

Implementing Open Access APCs:

the role of academic libraries

Siân Harris

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Foreword



Stephen Barr, President, SAGE International

We at SAGE were delighted to have the chance to collaborate with Jisc in organizing a panel to review a range of issues relating to the implementation of gold open access publishing in the UK.

This roundtable follows on from a similar meeting held in 2012, in collaboration with the British Library, looking at the long-term consequences of open access for the academic library. We see open access as a profoundly transformational issue for all of the stakeholders in scholarly communication, and believe that it calls for collaboration and communication between different interests in working our way through the many challenging changes as scholarly communication adapts to an open access environment.

In the UK, the Finch report, and subsequent decisions and actions by the UK government, RCUK and HEFCE have created a specific challenge around the implementation of article-processing charges on a massive scale, generating new issues for both universities and publishers. The objective of the roundtable was to identify and share ways in which different universities are responding to those challenges, with a view to helping the whole system adjust to the demands of working in a new model. We hope that this subsequent report helps inform the on-going deliberations of all stakeholders.



Lorraine Estelle, CEO, Jisc Collections

The SAGE roundtable meeting is timely because UK higher education institutions are facing unprecedented change. The Finch Report with its emphasis on gold open access and subsequent funding mandates puts UK higher-education institutions in a position different from the rest of the world. The wider the gap between one higher-education institution's own performance in OA publishing and the rest of the world's, the bigger the problem.

Open access is expanding its scope, scale and reach but progress is lumpy—fast in some areas, slower in others. It is likely that there will be minimal impact on global subscription levels for hybrid journals from UK OA article-processing charges, but UK research-intensive institutions face very high increases in expenditure now. The total cost of the journals system to UK universities will increase and thus collaborative discussion between scholarly publishers and UK higher education to ensure a sustainable implementation of the Finch Report is to be welcomed.

Executive summary

On 5 July 2013, a group of 10 UK librarians, along with representatives from SAGE and Jisc, met to discuss the role of academic librarians in implementing gold open access (OA) article-processing charges (APCs).

This event follows on from a roundtable commissioned by SAGE and held at the British Library in 2012, which set out some of the challenges and opportunities faced by librarians around the world with moves to OA. Since that event, there have been significant policy moves towards OA in the UK in particular, with the publication of the Finch report and subsequent revisions to OA mandates from Research Councils UK (RCUK) and the Wellcome Trust.

In view of these trends, the latest roundtable set out to consider the practical implications for academic librarians of helping researchers in UK higher education to comply with funder mandates.

It is still early days in the management of compliance with OA requirements from funders and institutions are at different stages of developing internal OA policies. However, some key trends emerged from discussions at the roundtable.

Participants showed strong support for the principles of OA but there was a preference amongst librarians and institutions for green OA in institutional repositories. It was felt that the institutional repository can help universities track their research output better and prepare for the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

However, the RCUK policy favours gold and there was concern expressed about journals policies changing to encourage people to take a gold rather than green approach. There were also concerns about a possible shortfall in funding for gold OA and that gold OA could cost institutions more than previous models.

The task of managing APC budgets has generally fallen to libraries. For many participants, the simplest and most cost-effective way to spend the grants given by RCUK to fund APCs is to put this money into publisher OA membership deals, often with large publishers that have a heritage of subscription publishing. Participants noted the similarities between publisher membership schemes to manage APC payments and big deals for journal subscriptions.

APC funds are often allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, regardless of the level of seniority of authors. However, there was a feeling that it should not be up to librarians to determine which papers get APC funding so many institutions have implemented an additional stage of academic sign-off before APCs are allocated.

In general, APCs are paid by the institution of the corresponding author, provided these are in the UK and funded by one of the funders with a gold OA mandate. It is a challenge when authors have different institutions, funders or even countries.

Volumes of APC requests to date have been low. This may be because some researchers have already been doing gold OA using existing budgets. However, discussions also revealed a lack of awareness from researchers about gold OA and publishing more generally, including a lack of awareness of copyright issues.

There was also a feeling that authors are not strongly motivated by the prices of APCs in choosing where to publish. Journal quality and impact factors were felt to be more pressing concerns than price for authors. Librarians also expressed concerns about top journals in particular fields not being compliant with UK funder mandates and about the potential for dubious publishers to take advantage of gold OA mandates.

A positive side of the low volume of initial engagement in gold OA, according to the roundtable discussions, is that it enables librarians to spend time working with researchers and establishing processes.

This slow start also provides an opportunity for librarians to investigate options for managing APCs. Several roundtable participants reported practical problems to date with managing APCs, both through intermediaries and in direct transactions with publishers. Problems encountered included the wrong VAT rate being assigned, failure to reconcile payments with the correct papers and the whole process taking a long time. Some librarians end up duplicating the administration process internally to avoid errors.

Librarians were concerned about the issue of double dipping, or differential pricing, particularly in relation to seeing reductions in their own subscription costs. The issue is complicated because the UK has taken a different stance on OA from the rest of the world and is a relatively small market for global publishers.

