA) and Open Educational Resources (OER) is a result of our collaboration.
- The target group for the resource is university faculty and students – but it can be of use to others, too.



Mom: The scientist is thinking hard about something important.

Daughter: About what?

Mom: Hmm, let's take something that is important for children.

Daughter: Emmm... Fish!

Mom: OK. The scientist is thinking about fish.



Mom: Then the scientist gets an idea and writes it down. And then she wants to tell EVERYONE in the world about it!

Daughter: (glad gasp)

Mom: She sends her story to the internet. Hmm, how are we going to draw the internet?

Daughter: Let's draw it like a screen.



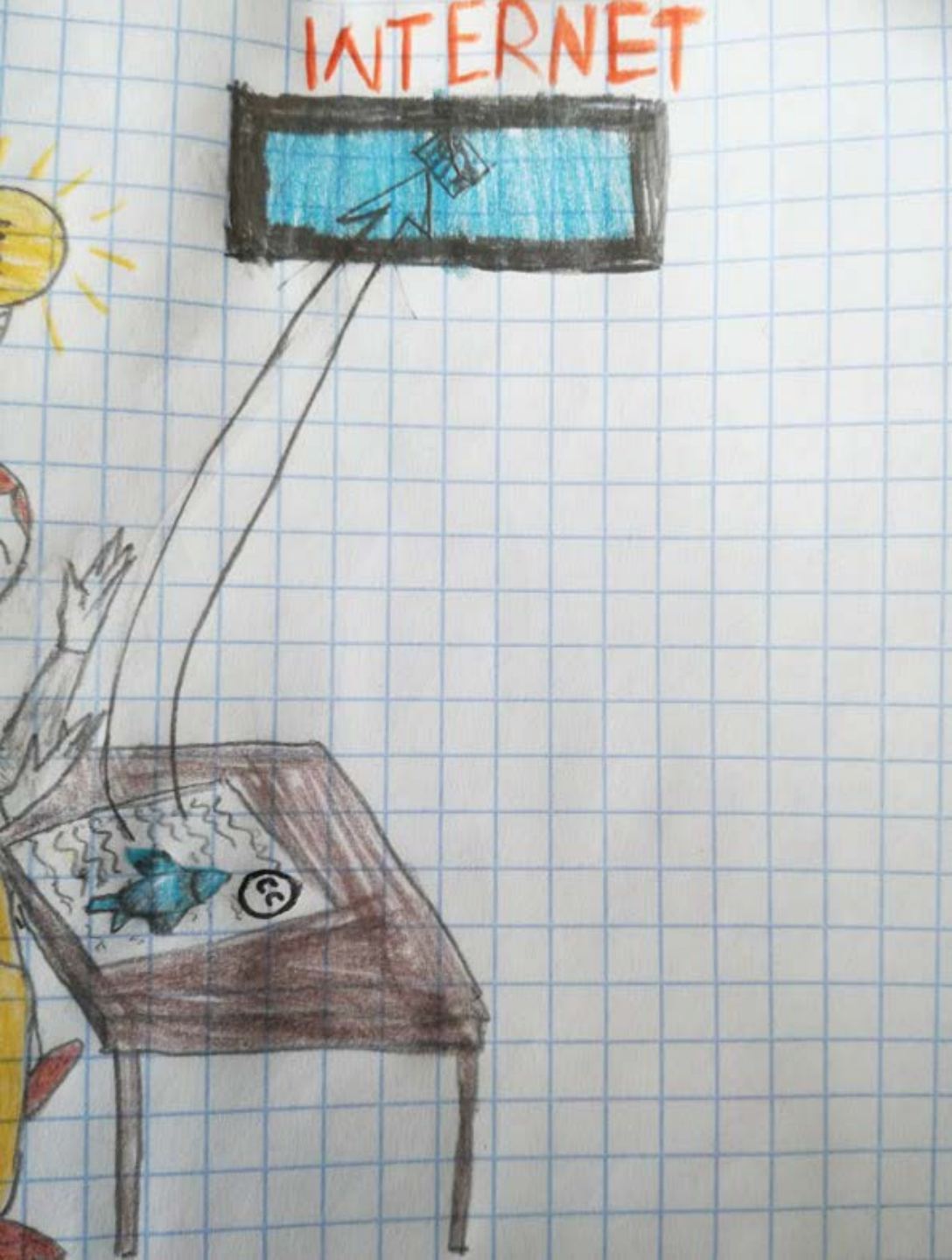
This scientific article gets published in an OA journal: a digital peer-reviewed journal that lets readers read its articles for free.

