RCUK Policy on Open Access: Call for Evidence

Impact on transition

1.0 Our main concern is that the support for gold open access through block funding has provided an additional revenue stream, particularly for major publishers, through the growing number of hybrid titles. The average APC that we have paid for a pure gold title is £1,010 and for a hybrid title is £1,765. This has not been accompanied by a commensurate reduction in subscription levels. We support attempts to deliver offset approaches, but have concerns that it is easy to obfuscate cost models and we have not yet seen a proposal for an offset model that we endorse. The Institute of Physics offer attempted to offset, but included a 6% rise for IOP Science Extra to cover new titles as well as inflation. This sort of integration makes value for money less transparent. Membership and prepayment deals for APCs are also not transparent, with many still working with a “contact x by email for information” arrangement. We support negotiations through Jisc Collections, but where there is no clear offset model pre-payment discount must be substantial. For example we do not consider Elsevier’s 10% offer to be reasonable.

1.1 We support the development of innovation for pure gold titles, but there has been considerable concern about the rise of “predatory” open access publishers. We have also heard of an established publisher suggesting to editors that rejected papers from a title could be cascaded down to open access titles for consideration. This is not the sort of approach to open access that has the confidence of our academic community.

Policy communication

2.0 It would have been helpful if there had been more consultation from RCUK with stakeholders in advance of the policy announcement. The subsequent debate, policy iteration, clarification and reworking did not lead to a smooth start for implementation or support positive academic engagement.

2.1 Our return shows that we have paid for a number of RCUK funded APCs outwith the block grant. Some of these will be publications previously costed into awards, however we accept that an element will be to do with awareness of the policy in this first reporting period. The history of compliance rates nationally for Wellcome shows that over time awareness and engagement increase.

2.2 In the next period it is important that we can give a clear message about open access in view of the REF requirements. Where there is a level of detail required by RCUK that is not required by HEFCE this does add a layer of complexity and it would help researchers if there was harmonisation where possible. Clarity about embargoes and licences across the policies would be beneficial.

Data Collection

3.0 There are a number of significant challenges for the sector in order to support robust data collection. Exchange of high quality metadata and the ability to transfer publications between services is paramount. This data exchange needs to flow between publishers, funders, research
management systems and institutional and disciplinary repositories. Given that RCUK stated a desire for reporting through the Research Outcomes System we were astonished that an API was not required as part of the tender for the new harmonised ROS. We strongly urge Research Fish to support data exchange working with Jisc, CASRAI and the RIOXX 2.0 application profile. Research Fish should be able to regularly harvest information from institutional systems and we support a linked-data approach. Equally we should be able to harvest information from Research Fish/Gateway to Research. We consider RCUK to be the primary holders of their grant information and have uploaded a snapshot from Gateway to Research into our institutional repository, but this process needs to be much easier.

3.1 One example of resource intensive work is manually cross checking against other deposit locations e.g. EuropePMC, ArXiv, and ESRC. We support Jisc’s work on a Publications Router to facilitate this transfer as part of wider improvements, and encourage RCUK to lobby for participation from publishers and other content providers. We are involved in Jisc projects to implement open access metadata exchange, roll out ORCID IDs for researchers and in testing the Publications Router so are actively engaged in contributing to solutions.

3.2 The SHERPA FACT service has been a useful starting place to check the open access policies of publishers, however if this is going to evolve into a reliable national service there needs to be accurate journal level information and alterations to the presentation of information to improve clarity. This will be helpful for researchers and administrators.

3.3 We feel it would be useful to agree base sources of information when reporting to RCUK. Institutional research management systems and repositories are mostly not yet able to capture all research outputs and affiliate to funders. This makes institutional comparisons from this source misleading. It would be sensible to specify RCUK affiliated outputs from Web of Knowledge and/or Scopus plus additional publications identified by the institution not indexed by these sources.

Licences

4.0 Whilst we support effective reuse of research, the specificity of licence conditions does not seem to always support wider open access goals. For example Optics Express is a pure gold title with a high impact factor and quick turn-around time. It supports multi-media presentation of data and permits green open access copies. However the reuse licence is not specified as CC BY. This policy risks disengaging research communities where considerable progress has already been made.