The roundtable revealed a need for clearer workflows for APC management and better management tools. Publishers could help with OA compliance by providing clear information about licences and conditions early in the submission process. The need for cross-industry initiatives and international standards in this area was identified, as was clarity from RCUK about how OA compliance should be recorded.

Introduction

On 5 July 2013, a group of 10 UK librarians, along with representatives from SAGE and Jisc, met together at Jisc headquarters in London to discuss the role of academic librarians in implementing gold open-access (OA) article-processing charges (APCs).

This event follows on from a roundtable commissioned by SAGE and held at the British Library in 2012¹ which set out some of the challenges and opportunities faced by librarians around the world with moves to OA. Since that event, there have been significant policy moves towards OA in the UK in particular, with the publication of the Finch report and subsequent revisions to OA mandates from Research Councils UK (RCUK) and the Wellcome Trust.

In view of these trends, the latest roundtable set out to consider the practical implications for academic librarians of helping researchers in UK higher education to comply with funder mandates.

The meeting was chaired by consultant Simon Inger. Participants were from a range of different types of UK academic institution and many also had key involvement in other industry groups and activities, including Research Libraries UK (RLUK) and Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL).

As an introduction, participants in the roundtable each presented brief summaries of their experiences with managing OA repositories, OA APCs and the approaches taken by their institutions. The discussion then moved on to considering the challenges and how these might be tackled.

This report records the themes, experiences and recommendations from the roundtable. Summaries of the case studies are included in Appendix 1.

¹ 'Moving towards an open access future: the role of academic libraries', <http://www.uk.sagepub.com/repository/binaries/pdf/Library-OARReport.pdf>

1. The current state of play

1.1 Institutional policies

It is still early days in the management of compliance with OA requirements from funders. The RCUK policy came into effect on 1 April 2013 and RCUK ‘expects compliance to grow over a transition period anticipated to be five years’². The newness of the funder OA requirements means that institutions are at different stages of developing internal OA policies.

For some of the roundtable attendees, there is already an institutional policy in place for OA. One participant, for example, noted, ‘we believe that open scholarship is essential and so we see it as an opportunity, not a challenge. We have developed detailed implementation plans that show how it is funded and what researchers should do to comply. This is available as a template for every researcher to follow.’

However, the majority of participants said that their institutions are still working on an OA policy. ‘The challenge is to get a consistent and strong message from senior management. We don’t yet have a clear, consistent policy,’ was one comment, whilst another librarian noted the risk of different faculties acting independently, resulting in several separate policies. This is something that this delegate’s library is aiming to avert by conducting a university-wide survey of researchers.

All participants at the roundtable reported the involvement of the library in helping to implement and manage OA in their institution. As one librarian put it, ‘the library manages it; this reasserts the library in the research workflow.’ Some participants also noted that implementation of OA policies might require restructuring of the library and library services.

The discussion of institutional policies revealed a preference amongst the participants for green OA. Talk of this in the roundtable primarily focused on institutional, rather than subject-based, repositories. ‘We are concerned that the UK’s rush to gold OA has put the UK in a different position from the rest of the world. We will comply but it’s not what we would have chosen. The concern is because it will increase our costs. We’ve had to find extra money in our research budget so that we don’t have to say to researchers that there is not money for them to publish,’ explained one participant.

One delegate neatly summarized the views of many of the delegates by stating: ‘our OA statement says we have a preference for green but that we have money for gold and will pay it where needed.’

1.2 The role of the institutional repository

In each librarian’s recount of OA initiatives, the role – or potential role – of an institutional repository was mentioned. For many, this forms an important part of their strategy in preparing for the Research Excellence Framework (REF). It was also seen as a way to help universities to track their research output better.

‘We are pragmatically pushing green over gold. We have an institutional repository that we’ll be looking at to capture institutional reporting,’ explained one participant.

‘We are very committed to OA in terms of results being publicly accessible. Our institutional repository is fairly mature and the library is interested in how it can extend green OA. We are gearing up for OA – and institutional repositories – to be a big part of REF 2020,’ said another.

Participants also considered the viability of a wide-scale push to green, rather than gold, as a means to comply with RCUK requirements. However, as one person noted, ‘if green were a huge success, publishers would change embargoes.’ Some mentioned that they have already seen publishers changing their embargo periods for green to encourage authors towards the gold route.

As a possible solution to this, one delegate suggested, ‘there may be a case for freezing APCs and putting a top embargo cap. We’re worried about journals changing policies.’

² RCUK policy <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/documents/RCUKOpenAccessPolicy.pdf>

1.3 Gold OA and APCs

In contrast to the preferences expressed by many institutions represented at the roundtable, the RCUK policy favours immediate OA, via an author-pays gold route. In order to assist uptake of this, RCUK has made available grants to assist institutions in paying APCs. RCUK has stated that these grants are anticipated to cover around 45% of APCs for RCUK-funded research papers in the first year, 50% in the second year and 75% by 2017/18. RCUK anticipates that the remaining papers are to be made OA via a green route³.