(I hope that when this 6-year-old grows up, she will not have to learn the difference between toll access and OA journals – because all journals will be OA.)



“Open-access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions.” [Peter Suber](#)

OA publishing channels are different from toll access channels – the latter charge readers for access through subscriptions or per-article fees, and impose strict restrictions on reuse.



Mom: Before the scientist sends her story to the internet, she puts a little sign on her story – the sign says that everyone in the world can use this story.

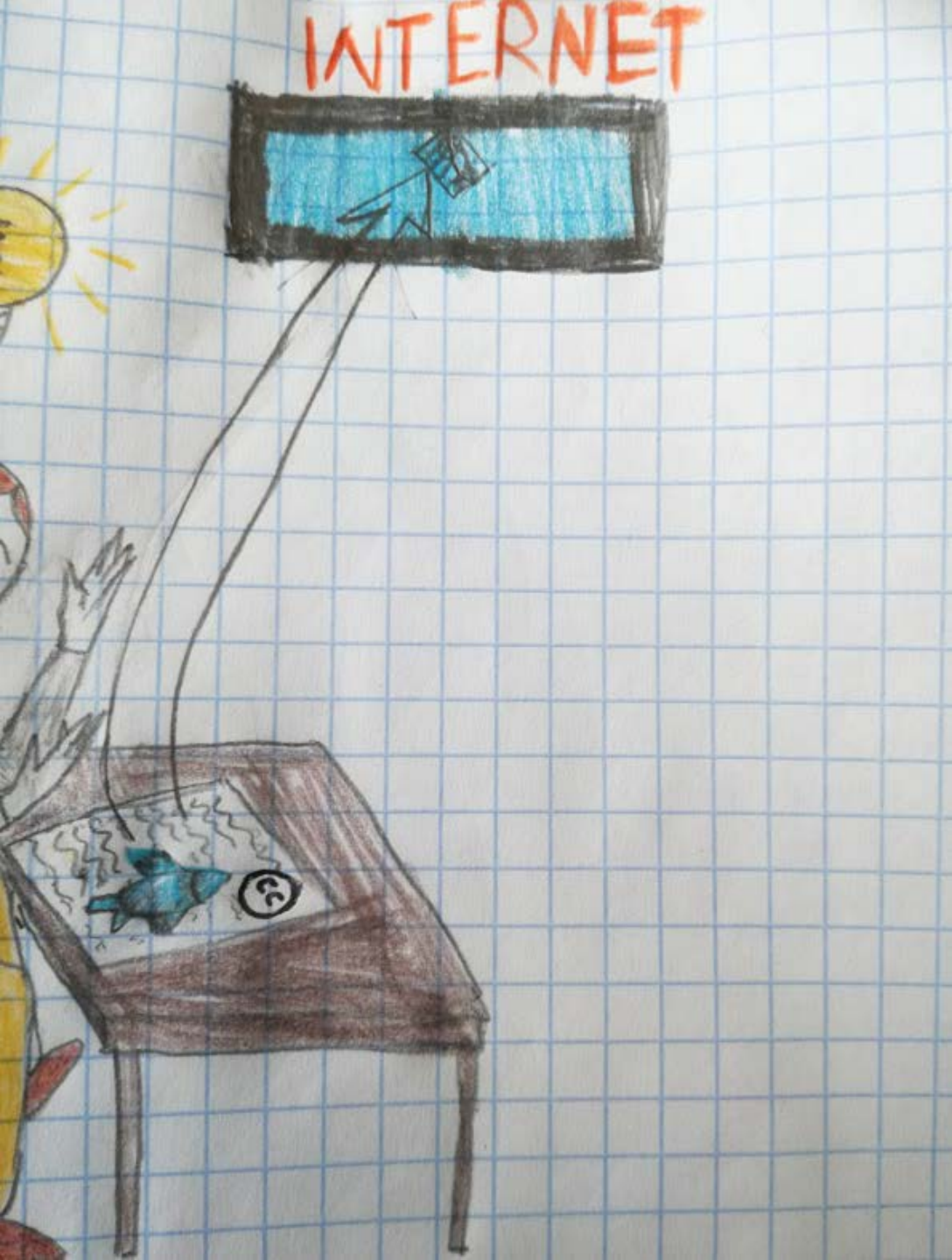


The «little sign» is a [Creative Commons](#) license that lets readers reuse and redistribute the article, without asking the scientist's permission. Reusers must always attribute the scientist.



