Q&A from OASPA Webinar - Introducing OASPA’s Wayfinders: Increasing Equity in Open Access Publishing (January 2024)

Chair: Malavika Legge (ML)
Panelists: Danny Burke (DB), Meagan Phelan (MP), Ros Pyne (RP) and Susan Veldsman (SV)

Please find responses to those unanswered attendee questions we did not have time to answer during the live webinar.

Q. Danny - How successful are you with out of the blue funding requests to potential supporters? Especially organisations that don't work with open access publishing, like cancer charities?
DB: If you do thorough research before approaching an organisation, you can be quite successful. Make sure your adjectives align and try to speak to someone before submission to give a brief overview of what you're trying to get funding for and to see if they are interesting in finding out more. Focus on impact and the change funding a publication will make. We tend to ask for funding for 10x publications for in the region of £10K (this should be adjusted to suit the funder if necessary) and have have been relatively successful raising around £30K per year and a success rate of around 1 in 10 approaches

Q. Danny - do you find that addressing the funding issue after acceptance leads to delays (e.g. risks the paper becoming out of date)? Did you consider an approach where funding is addressed before article submission?
DB: We provide information to the corresponding authors at the time of submission around seeking funding but only dedicate our staff time to this at acceptance. If authors are motivated and there are possible options, they have often done a lot of the work up front so there is no delay in publication

Q. Danny - Can you give an estimate of what the publication of an article actually costs your organization, and what parts of the process the costs originate from?
DB: The cost of publishing an article is in the region of £900. This is predominantly staff costs but there is also type setting and platform maintenance costs. These break down roughly as £650 - staff, £150 - type setting, £100 hosting, maintenance + web development costs.

Q. Danny - It is a great model and inspiring to hear about what you are doing. How scalable do you think it is... is there enough good will and donations to support more cancer research being made OA this way? Are there any key organizations, (Wellcome, Health Insurance Companies) who might be persuaded to sustain this type of publishing model over time? (Answered live by Danny)
ML: Glad to see this question. One thing OASPA has reflected on is the need to think about all payers in the system - not just libraries. For instance, the pharma and healthcare sectors produce research and are also research funders. They are private-sector examples of stakeholders in scholarly communications, and we should think about the role of the private sector as well in contributing towards an equitable system for disseminating research. This
could also take the form of content-related activities that are sponsored and diversify publishing income in order to sustain equitable OA publishing for all content.

Q. How is your impact factor? Can it refute the "cheap is worthless" mindset?
DB: Our impact factor is 1.8 but we've only had this for around 6 months.

Q. Meagan - What licenses do you allow for green open access?
MP: Authors of peer-reviewed research articles who are required to do so by their funder or employer may place a CC BY license on their accepted manuscript. cOAlition S-funded authors may place a CC BY license or a CC BY-ND license on their accepted manuscript.

Q. Meagan - Does Green OA allow CC-BY for the AAM as this is required by cOAlition S Funders?
MP: Yes. Authors of peer-reviewed research articles who are required to do so by their funder or employer may place a CC BY license on their accepted manuscript. cOAlition S-funded authors may place a CC BY license or a CC BY-ND license on their accepted manuscript.

Q. Can you please explain how green OA is sustainable financially at scale? It doesn’t seem to cover the final, published version nor the costs of peer reviewing.
MP: The Science family of journals is sustained through support of librarians the world over who pay for subscriptions because they believe in the mission and value of what we are publishing -- News from Science, Science Careers, Policy Forums, Editorials, and Research. Research is the content which may be posted Green OA. The librarians we talk to remain happy to pay reasonable subscription fees we charge to support all we do, even knowing some of our content will be open via Green OA.

Q. Meagan - Do you know how high the actual proportion of green OA is on AAAS output?
MP: It varies by journal but is a little over half of the research content, in recent years, looking across our whole portfolio.

Q. Some of these models limit their reach to authors in LMICs or the Global South, while continuing to charge fees to authors based elsewhere. While to some extent I understand the rationale for this, it’s also true that authors in wealthier regions often struggle with author fees – is there any scope to expand these models to all authors? I also recall that some of OASPA’s work on equity has emphasised that researchers can find waiver systems ‘often come across as colonial, condescending or demeaning’ – have any of the speakers had similar feedback about the regional focus of these fee-free models?
DB: Our pay what you can afford policy supports under resourced groups in high income countries as well as authors from LMICs.

RP: Bloomsbury Open Collections enables open access for authors based all over the world, not just the Global South. (In the pilot collection, of 58 authors who contributed to the works that will be published OA, 17 are from the Global South.) However, in cases where we are not able
to fund all titles in a collection to go OA, in the interests of equity we do prioritise authors from the Global South, unaffiliated authors, and ECRs, as these groups are underrepresented in our OA publishing via a fee model. Our editorial team was in close contact with the authors involved before we announced the pilot and throughout last year and, as I shared in the webinar, we received very positive feedback from them about our approach. We value our relationships with our authors and respect their views, and their support was key for us.

ML: Regarding negative reactions to waiver systems - the feedback OASPA heard about was in the specific context of waiver-related publishing workflows and how these are structured and set up, including steps involved in requesting a waiver, proving eligibility and so on. Of course, waivers do permit lots of work to be published OA that would otherwise be behind a paywall, but our work so far suggests that there are improvements that can be made (to workflows and policy) that could help waivers come across in a more constructive and helpful way. The point of under-resourced authors in what are otherwise considered ‘rich’ regions is hugely important, and linked with this, an ideal outcome is that incomes support all content / all authors’ work being published OA, regardless of the authors’ region, funding status and other factors. This is what we refer to as default OA, and this would be a hugely desirable end-state from an equity perspective.

