



REMAINING QUESTIONS TO PANELISTS AT THE END OF THE WEBINAR SESSION (20 Oct 2009)

MC = Matt Cockerill, BioMed Central (BMC)

DH = David Hoole, Nature Publishing Group (NPG)

MP = Mark Patterson, Public Library of Science (PLOS)

SF= Saskia Franken, Utrecht University Library (Igitur)

PdV= Pierre de Villiers, African Online Scientific Information Systems (AOSIS)

How does Biomed central avoid conflicts of interest with its commercial publishing parent?

MC: BioMed Central itself is (and has always been) a commercial publisher. Publishing open access journals is entirely compatible with operating in the commercial sector. Meanwhile, Springer publishes several other open access journals, and offers the OpenChoice option on all its other journal titles.

At the time of the BioMed Central acquisition, Derk Haank (Springer CEO) noted “This acquisition reinforces the fact that we see open access publishing as a sustainable part of STM publishing... We have gained considerable positive experience since starting Springer Open Choice in 2004, and BioMed Central’s activities are complementary to what we are doing.”

Do new BMC journals go straight into PubMed Central/Medline or do they have to be approved by NIH first?

MC: New BioMed Central journals go through a standard NLM approval process to get into PubMed Central/PubMed. The NLM has deliberately made this approval process rapid and efficient, so journals generally appear in PubMed and PMC shortly after launch.

MEDLINE is somewhat different. The NLM generally only selects well-established journals for inclusion in MEDLINE. We wait until a journal has published a substantial amount of content before we submit it for consideration for inclusion in MEDLINE, Web of Science and similar selective databases.

One for Matt, following a recent discussion at BMC, will you be adding Mendeley to your list of social bookmarks to BMC Manuscripts? Thanks.

MC: Good idea – we are tweaking our user interface to allow us to add a greater range of choices for social bookmarking, and Mendeley would be a natural one to add.

What level of partnership or support has Biomed received from its parent?

MC: BioMed Central operates as an autonomous publishing unit within Springer, while benefiting greatly from Springer's international infrastructure and offices. We have many productive collaborations with colleagues in other Springer units – for example we were recently added able to add geographic author maps to all our subject gateways thanks to our collaboration with Springer's AuthorMapper team.

Regarding article level metrics as on PLoS...how are authors or institutions or sponsors driving people to read the articles and grow usage, blog coverage, etc.? Is there a best practice? Are other OA or non-OA publishers adopting this?

MP: It's very early days for article-level metrics, but we have already seen instances where authors are highlighting the metrics associated with their articles. And a recent news piece in the Times Higher Education highlighted the amount of times a PLoS Biology article had been downloaded (<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=408659>). This is exactly what we hope will happen. Different groups will find different uses for the range of data that we make available. Other publishers are beginning to express interest as well.

How do you [PLoS] measure citations?

MP: Using three sources at the moment – citations in PubMed Central (the free full-text archive), Scopus (Elsevier's product), and CrossRef (a non-profit organization that provides many services related to publishing)

Is PLoS going to propose equations to pull all these article-level metrics into one single number?

MP: Not yet. We are making the entire dataset available, in part to allow community members to explore the data and come up with new ideas for how to assess the impact and influence of individual articles. Already, the data have been imported into the Many Eyes tool, which provides some interesting views on the data (see <http://manyeyes.alphaworks.ibm.com/manyeyes/visualizations/plos-article-citations-per-day-col>).

One note of caution – ‘impact’ is a complex concept that means different things to different people, and attempting to distil this into one number is probably not the best approach.

Mark, how do you launch/promote a new journal like PLoS Currents Influenza to receive submissions?

MP: PLoS Currents Influenza is moderated by a group of outstanding influenza researchers, and it is their support in particular that has helped to drive interest in submitting to this new forum. We have also promoted the site using our existing publications, and have used blogs and other channels to raise awareness.

In what way does Nature communication differ from PLoS ONE ? Why would it be better ?

DH: PLoS One explicitly reviews papers in terms of being technically sound, and then hopes user ratings will identify the really significant papers. This is an admirable concept, but in practice, we don't believe the user ratings are sufficiently well developed to "filter" the literature. Nature Communications will, as with all Nature journals, publish high quality, carefully selected science. This is why it will have a higher APC than PLoS One, as more time will be spent rejecting and developing manuscripts.