There are six different Creative Commons licenses, with various combinations of restrictions/conditions.

The Attribution condition is present in all of the licenses.



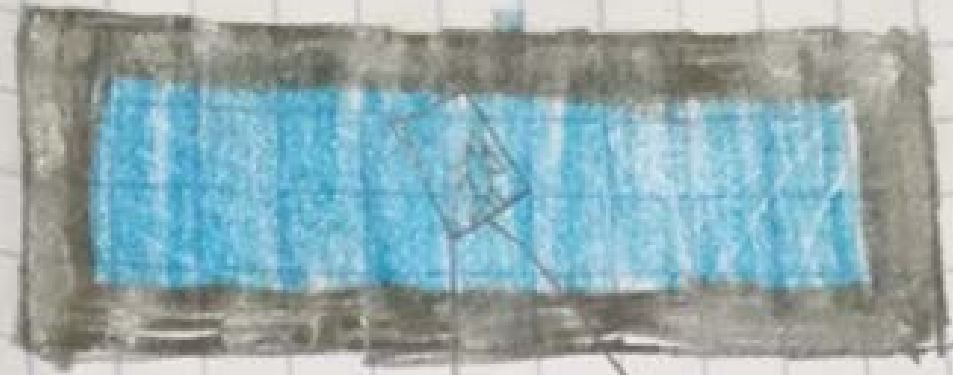
Daughter: Who everyone?

Mom: All the people who want to learn about fish?



How about you? Do you think your research is important for someone outside of the university sector?

Do you think your peers in other universities have access to all of the subscription journals you have access to?



Mom: Now the story is on the internet and EVERYONE can read it. And they don't even have to pay for it. Like this lady here – what shall we make her? Maybe a fisherwoman? You can draw all those fish in the net!

Daughter: Nooo! I feel sorry for the fish...

Mom: OK, she can feed the fish.

Daughter: Yes!





Mom: This lady read the story and used the scientist's ideas to make better food for her fish... This fish looks weird. Why does it have such a big head?

Daughter: I don't know, it just turned out like that 😊



It's free unpaywalled access to information that was important for this fish farmer.

Ideas are not protected by copyright. If you have an idea that needs to be protected, apply for a patent before publication.



Mom: And then there is this other scientist who reads the story and gets a new idea.

Daughter: Why are you drawing a man? Draw a woman.

Mom: But we have been drawing only women, let this other scientist be a man.

Daughter: No, this must be a woman, too! It will be cool!

Mom: Alright. So this scientist adds her new idea to the story and also sends it to the internet. Now everyone can learn even more about fish.