However, participants expressed concerns about how a possible shortfall in funding for APCs might lead to problems in meeting the requirements for gold. 'It's hard to get the scale of the issue,' observed one participant, while another, who described their institution's research output as 'rapidly evolving', said that their internal calculations placed the RCUK grant far short of the amount required for their anticipated research output.

Participants in the roundtable noted that there has been an implied expectation from RCUK that universities will fund additional APCs out of their own budgets. 'RCUK says that they take a very dim view of people who don't spend the block grant – but they also take a dim view of people who stop when the grant is spent,' commented one librarian.

However, different institutions take different approaches on their willingness to top up their APC funds. These range from no additional money from some institutions to enough money to fund all gold OA article fees from others.

2 Allocation of APC money

Librarians at the roundtable also shared some experiences of how they have been spending their APC grants so far. The picture painted was a mixture of bulk deals and individual allocations, with the emphasis varying between institutions.

2.1 Membership deals

For many participants, the simplest and most cost-effective way to spend RCUK grant money has been to put it into publisher OA membership deals. Such agreements with Elsevier, Springer, BioMed Central, Wiley and the Royal Society were mentioned several times.

There was also particular interest expressed in the Royal Society of Chemistry's Gold for Gold scheme, where institutions are given APC credits for their authors in proportion to the institution's subscription spend.

Many institutions have also put money into Jisc's APC management scheme, which is currently managed via the Open Access Key (OAK) service. Others put some of their OA grants into OA platforms in their university presses.

One participant noted that putting so much of the gold OA grants into publisher membership schemes and systems to manage APC payments is, in a sense 'reinventing the big deal.'

Another added that scaling up APC payments should be done in a way that does not hide costs. However, others were more pragmatic: 'yes, prepayment schemes reinvent the big deal but people should go and buy as many bulk deals as possible because it makes it easiest to comply with RCUK, even though it creates a disconnect on price,' was one comment.

A concern with this, which echoes some issues with big deals in subscription-based publishing, is impact on and the role of smaller publishers, with a possibility for dominance by the big players. 'One of the things that worries me with pre-payment schemes is that there are a lot of small fry. With big publishers I

³ 'RCUK announces block grants for universities to aid drives to open access to research outputs', <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/news/2012news/Pages/121108.aspx>

can't see we'll make financial gains with gold OA. I think we'll lose. One deal I saw said that if you didn't spend all your membership money you would lose it. I wonder whether Finch and gold isn't just a big con to make us pay more money,' said one participant.

It is noticeable that many of the APC packages mentioned in the discussion are with large publishers that have strong traditional subscription businesses.

2.2 Individual APC payments

In addition to joining membership schemes, to a greater or lesser extent, libraries have also been allocating funding for individual papers. How this is allocated varied across the institutions represented, based on whether the institution is prepared to top up the grant money.

'We don't care about the research level of the authors,' said one librarian. 'If you're compliant and if there is a lead author from our university then we'll pay the APC.'

In some cases, academic checks are required – a kind of internal peer-review process. 'We are devolving down decisions about who can use APC payments to school level,' said one participant, while another observed, 'APC requests need to be signed off by heads of department. We wanted to ensure that they've got approval from other academics.'

The reason for this is a sense that it should not be up to librarians to decide which papers are worth funding. 'Academics would be very uncomfortable with libraries or administrators deciding academic decisions. We would have to have faculty involved,' explained one librarian with another delegate wholeheartedly agreeing, 'I wouldn't want to cross the line of saying: "you should publish here".'

Although this is not seen as the library's role, concerns about possible quality problems with some gold OA journals mean that institutions tend to want some checks in place before paying APCs. One participant suggested that institutions could have an agreed set of journals from heads of schools that are always published with under a gold model and that other titles are chosen on a case-by-case basis.

Many said that they allocated funds on a first-come, first-served basis. This, according to one participant, ensures that the allocation does not, for example, disadvantage early-career researchers. However, this is an issue that can cause problems when researchers do not know when in the year their article might be accepted for publication. In addition, publishers often save up papers that are likely to be highly cited to the beginning of the calendar – rather than academic – year in an effort to boost citation counts.

A refinement of the first-come, first-served approach, which met with approval from other participants, was one library's approach of dividing their grant into quarters so that it can be spread more evenly throughout the year. This same library has also divided its RCUK funds up roughly by research council. This, said the librarian, 'is not limiting but for reporting purposes.'

2.3 Volume of APC requests

Many participants reported that the number of APC requests received so far has been low even compared with expectations. The numbers of APCs that participants reported giving out in the three months since the RCUK policy came into effect at the start of April ranged from 34 down to just two.

'We are handling APC requests on a first-come, first-served basis. Take up started slowly but has speeded up. We are trying to take the process away from academics,' noted one librarian.