MP: There are several ways in which PLoS ONE is very different from Nature Communications. First, PLoS ONE is entirely open access. For a flat publication fee of \$1350, authors receive a prompt service and there are no restrictions on format or length of articles. Upon publication in PLoS ONE, each article is also deposited immediately by PLoS into PubMed Central. The license used by PLoS is the Creative Commons attribution license which ensures that all the work published can be read and reused without restriction. PLoS ONE is currently publishing around 400 peer-reviewed open-access articles every month.

Another key difference between PLoS ONE and Nature Communications is that the peer-review process in PLoS ONE focuses on whether the work is scientifically rigorous and does not attempt to make subjective judgments about the likely impact of the work. Instead, the question of influence and impact is left until the post-publication phase. Using tools such as article-level metrics, which are based on the activities of entire communities, individual articles can then be assessed on their own merits. The benefits of this approach are potentially profound – authors can publish their work rapidly, because they do not have to grapple with journals that are essentially biased against publication, and the entire research process could be accelerated as a result.

PLoS ONE (like all of the PLoS Journals) also benefits from tools for commenting, annotating and rating that community members can use to interact with the content. To underline the significance and novelty of PLoS ONE, the journal recently received the 2009 award for Publishing Innovation from the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (<http://everyone.plos.org/2009/09/14/plos-one-wins-alpsp-award-for-publishing-innovation-2009/>).

Could David say what the APC in for EMBO J? And is the subscription cost reduced as a result (as requested by the Wellcome Trust)?

DH: The APC on EMBO J is currently £1,485/\$2,795/€2,200 (plus VAT where applicable). The site license price will be 9% lower in 2010 than 2009.

What about traditional IF – Do you consider that to be an important post-publication assessment?

MC: Any single number will never represent the full picture, but within a field, it is clear that Impact Factors rankings do contain useful information. The main problem with reliance on Impact Factors, however, is that due to selectivity of Thomson Reuters' journal tracking, Impact Factors do not provide a comprehensive, objective view of the literature. Many journals launched in the last that are highly cited and highly ranked by other journal citation metrics such as the Scimago Journal Rank do not yet have any Impact Factor due to delays in tracking by Thomson Reuters. Another problem with Impact Factors is that in some cases, the pursuit of an increased Impact Factor at all costs can play an excessive role in determining a journal's editorial policy. This should be avoided.

MP: The key problem with the impact factor is one of overuse and misinterpretation. The measurement of research impact is a complex problem that should not be reduced to a single metric. At PLoS, we believe that articles should be judged on their own merits rather than on the basis of the journal (and its impact factor) in which the work happens to be published. We introduced our program of article-level metrics to provide data that we hope will encourage the community to develop new and more meaningful ways to assess the research published in individual articles.

DH: Yes, despite its problems, it remains the only clear indication of journal impact through citations. But of course we are all interested in other aspects of impact.

SF: the problem with the IF is that it is not applicable to all disciplines. Igitur journals in Medicine/Social Sciences are very eager to get an IF, but for the Igitur journals in the humanities the IF is practically beyond reach. So another way of assessment is needed.

What do libraries need to do to ensure success of OA models?

MC <http://www.arl.org/sparc/advocacy/campus/> is a useful resource, in terms of advocacy. Engaging with other parts of their institution, to work towards evolving the scholarly communication funding models within their institution to facilitate a migration towards open access publishing is also vital. Persuading their institution to join the members of the OA Compact would be one good way to achieve this.

MP: Libraries and their host institutions have already played a key role in the transition towards open access. The recent development of centralized funds to help authors cover the publication fees that support open access publishing in many journals is a great example of how institutions can take very practical steps towards the broader adoption of open access publishing. A useful report on this topic was published this year by RIN and Universities UK - <http://www.rin.ac.uk/our-work/research-funding-policy-and-guidance/paying-open-access-publication-charges>.

SF: I think the role of the library can be threefold

- the library can stimulate a university or a faculty or a research institute or even a national funding agency developing funds to help authors to cover the publication fees. The library can also inform authors/researchers on how to apply for funds to meet the publication fee. I don't think the library itself should develop a fund! In that way the library would pay twice: the publication costs and the subscription costs.
- the library can start to publish Open Access journals itself (as Igitur does)
- the library can promote the green way to OA by maintaining a repository

How are the journals being preserved & archived?