4.1 The vast majority of publishers do not provide any information on reuse options for green open access. This is a significant issue which will also be important for the REF. Given this we take the provision of a green open access copy to be compliant, recognising that the sector as a whole needs to work on availability of licence options. Amending individual Copyright Transfer Agreements and exclusive Licences to Publish is too burdensome; authors should retain certain redistribution rights as a standard minimum.

Embargoes

5.0 There is no evidence yet that embargoes impact on journal subscription levels. After the RCUK policy was announced some publishers extended embargoes. For example Springer lengthened its embargoes for institutional repositories in order to make its policies “simple and consistent”. Long embargoes are not helpful for research impact and there is a concern that in order to maximise
income from APCs long embargoes are attractive to publishers, which marks an unwanted direction of travel. The green option is an important part of the open access landscape and we need green options that do not overly delay the availability of research outputs.

Workflow and publishers
6.0 We recognise that many stakeholders are working on improving open access workflows. However aside from the overarching issues already identified, there are particular pinch points which cause delays to publication, frustration for our researchers and administrative burden for services. These include: invoicing in different currencies even from the same publisher arm; credit card payments as the only option or as a stated accelerated option when workflows at institutional scale require timely invoicing; paying for but not getting CC BY licences which is a combination of lack of clear information to inform an author’s choice of licence and publisher error; separate page and/or image charges adding to the complexity of invoicing; prominent display of rights-link for article payment next to CC BY papers; publishers’ templates for manuscripts that are typeset early in the process without clarity as to which version is a useable author accepted manuscript, leading to ambiguity as to self-archiving options. This steady accretion of obstacles risks silting up the workflow completely as we upscale.

Access to data
7.0 Part of the RCUK policy concerns access to data and inclusion of contact information on papers to facilitate requests for the underpinning data. In this reporting period we have tried to provide exemplars to showcase options as well as developing the services to support this. One model is to deposit data in our institutional repository, issue a Southampton DOI and embed this in the text or appendix of the article\textsuperscript{i}. In disciplines such as Chemistry we are experimenting with data visualisation options within articles and referencing a combination of live data from lab notebooks and static data snapshots\textsuperscript{ii}. Notwithstanding some licence arrangements with data providers, in many cases institutions own data underpinning research. As links between data and publications develop we wish to promote models which ensure that institutions continue to hold the rights to their data.

\textsuperscript{ii} Paul Walk (2014) RIOXX Metadata profile and guidelines (blog) http://www.rioxx.net/2014/06/27/rioxx-2-0-beta-1-released-for-comment/ [accessed 12/8/14]
\textsuperscript{iii} EDINA (2014), Jisc Publications Router, Open Repositories, Helsinki (poster)
http://www.slideshare.net/edinadocumentationofficer/jiscpublicationsrouter-a1v2 [accessed 12/8/14]
\textsuperscript{iv} (2014) End-to-End: Open access review and improvements (blog) http://e2eoa.org/ [accessed 28/8/14]
\textsuperscript{v} (2014) University of Southampton ORCID Pilot (blog) https://blog.soton.ac.uk/orcid/2014/05/16/hello-world/ [accessed 28/8/14]
\textsuperscript{vi} University of Nottingham (2013-), SHERPA FACT (website) http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/fact/ [accessed 12/8/14]
\textsuperscript{vii} Optics Express, http://www.opticsinfobase.org/author/author.cfm [accessed 12/8/14]
\textsuperscript{viii} Ricky Poynder (2013) Open Access, Springer tightens rules on self-archiving, Open and Shut (blog)
http://poynder.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/open-access-springer-tightens-rules-on.html [accessed 12/8/14]

\textsuperscript{ix} Langdon, Peter, Riddy, Liam and Brooks, Steve (2014) Summer temperature gradients in northwest Europe during the Lateglacial to early Holocene transition (15-8 ka BP) inferred from chironomid assemblages. doi:10.5258/SOTON/361991 [dataset]


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