



Support Diego Gomez and Join the Global Open Access Movement

In many parts of the developing world, students face barriers to access to academic materials. Libraries do not often have adequate resources, and schools and universities are unable to pay dues for expensive, specialized databases. For these students, the Internet is a vital resource to access materials that are otherwise unavailable to them. Yet despite the opportunities enabled by the Internet, there are still major risks to accessing and sharing academic resources online.

Diego Gomez, 26, is a master's student in Colombia who researches biodiversity and works on the conservation of reptiles and amphibians. Throughout his young career, the biggest obstacle he faced was in accessing academic resources that existed on global research databases.



So he depended on the Internet. It enabled him to read relevant research, share documents, and communicate with others in his field. When he and his colleagues came across papers that were crucial to their work, they often shared it online for other researchers to access. [Photo of Diego]

A couple of years ago, he came across an academic paper on Facebook that was especially useful to his fieldwork. He later posted it on another website. When the author of the paper found out, he filed a police report against whomever had shared it for violating his rights as an author. Now Diego is being criminally charged and faces imprisonment for up to eight years and crippling monetary fines.

Academics and students send and post articles online like this every day—it is simply the norm in scholarly communication. And yet inflexible digital policies, paired with senseless and outdated practices, have led to such extreme cases like Diego's.

Why We Need Open Access

Scientific progress relies upon the exchange of ideas and research, but outmoded policies and practices continue to present barriers that collectively stifle the Internet's potential. The open access movement is a fight for the continued progress of knowledge, science, and culture, by recognizing the intrinsic importance of enabling scholarly works to be shared widely, cheaply, and easily. There are two basic goals for open access advocates:

- 1) To make research freely available online without cost, through shared digital repositories or open access journals.
- 2) To make research reusable by promoting the use of open licenses—ensuring that the public can not only read existing works, but can also pick apart the research and build upon it.

The inability to readily access important research is an issue that affects us all. We need major reform of our laws, both internationally and domestically, to ensure that people are not made criminals for promoting scientific progress and exercising their creative expression.

Want to get involved? Visit this link and join the movement: <https://eff.org/diego>

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