MC: BioMed Central archives all the articles it publishes in several permanent digital archives around the world. See <http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/libraries/archive> for more information. Preserving digital content is crucial, as increasingly the digital version of an article is the complete version of record, even for hybrid print/online journals. Open access helps significantly to ensure digital permanence, by allowing the free flow of article content into archives, and by allowing that archived content to be made accessible, avoiding the problems associated with 'dark archives', which may turn out not to be there when you need them most, due to problems which weren't spotted because the content in the archive was not in active use.

MP: At PLoS our journals are archived at PubMed Central (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/>) and via the LOCKSS (<http://www.lockss.org/lockss/Home>) system.

DH: Portico and CLOCKSS

SF: all Igitur OA journals are in the DOAJ. And the DOAJ and the e-Depot of the National Library of the Netherlands (KB) have started a cooperation in order to secure long-term preservation of open access journals. Besides, all articles of the Igitur journals are stored in the repository (Dspace) of the library.

Pierre: Firstly the electronic versions are backed up on site and off site. Then we also allow indexes such as EBSCO, SABINET, AJOL and now SciELO (SA) to upload full text on their sites (many copies exist elsewhere). Finally we also do print all journals and make print copies available for print subscribers. We also supply a print copy to 5 statutory required libraries in SA.

A question to the whole panel for the end - how do you see interest from commercial sponsors (pharma/device companies) in OA journals?

MP: At PLoS we have seen a reasonable amount of interest from commercial organizations in general, and we do carry some advertising. This is not surprising given the large amounts of traffic that open access content can attract. However, we have not taken advertising from pharmaceutical companies or medical device manufacturers because of the potential adverse effects on the perception of the

editorial integrity of our journals (see for example <http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1000072>).

DH: Sponsorship is not an ideal business model.

MC: Absolutely. Companies interested in reaching researchers and practitioners (biotechs, equipment suppliers, pharma etc) follow the eyeballs, which means they are increasingly looking online, and to open access journals.

SF: Igitur has thought out an advertising policy, but till now, advertisements haven't been placed. And I agree with PLoS: you have to take care of the editorial integrity!

PdV: Please support African open access journals. Our publication fees are very reasonable, ranging from USD 130 – USD 800. Fees can be waived.

Because authors pay (sometimes very high) fees to publish in open access journals, is there a danger that we might miss out on some interesting work by younger researchers who aren't as well-funded as their older colleagues?

MP: At PLoS we have a waiver policy so that the publication fee is never a barrier to publication for any author who does not have access to sufficient funds. Payment information is also never available to editors, so that the ability to pay the fee cannot possibly influence editorial decisions.

DH: We are assuming there will always be a mixed economy within STM. Of course there are some researchers who will not have appropriate funding for APCs.

Who typically pays these fees? We have had several authors ask the library to pay.

MC: It really varies by subject area and by institution. The majority of BioMed Central's APC revenue ultimately comes from research funders (as Mark Walport has noted, publishing the results can be seen as the final step of the research process). In some cases these funds are channeled via the author, in other cases via the author's institution. Libraries have an important role to play, but generally need to work in collaboration with other parts of the university to ensure that the funding model can scale as open access takeup increases.

The Research Information Network report: [Paying for open access publication charges](#) contains very useful guidelines and suggestions for best practice on this front.

MP: The authors typically pay the fees, using funds from research grants.

DH: Personally, I feel research funders will be the main payers of open access fees in the medium term. But if libraries see a fall in subscription costs, it will make sense to try to use the money to further open access.

PdV: In our context it is usually paid through the employer, either from an employer fund for this purpose or from the researcher's personal research funds in the university

Has the percentage of authors able/unable to pay for publication changed over time?

MP: The percentage of authors requesting waivers has stayed roughly consistent between 5 and 10%.

MC: It has been remarkably stable

Pierre: We have little experience with this.

There was a story in NATURE earlier this year (<http://www.nature.com/news/2009/090615/full/news.2009.571.html>) that highlighted a worry Matthew brought ie if i pay as an author, can i publish any text? The story above says YES, and OA skeptics use it against us. HOW do we best put those worries to rest???

MP: OASPA posted a response to this on our blog.

MC: [OASPA](#) blogged a full [response](#) to this. Basically the issue is not one of open access versus closed access, it is one of editorial standards, which are vital whatever the access model of the journal.

PdV: In all our journals the editorial decision (including the peer review) and the financial administration are completely separated. The editor decides what will be published, and only after that the invoice will be generated for the publication fees. Authors first have to get over the hurdle of peer review. It is therefore not a matter of "pay and get published", it is rather a matter of "pay when your article was good enough to be accepted for publication"