'We are getting about one request a week, despite a massive effort on our part. We've done everything we can think of but there's no real interest,' said another, who added 'we've just absorbed the task of APC management into the background because there's been so little interest.'

However, this may be partly because of gold OA already going on through other routes rather than a lack of interest in OA, noted some participants. 'There is still quite a bit of pent up money in the system in existing grants, maybe being paid by principle investigators. You get the impression that a lot of OA is already going on,' explained one person. Another added: 'We've had lots of requests of the form "we used to pay this. Will you do it now?"'

3 Challenges of APC management

3.1 Selecting who should pay APCs

A recurring theme was the challenge that can arise of who should pay an APC. Different institutions take slightly different approaches on this, as do different funding bodies. The situation is fairly straightforward if a paper has, say, four authors who are all RCUK-funded and all at the same institution. The problem arises when authors are based at more than one university or have different sources of funding.

One librarian gave the example of a recent paper where one author was funded by RCUK and one by the Wellcome Trust. The Wellcome Trust said that it would only fund its share of the APC, leaving the university's accounts department with the requirement to split the invoice in half.

Location of the researchers also makes a difference. 'Our authors are normally co-authors with researchers around the world. This presents a challenge of who manages and who pays,' was one comment.

In situations where authors are based at more than one university, most librarians took the view that payment should rest with the institution of the principle investigator or corresponding author. However, even that can cause problems. An example given at the roundtable was that of a paper where the principle investigator was based at an overseas university, with no funding for APCs and no funder mandate to publish as gold OA. The UK university had to pick up the APC bill in order to comply with the RCUK mandate.

'We could argue for days over APCs but it is really important to get sensible workflows,' observed one participant.

3.2 Advising researchers

Another challenge raised in the discussions was the issue of lack of awareness and engagement from researchers in the process. One participant noted potential confusion amongst researchers about different licence options (such as CC BY versus CC BY NC). 'If researchers pick the wrong one then it is complicated to undo,' they explained. 'The logistics and explaining things to academics are time consuming.'

Discussions revealed a particular lack of awareness of copyright and how this fits into subscription publishing. 'A lot of the talk about CC BY is not really about CC BY. It's just that they've never read the agreements before,' noted one. 'We did a survey a few years ago about OA. Researchers pretty much knew what the repository did. What they didn't know about was copyright. About 30% of people said they've never read a copyright agreement in their lives⁴.'

In addition, experience suggests that in some cases, with licensing options, the one an author picks for a paper is influenced by the order the options are presented to them.

There was another awareness challenge that one librarian noted, which is the issue of researchers submitting to fully gold OA journals without being funded by RCUK. One librarian, who has noticed this a few times with submissions to the journal *PLOS One*, urged, 'Don't submit to a fully gold OA journal if you're not RCUK funded because we are not going to pay.'

'Researchers have really good awareness of green OA but very little awareness of gold and what it means. Academics are really tied up in the REF,' was one comment.

'Many academics don't understand much about how traditional publishing works,' was another observation, while another said, 'There is a need for training and advocacy to academics. They have not been trained how to manage their rights. This is the responsibility of publishers and universities.'

One librarian agreed: 'Even for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) colleagues

4 Stone, Graham (2010) [Report on the University Repository Survey, October-November 2010](#). Research Report. University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield

many aspects of OA are strange and new. With humanities and social sciences (HSS) colleagues it is interesting to hear the different stages people are at. They are puzzled by some of the basic language.'

'It is an interesting challenge to work with academics. It's a culture change and any change is difficult. It can't happen overnight,' agreed another.

However, the lack of researcher engagement in gold OA to date does have some benefits. According to the discussions, it helps librarians, researchers and institutions to evaluate and get to know the process. 'At the moment it's quite nice to have such a low level of interest because it means you can spend time with individual authors and really look at things like Jisc APC,' said one librarian. 'Many researchers are already using grant money for APCs but we've never really captured the scale of this before. Now we are sitting with them from the beginning so it's been a useful learning process.'

'You'd assume that authors who publish will have used the library but we do find we're having more contact with authors now,' another librarian commented.

'Managing OA makes the library more relevant to the research community,' agreed someone else.

One participant noted that libraries already provide researchers, especially in the early stages of their careers, with advice about things like licences. However, there may be a challenge with scaling this up to provide advice on each paper submission.

There are a few resources available to help, such as a leaflet produced by Jisc explaining the CC BY licence⁵. Libraries have also undertaken to provide advice about OA in leaflets and via their websites. The discussion highlighted several good examples of this at UK universities, although one participant wondered whether researchers are actually using them or whether they are mainly read by other librarians.

'We've had more success on a one to one basis rather than a big splash in an email newsletter,' observed one librarian. Another noted that they are talking about OA in every committee they are on. 'It comes down to talking to people,' they explained.