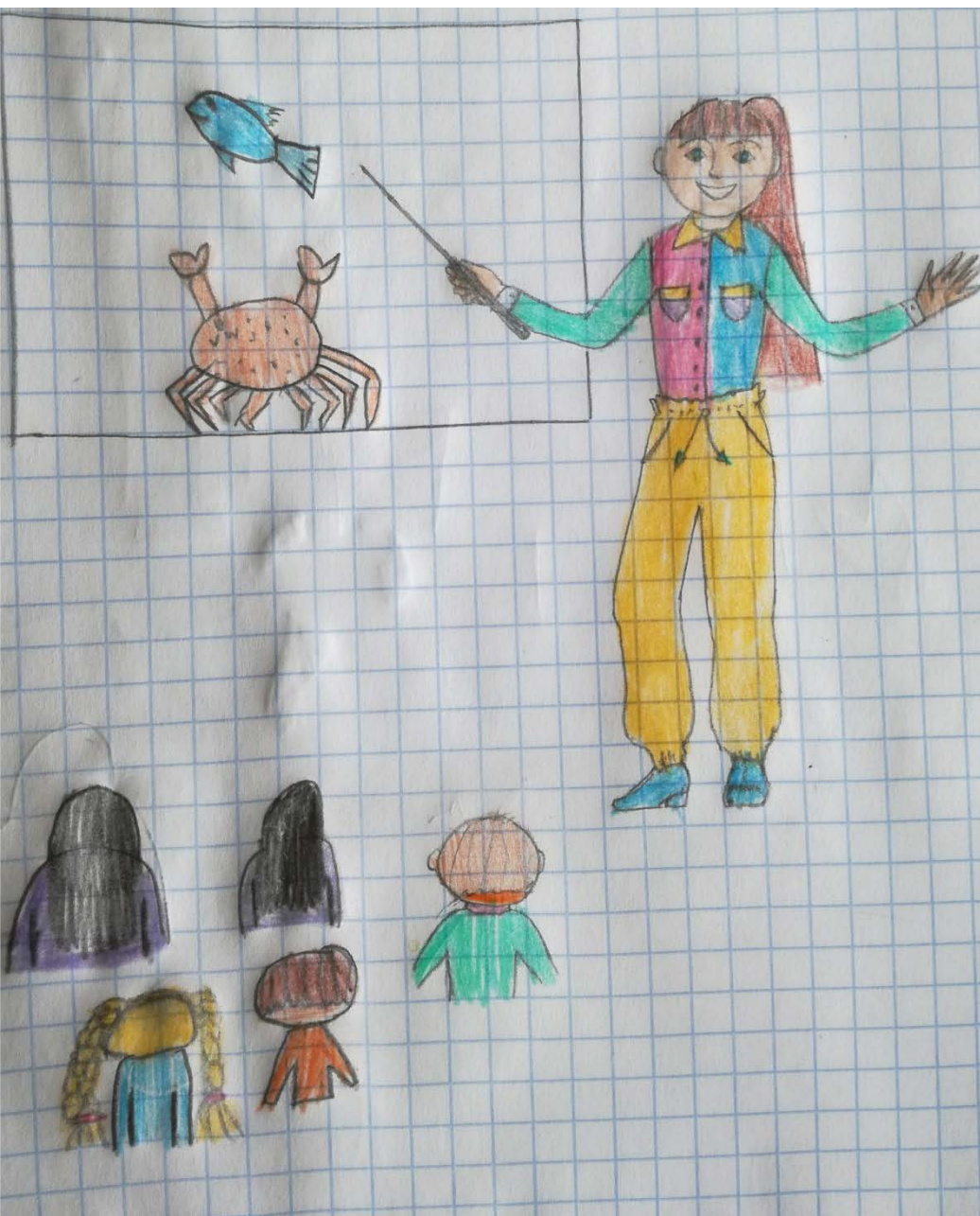
Most of the [Creative Commons](#) licenses allow reusers to adapt and build upon the material. This is *real* OA.

The scientist here must mention the original article's author and license, and state that she has made changes.



OA accelerates science because researchers around the world can access the latest scholarly literature for free, can build upon it and share their findings with others.

The [call from Wellcome Trust](#) to share research data and findings on COVID-19 **openly** has, as of 15 March 2020, been signed by 100+ organizations, incl. major subscription publishers. There is general agreement that OA to publications and data accelerates sharing of knowledge.



Mom: A teacher has read this story, too – and can tell her pupils about it.

Daughter: How many legs does a crab have?

