

Open Access Publishing Fees: Responses, Strategies and Emerging Best Practices

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Abstract

The Open Access (OA) movement has led to a rethinking and restructuring of traditional publishing funding models. A growing number of OA journals require authors to pay an Article Processing Charge (APC) in order to have their articles published in their journal. In addition, hybrid journals (i.e. traditional, subscription-based journals), are beginning to offer the option to make an article OA if authors pay an APC. Building on the research initiatives of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), the University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries conducted a review of thirty North American universities' OA fund initiatives, fifteen OA journal funding models, and twelve hybrid journal funding models in order to better understand this trend. This poster illustrates the findings of this research and identifies emerging best practices among universities that have implemented an OA fund.

Keywords: open access, funding models, OA journals, hybrid journals, article processing charges

Purpose

The Open Access (OA) movement has led to a rethinking and restructuring of traditional publishing funding models. A growing number of OA journals require authors to pay an Article Processing Charge (APC) in order to have their articles published in their journal. In addition, hybrid journals (i.e. traditional, subscription-based journals), are beginning to offer the option to make an article OA if authors pay an APC. This practice of charging an additional APC in order to provide open accessibility to articles is seen by many publishers as a transitional method from subscription-based models to more inclusive models of funding to incorporate OA initiatives. In response to the increasing number of journals charging APCs that authors are responsible for paying in order to have open accessibility to their work, a growing number of universities are creating OA funds in order to help cover a portion of the costs.

Methods

Building on the research initiatives of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), the University of North Texas (UNT) Libraries conducted a review of thirty North American universities' OA fund initiatives, fifteen OA journal funding models, and twelve hybrid journal funding models in order to better understand this trend. The review included consulting research by SPARC (Open-access funds in action, 2012), the University of California Berkeley (Selective list of open access, 2010), BioMed Central (Comparison of BioMed Central's, 2010), Virginia Tech University Libraries (Open access subvention fund, 2012), Tufts University (Provost's Open Access, 2010), and the University of Connecticut Health Center (Open Access Author, 2012). The UNT Libraries' research focuses on the funding sponsors of the OA funds, the eligibility requirements of authors and articles, the reimbursement criteria, examples of OA journals and APCs, and any stipulations placed on the OA fund for authors.

Results

Of the thirty universities reviewed, twenty-seven are sponsored completely, or in part, by their university's library. Fourteen of the thirty universities reviewed receive co-sponsorship through other administrative or institutional initiatives.

All thirty universities reviewed accept submissions to their OA reimbursement fund only from authors affiliated with their university. Of the thirty universities reviewed, all accept submissions from faculty, twenty-six accept submissions from students, nineteen accept submissions from researchers, and fifteen accept submissions from staff.

Of the thirty universities reviewed, all support OA journals. Fourteen also support hybrid journals, in some capacity. Of the fourteen universities reviewed that also include hybrid journals in their OA reimbursement fund, nine include specific stipulations that must also be met. The stipulations include: 1) no embargo period on the article, 2) that the author retains distribution rights or copyright, and 3) that the publisher agrees to reduce the subscription cost to the university.

All thirty universities reviewed stipulate that articles considered for their OA reimbursement fund be published in peer-reviewed journals. Sixteen of the universities stipulate that the journal be listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and fourteen of those also require additional stipulations for the journal including that the publisher, 1) be a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) or adhere to their Code of Conduct, 2) have a publicly available standard fee schedule, and 3) have a policy to waive fees in the case of economic hardship.

Of the fifteen open access journal publishers reviewed, the average APC is approximately \$2000. The APCs range from \$695 to \$5000. Of the twelve hybrid journal publishers reviewed, the average APC is approximately \$2600. Hybrid journal APCs range from \$645 to \$5000.

Twenty of the thirty universities reviewed include a specific cap on how much funding one author may receive in a given period of time, or how many times one author may apply for reimbursement. Twenty-one of the thirty universities reviewed include a specific cap on the funding awarded to each article.

Four of the thirty universities reviewed require authors who are awarded an OA reimbursement fund to also include their article in the university's institutional repository. One university also stipulates that the university be listed as the primary affiliation of the author in order for the article to be eligible for the OA reimbursement fund.

All thirty of the universities reviewed specify that the OA reimbursement funds will be disbursed on a first-come first-serve basis, and they offer a submission form for authors to fill out either electronically or in a downloadable format. In addition, all thirty universities have established a web presence for their reimbursement funds with information on the policies and criteria.

Conclusion

This poster illustrates the findings of this research and identifies emerging best practices among universities that have implemented an OA fund. As publishing practices, funding models, and scholarly communications continue to evolve, universities must find innovative ways of keeping up. OA funds are one approach that universities can use to promote open accessibility to the valuable research outputs of their faculty and students. Although trends are apparent in the research data, best practices will not be fully developed until more universities adopt this approach.

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