3.3 Communicating APC costs

Communication with researchers was also felt to be important on the topic of APC prices. The approach of buying into membership packages and other schemes to simplify APC management can break the connection between journals and their APC price. 'To get things done there can't be anything but a disconnect,' noted one librarian. Although agreeing with this, others noted that there should somehow be a communication of costs to researchers. 'The downwards pressure on APCs comes from authors. I would like price to be visible,' was one view.

However, there was discussion about how much difference this would make. As one participant pointed out, 'at the moment it's not workable. If we tell academics APC prices they say "don't tell me where to publish" and "my funder pays, therefore price doesn't matter".'

Another agreed: 'while Impact Factors influence where you are in a league table, price will not be an issue.'

Some participants wondered whether university research offices might influence this in the future. One observed: 'At the moment they don't know how much we spend on subscriptions but they are going to be looking at APCs and whether the university is getting value for money.'

3.4 Working with publishers

Participants also noted that the task of paying for APCs is not straightforward. 'Payments are down to the smallest possible unit, which presents a huge overhead,' was one comment. This is a challenge for both libraries and publishers alike and means that communication with publishers is also important. 'We

5 *Guide to Creative Commons for Humanities and Social Science monograph authors*: <http://oopen-uk.jiscebooks.org/ccguide/>

are having a mixed experience of dealing with publishers. What should be simple can take three to four hours. Some publishers are not geared around doing this,' said one participant.

Issues that people have experienced include the wrong rate of VAT being added to APC payments where, for example, the publisher is in Germany but the researchers are in the UK. Other librarians reported problems in linking payment to the relevant paper.

'We're not going to deny that administering APCs is a struggle,' agreed David Ross, Executive Publisher for open access at SAGE. 'Historically publishers have been set up to transact centrally with libraries. We are working with organizations such as OAK [the service provider currently being used by Jisc for its APC management service] to see how much we can automate but currently volumes are so low that they can effectively be handled on a spreadsheet. At the moment it's a tiny part of our journal revenue, much less than 1%.'

Another issue raised was publisher awareness. 'Outside the top 20, publishers are pretty clueless about things like different CC licences and we have about 10,000 of those guys to educate,' was one comment. This is particularly a challenge because the UK, which is a relatively small portion of the total market, has taken a different approach from that of other countries.

The discussion turned to practicalities of submitting OA articles and the role that publishers could take in communicating their RCUK compliance to authors. One comment was that 'It comes down to submission point – academics are not interested until then.'

However, this can be a challenge too. 'Academics will spend hours on submitting an article. They are probably bored by the time they get to the licence.' In addition, the licence details – and hence compliance or otherwise with RCUK requirements – are often not presented to the author at the point of submission. Instead this happens at the point of acceptance.

In addition, it can be hard for researchers to know whether a journal is compliant with RCUK requirements. 'It would be helpful for publishers to do work on standardizing licences and communicating to authors,' remarked one librarian, who added that submission pages often do not provide straightforward statements of what is allowed with things like embargoes and licences.

'I think there's a piece of work to be done to get messages to academics, for example a message saying "further down the line you will be required to tick a box that says ...",' suggested one participant, while another suggested that what is required is simply a statement early on in the submission process saying that a particular journal is RCUK compliant.

3.5 Working with APC management systems

The process of managing APC payments can, in theory, be assisted by intermediaries. Many participants reported using Open Access Key (OAK), the service provider that Jisc is currently using to pilot APC management.

'We are handling our RCUK grant with OAK but we are quite concerned about it. We've been told that publishers have been paid but the payments have not been reconciled with individual papers and sometimes VAT is not being paid. At the moment we are double recording everything so it is not saving on administration,' said one librarian.

'We do have real worries about OAK and about the engagement of publishers in it,' agreed another, who also noted they were 'concerned about the costs of administering APCs unless it's automated and made easier for academics. [Administration] is using up money that could go more directly into research.'

Another participant noted that the pilot project Jisc APC is interesting but that they have not signed up to it yet as their legal department had some issues with the contract. 'We've not signed up to any schemes. We wanted to get experience ourselves,' they said.

Lorraine Estelle, CEO of Jisc Collections, observed: 'we have worked with libraries on various pre-payment schemes. Some require a lot of administration and data to make them work. We had hoped to launch Jisc APC already but haven't yet. We have learned that it is not trivial and our programmers have

been working on it solidly for three months. Micropayments, however you do them, are a nightmare for everyone.'

Discussions turned to alternatives to OAK. The APC management system provided by EBSCO was discussed, with varying levels of enthusiasm. It was noted that RIN has carried out some research into APC management⁶.

Alternatives could also come in the shape of cross-industry initiatives, along similar lines to CrossRef and COUNTER. 'With all these systems it comes down to standards. Unless they work to standards and report in the same way and are interoperable they are no use,' commented Lorraine Estelle of Jisc Collections.

The roundtable also discussed whether APC management could be better integrated with manuscript submission systems. However, this is also a challenge. David Ross noted that this is not currently easy with the system used by SAGE, although it is on the vendor's roadmap. Such submission systems are so embedded into publisher practices that they can't be easily shifted.