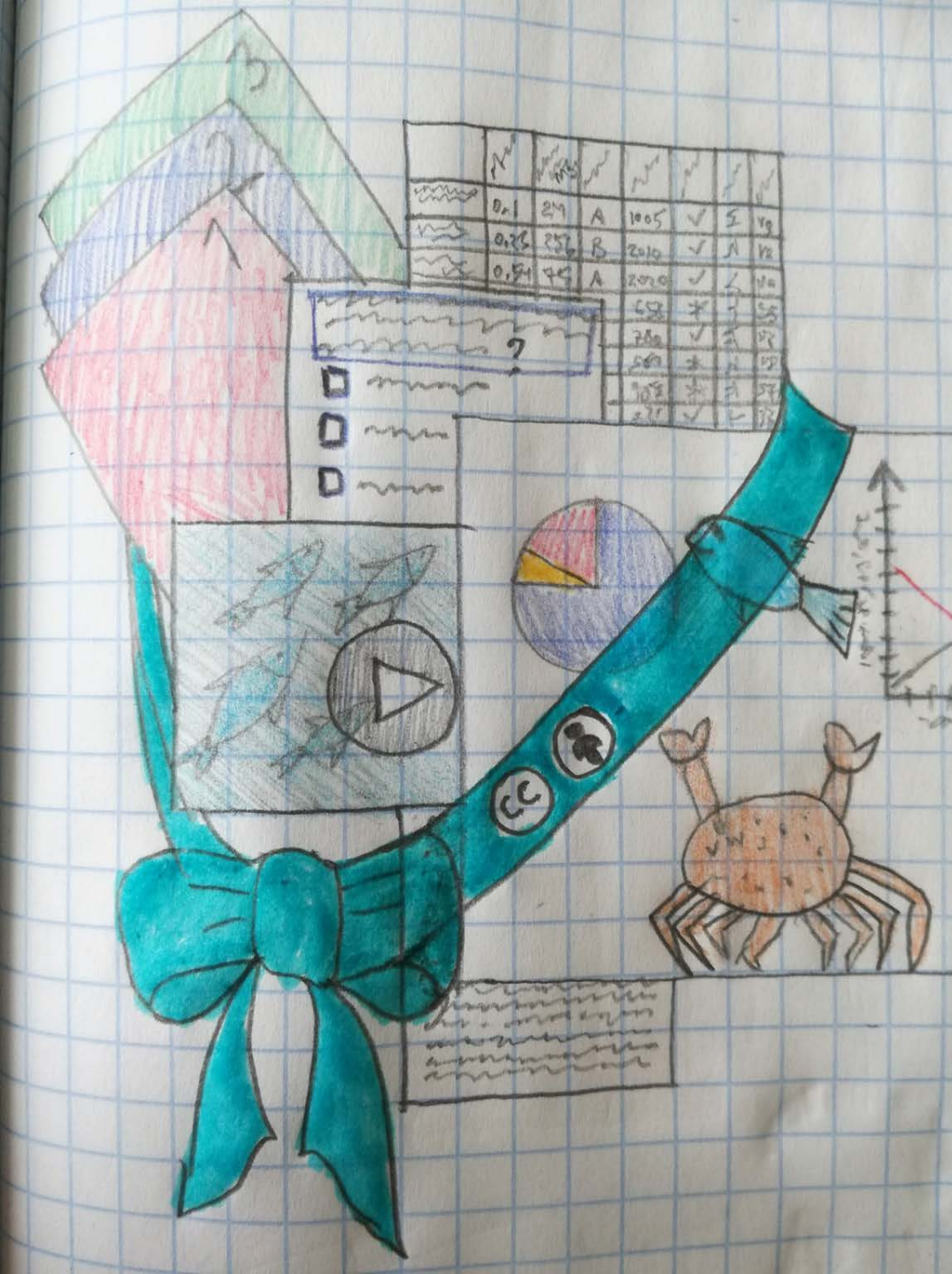
Mom: I think eight, together with the claws? Let's [check](#). Huh!



Schools usually cannot afford subscriptions to scholarly journals.

OA scholarly literature is an important knowledge resource for school teachers. Teachers can freely build on OA material and include it in their lessons.

And crabs are decapods.



Mom: Teachers can also put together everything they are teaching – and send all of that to the internet.

Daughter: What for?

Mom: So other teachers can teach their pupils about it.



A license that allows remixing (e.g. [CC BY](#)) is the most useful for the educational community: as teachers can then adapt the material more freely to the needs of their students.

Educational material that is published with an open license that allows remixing is what we call **Open Educational Resources**.



Anyone can use OER – as long as they adhere to the conditions in the material's license.

Material can be classified as OER if users can engage in the [5R activities](#):

1. Retain
2. Reuse
3. Revise
4. Remix
5. Redistribute

Students engage with the material more, because they too can remix it.

With OER, students do not have to pay for course material – and wait for it to arrive – so they can start studying right away and can afford to take more courses.



Open Access and Open Educational Resources –
so knowledge can truly be a public good!

Postface

- Crises like COVID-19 make even rich countries experience the importance of OA to scholarly and educational resources:
 - School pupils struggled with access to their digital textbooks from home. One of the Norwegian textbook providers opened up its material for the COVID-19 «home education» period.
 - UiT The Arctic University of Norway encountered VPN problems when the staff and students were sent away from campus – all the literature we had bought access to was now inaccessible (a high-priority task for the IT department).
 - In all of Norway, faculty and students (with help from the libraries) now had to find alternative sources: physical material on campuses became inaccessible and digital material often has restrictions on the number of simultaneous users.