Q. Ros - Are you considering offering the model for any digital or reference products?
RP: At the moment our focus with Bloomsbury Open Collections is on enabling open access to arts, humanities, and social sciences research published in monographs.

Q. Ros - Do authors lose out on potential royalties for choosing gold?
RP: Bloomsbury authors whose books are published open access still receive royalties on sales of print editions, but royalties are lower overall as the digital editions are not sold. We make authors aware of this when we invite them to participate in Bloomsbury Open Collections (and indeed when authors choose OA via a fee model).

Q. Susan - Can you please share the open access policy environment in South Africa i.e. how are government-funded researchers expected to publish their work?
SV: The Department of Science and Innov has drafted an Open Science Policy, which still has not been approved by the Parliament. This implies that funding any Open Science/Open Access activities is difficult. Some University Libraries do provide funds for APCs, but due to budget cuts and high demand, these funds are dwindling. Researchers sometimes fund it out of their research funds, but again sometimes the APCs are very high and they fail to publish OA. Some funders do allow APC’s to be paid from research funds i.e. Wellcome, NIH, and others. When the research is of utmost importance and significance Research Offices of Institutions will assist. Institutions fund Institutional Repositories and OA journals. Government is funding central data repositories.

Q. Do you think we need to go upstream to address inequity? All publishers still need to go by what the world bank sets as the apc price based on what they categorize as global south. This is based on government economic wealth and not reflective of the general
**population's economic wealth.**

**DB:** Our pay what you can afford policy supports under resourced groups in high income countries as well as authors from LMICs.

**ML:** From what OASPA understands, publishers are not under any compulsion to follow pricing and discounting rules only as per World Bank (or Research4Life) data. Many publishers have discretionary waiver policies (and other policies) that enable routes to OA more broadly, including on the basis of financial need. We should also remember that (OA) publishing involves disseminating the work of people - not counties, not institutions, but individual researchers and lab groups. Applying national-level economic indicators is hard enough when these are used as a generalised proxy for determining pricing and discounting; such indicators completely fail to capture individual circumstances, such as an early-career researcher in a high-income country being in-between post-doc positions, OR a humanities scholar who cannot find BPC funding because of local institutional/government policy prioritising OA funds for STM subjects OR a research group 'eligible' for a full waiver based on where in the world they are based BUT receiving funding from Wellcome or the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and so, having funds set aside for APCs.

**Q. Susan - How high are your APCs for Gold OA, roughly? How does that compare to an average Research grant?**

**SV:** The APCs vary between R500- R10 000 per article for SA published journals. BUT APCs for international journals are much higher R20 000- R45 000 per article and this is sometimes way above a national grant for research projects. Therefore central government funding is critical. When grants are made they should also be allowed to claim APC's from the grant, this is not always possible.

**Q. I wondered if AAAS, Bloomsbury, etc. with these policies and kind words genuinely believe that they are wayfinders and leaders in open science and open access? Or are they tolerators of OA as part of the commercial publishing paradigm? It seems the rest of the world like SCIELO can sustainably do OA, even Diamond OA. Whereas the speakers today talk of embargos and large APCs and BPCs. Aren’t the true wayfinders in the global south who have scaled OA successfully?**

**MP:** Please see: https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.ade8028

**RP:** What works for one publishing format, discipline, or region doesn't necessarily work for all. If we are to transition monographs and scholarship in the arts, humanities, and social sciences more broadly to open access it's likely that we'll need a variety of approaches to suit different contexts. With Bloomsbury Open Collections, we are trying to find a route to increase equity in our approach to OA and innovate within the context that we work in.

**SV:** I absolutely agree, but with the SciELO Network journals, government funding is sustaining and growing these collections, which is the correct way. Authors should not pay for the OA model.
ML: The truth is that there isn't "one true way" but many paths. OASPA believes that the most constructive way forward is to amplify and discuss all types of efforts that genuinely build and increase equity in OA. Completely agree with Susan that authors should not need to face fees in the OA model because in our work, OASPA has heard that this is "essential for global equity for researchers". And also agree that there are some fantastic ways to scale more equitable OA in Latin America, Africa, India and other places. That does not mean that matters of financial sustainability and managing investment/risk are easy in these examples. Susan's presentation reminded us that there is no free lunch. OASPA looks forward to being able to showcase efforts to deliver equitable OA from right across the world. And, yes, SciELO is on our list :) 

Q. Have any of the panelists worked with University libraries and universities who have reframed their budgets to pay for publication fees rather than traditional subscription fees, and is that model seen in both science and the humanities?
DB: No but we'd love to!

ML: OASPA is most interested in this, too, although we would caution that moving budgets from subscription charges to publication charges still maintains inequities for authors. This is because rather than a paywall to read, we erect a paywall to publish. This means only those authors affiliated with certain institutions (the ones with the resources and staff available to make these budgetary shifts and negotiate on new terms with publishers) stand to benefit. Forces of cumulative advantage are strong here - the most well resourced institutions are more than likely the (only) ones capable of making this shift. More thought and discussion could be given to reframing the budgets of institutions, funders and other payer-stakeholders in order to support OA publishing for all authors. OASPA plans on featuring a 'payers perspectives' webinar as one of the forthcoming wayfinders sessions.