3.6 Compliant and non-compliant journals

There was also discussion of how to deal with journals that do not comply with RCUK requirements. According to discussions at the roundtable, some disciplines publish in non-English language journals. In other disciplines, some of the key journals are still only in print and so not even available electronically.

In addition, some key journals are from societies not based in the UK. They see the UK as only a small portion of their market and therefore compliance with RCUK is not a priority.

SAGE Publisher David Ross acknowledged that not all US societies, for example, saw the need to become RCUK compliant. However, he added that most would make an exception if they were contacted directly about a really good UK paper.

A librarian at the roundtable noted a similar experience. 'I've had three requests to publish with non-RCUK compliant journals, all published by US societies. In each case we called them and they said "yes".'

The need for further advocacy in the US was noted.

There is also the risk of misinformation. One librarian reported cases where publishers have told researchers that they need to pay an APC to be RCUK-compliant, where, in fact, the publisher also allows RCUK-compliant green OA.

3.7 Reporting

Reporting OA publishing – and publishing activities more generally - was a recurring theme at the roundtable. Many participants felt that the RCUK requirements lacked clarity on what the funder is looking for from institutions. Several noted the need to bring funders into the conversation and discover what they want in terms of reporting OA publishing and compliance with mandates.

'What's easy to report is gold and RCUK-compliant publications. Reporting of all the green and non-compliant things is not easy,' observed one participant. In particular, people wondered how to report green activities and how to track RCUK-compliant publications as a percentage of the total.

However, others felt that tracking all publication activity is a challenge. 'Some universities may have systems in place but we're not there yet,' observed one person. Another noted that their system will use RSS feeds from Web of Science to create an auto alert of authors from their institution. However, this doesn't capture all RCUK-funded papers and captures many that do not credit RCUK.

And it is not just RCUK papers that universities need to track. The Wellcome Trust also has requirements

6 The Potential Role for Intermediaries in Managing the Payment of Open Access Article Processing Charges (APCs), RIN, October 2012: <http://www.researchinfonet.org/publish/apcs/>

for OA that need to be complied with. 'Funders have not said what they require with reporting. It would help if publishers could help us get ahead in the game,' said one participant.

Understanding research output of universities is also important for the institutions themselves, and particularly as they consider how to allocate their APC funds. One participant noted the potential for using repositories as predictors of what institutions will publish with each publisher and also helping libraries with collection development.

'We are beginning to get a grip for first time on where our researchers publish,' was one comment. Another said that they have created their own subject list based on their institutional repository.

However, another comment was that, while tracking OA publications helps an institution get more information it is 'not necessarily improving the system.' Further comments suggested that there was little evidence of best practice.

Some felt that publishers have a role in helping this, along with industry organizations such as CrossRef. 'It would be helpful to have a forum with publishers, libraries and academics involved,' was one comment. Another suggested 'these things have to be internationally standardized. This is UK specific at the moment but it needs an international solution.'

4 Additional issues to address in the future

4.1 Effects on subscription pricing

Another concern was so-called 'double dipping' or, as some referred to it at the roundtable, 'differential pricing'. Initial discussions about this topic in the industry considered a reduction on the subscription price for everybody on hybrid journals when articles are published as OA. However, discussions at the roundtable focused more on ensuring particularly that subscription prices are reduced for those institutions that have paid APCs with that publisher.

'This is already an issue. My university doesn't understand why there hasn't been movement in the subscription regime,' was one comment.

The problem in the specific case of subscription reductions for those who have paid to publish is that the UK is in a unique position with its OA policy and the majority of APC payments are going into fully gold OA journals where differential pricing is not an issue. As one person noted, 'publishers are not double dipping across the world but on a local scale it is a huge issue.'

'What I don't understand with big journals is why there can't just be a simple calculation: one minus the other equals refund,' said another participant. The Royal Society of Chemistry's Gold for Gold model is an example of this approach, which was discussed favourably.

One attendee stated the importance of maintaining a dialogue between institutions, researchers and publishers in order to dispel concerns about publisher profits and the drive to OA.

'The problem comes from hybrid journals. Why can't we have a landscape of one or the other?' argued one participant. However, others expressed their researchers' desire to publish in top journals in the field and lack of interest in the publishing model today.

'Academics want to publish in the best journal,' noted one participant. Another questioned why an academic would choose a new gold OA journal over an existing high Impact-Factor journal.

Even the example of the SCOAP3 initiative to transform high-energy physics journals into fully OA has been far from straightforward, according to one participant, and this is an initiative with sector-wide backing, a long experience of using ArXiv and researchers so used to massive-budget projects that the cost of an APC is almost negligible.

'We will have to live with hybrid journals so will have to deal with double dipping,' observed one librarian.

4.2 Monographs

Another topic, which participants said the Finch report was ‘almost silent on’, was the role of OA in the future of HSS monographs. This was an important issue at the roundtable and something that some participants said their institutions are tackling with their own university presses.

‘Our view is that the current model is broken. There is less money for libraries to spend on buying monographs. We saw publishing them as OA in our press as a solution,’ remarked one librarian. ‘We believe it is one of the roles of a university to disseminate its own findings. The idea of an OA university press fits well with this.’

4.3 Quality concerns

Concerns were also raised about ensuring quality with gold OA and the rise of apparently dubious OA journals was mentioned as an issue. Participants were also concerned about automation in the submission process within publishers, where papers are automatically considered for another journal within a publisher if they have been rejected by a higher Impact Factor (IF) sister title. Many publishers have proudly announced the concept of cascading peer review as a way to improve efficiency for authors and reviewers but it was actually seen in a more negative light by participants at the roundtable.

‘With a cascading system, the academic loses a bit of control or doesn’t understand what’s happening,’ said one librarian. Another participant suggested that ‘the cascade problem is quite serious. From a publisher point of view, would you turn away good money?’

Another commented, ‘if authors try a high Impact Factor journal, it might be better for them to take their paper away, do more work on it and publish elsewhere rather than cascade to another journal with that publisher.’

‘The rise of OA mega journals can be seen, rightly or wrongly, as a soft way to get published,’ agreed a third.

Conclusions

While the academic librarians, and their institutions, represented in the roundtable support the goals of open access, the OA mandates from UK funders have created significant practical challenges for them. These include issues about how to apportion funding, challenges about managing many small payments and concerns about quality and quality management. There are also concerns about the UK taking a different approach from other countries.

Some other, perhaps surprising, outcomes from the roundtable include the clear preference in many institutions for green OA, the amount of APC money being spent with established subscription publishers in a way that is similar to subscription big deals and the reported lack of researcher engagement and awareness of gold OA.

Despite the challenges, however, librarians reported many positive aspects of the UK's strong move towards OA. In addition to supporting the goal of broadening access, the new emphasis on OA helps re-establish the role of libraries in the research process. This enables libraries and their institutions to gain a better understanding of both researchers' publishing practices and their information needs.

Recommendations

Participants at the roundtable felt that several things would help the process of implementing OA APCs:

Clear guidance from funders about what they are looking for and how it should be reported and measured

Better communication by publishers of copyright options and which journals are compliant with RCUK policy

More robust systems for managing APCs

Cross-industry initiatives and international standards

More work to address the issue of double dipping or differential pricing

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About the author

Dr Siân Harris is editor of *Research Information*, the global publication for research librarians, information professionals, scholarly publishers and researchers. Prior to becoming editor of *Research Information* in 2004, she worked for six years at the Institute of Physics Publishing and she has done freelance writing and editing for a number of other international publishers. She has a PhD in inorganic chemistry and has worked in university and corporate libraries.

www.researchinformation.info @researchinfo

About the chair

Simon Inger has been involved in scholarly publishing for over twenty-five years and has been a consultant since 2002.

Simon has worked in the subscription agency world; has been closely involved in library technology solutions and standards-making; was a co-founder and managing director of CatchWord, the first e-journal platform provider; and has provided consultancy to commercial and not-for-profit publishers, large and small, and intermediaries of all descriptions in the information chain. In addition, under the brand of Renew Training, Simon is a co-trainer on a number of courses run in association with UKSG and ALPSP for librarians and publishers.

Appendix 1: Librarian case studies

Case study 1

'It's early days for us. We have an institutional repository and we are working on that and REF decisions. OA has ended up in the library. We are seeing how it goes and following the RCUK approach. We handle APC requests on a first-come, first-served basis. Take up started slowly but has speeded up. We are trying to take the process away from academics but we don't see it as the library's place to evaluate research.

We are also managing the financial side and aiming to avoid double dipping but we are not sure how we'll do this. We are having a mixed experience of dealing with publishers. What should be simple can take three to four hours. Some publishers are not geared around doing APCs.'

Case study 2

'We try to liaise closely with our research division and are working out the process. There is likely to be some restructuring in the library. We have quite a lively repository, which we established a while ago and are using for the REF. This has helped researchers to get to know me.

The logistics of APC management and explaining things to academics are time consuming. It is a challenge to determine who is eligible for the pre-payment pot of RCUK money, especially with the different licences (CC BY, CC BY NC etc). If researchers pick the wrong one then it is complicated to undo.'

Case study 3

'With money from BIS [Department for Business, Innovation & Skills], we have so far paid for 34 individual articles. We also took out the Elsevier retrospective OA package and Elsevier pre-payment scheme, as well as the Springer package. We put money into setting up an OA platform at our university press and deposited the rest of the BIS money with OAK [Open Access Key].

With the RCUK block grant we don't yet have a university policy. Our faculties are very autonomous so we could end up with 13 OA policies but we are currently running a survey of staff with a view to a university-wide OA policy.

We are handling our RCUK grant with OAK but we are quite concerned about it. We've been told that publishers have been paid but the payments have not been reconciled with individual papers and sometimes VAT is not being paid. At the moment we are double recording everything so it is not saving administration.'

Case study 4

'The library has taken on the responsibility of running the Wellcome Trust money. We bought a membership with the Royal Society, took out the Elsevier retrospective deal and banked the rest with Wiley.

We have made some APC payments. We don't care about the research level of the authors. If you're compliant and if there is a lead author from our university then we'll pay the APC. We are getting about one request a week and this is despite a massive effort on our part. We've done everything we can think of but there's no real interest.

We've just absorbed APC management into the background because there's been so little interest. However, there is still quite a bit of pent up money in the system within existing grants so maybe APCs are being paid directly by principle investigators.

We are holding back on green OA at the moment and going to try to go for a big relaunch [of our repository] in the new year.'

Case study 5

'We've had a repository since 2006 and there is a really good awareness of green OA amongst researchers. However, there is very little awareness of gold OA and what it means. In fact the response has been quite hostile. Academics are really tied up in the REF currently.

We don't have yet have a policy about APCs but it is being looked at. Our research agenda is rapidly evolving and our calculations show that the RCUK grant doesn't come close to covering what is actually published.

We have put our grant money into Jisc APC, BioMed Central and the Royal Society's OA membership schemes and we participate in RSC Gold for Gold. Interestingly, chemists are the most interested in gold OA. They were the ones who didn't take up green OA with us.'

Case study 6

'The library's been managing the institutional repository for a number of years. It is mostly records, not full text. To get in, there has to be at least one of our staff but our authors are normally co-authors with researchers around the world.

This all presents a challenge when it comes to gold OA, deciding who manages the APC and who pays.

We launched an OA support service in April and have so far had conversations with about 20 people. This translated into 10 actual requests for funding but most were already too far along to fit the RCUK deadline. So far we've paid two APCs, all chemists, under the RSC Gold for Gold scheme.

Many researchers are already using their grant money for APCs but we've never really captured the scale of this before. Now we are sitting with them from the beginning so it's been a useful learning process. At the moment it's quite nice to have such a low level of interest because it means you can spend time with individual authors and really look at things like Jisc APC.

The library at the moment is taking each request as they come and so far we've been using company credit cards to pay APCs. We have signed up to the Jisc APC system but are still deciding whether to deposit or pay monthly.

The challenge is to get consistent and strong messages from senior management. We don't have a clear, consistent policy yet.'

Case study 7

'We believe that open scholarship is essential and so we see it as an opportunity, not a challenge. We have developed detailed implementation plans that show how it is funded and what researchers should do to comply. This is available as a template for every researcher to follow.

However, we are concerned that the UK's rush to gold OA has put the UK in a different position from the rest of the world. We will comply but it's not what we would have chosen. The concern is because it will increase our costs. We've had to find extra money in our research budget so that we don't have to say to researchers that there is not money for them to publish.

The library manages it and this reasserts the library in the research workflow. We are having to monitor compliance. It is an interesting challenge to work with academics. It's a culture change and any change is difficult. It can't happen overnight. It's a very exciting but challenging change.'

Case study 8

'We are very committed to OA in terms of results being publicly accessible. We responded to the House of Lords and said we are very committed to green. We are in the process of establishing a policy. Our institutional repository is fairly mature and the library is interested in how it can extend green OA. We are gearing up for OA – and institutional repositories – to be a big part of REF 2020.

We are devolving down decisions about who can use APC payments at school level. One of our senior librarians will be OA manager and will establish a team to be contact with OAK, Symplectic and others. We do have real worries about OAK and about the level of engagement of publishers in it. We are concerned about the costs of administering APCs unless it's automated and made easier for academics. It's using up money that could go more directly into research. We haven't put any additional money into fund for APCs.

Even for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) colleagues many aspects of OA are strange and new. With humanities and social sciences (HSS) colleagues it is interesting to hear the different stages people are at. They are puzzled by some of the basic language.'

Case study 9

'We have a statement of OA on our website, which says that we have a preference for green but we have money for gold and will pay where needed. It's the first time we've had a central APC fund. We've had 36 applications and have paid 16 of them.

We've not signed up to any APC management schemes; we wanted to get experience ourselves. Payments are down to the smallest possible unit, which makes a huge overhead. We've divided up the money roughly by research council. This is not limiting but for reporting. We have also divided up our APC money into quarters of the year.

APC requests needs to be signed off by heads of department. We wanted to ensure that they got other academic approval.'

Case study 10

'We publish about 1200 publications per year and reckon that about a third of these fall within RCUK. It's hard to get the scale of the issue but our institution views OA as opportunity to take a more strategic approach to research.

We are pragmatically pushing green over gold. We have an institutional repository that we'll be looking at to capture institutional reporting.

We see a mixed picture of engagement. Libraries are leading on advocacy but it's early days.'

