

Shaping Open Access and Creating Transparency

Recommendation by Science Europe for the Disclosure of Publication Fees

Science Europe is committed to playing a role in accomplishing the transition to Open Access in an efficient and sustainable way. In this perspective, it recommends that scientific institutions disclose payments of Open Access publication fees by participating in the ‘Open APC Initiative’. This will help create a more transparent cost structure in the Open Access publication market and stimulate competition.

The aim of Open Access is to make scientific publications available to users via the Internet, where they can be used without technical or legal restriction, and are free of charge. This opens new possibilities for researchers to access knowledge and information, and it improves knowledge transfer in society, policy, and the economy.

Journal publishers, in reaction to the demand for Open Access, have created business models in which scientific institutions and funding organisations reimburse publishers for their services by the payment of ‘Article Processing Charges’ (APCs).

In order to ensure the cost-effective use of public funds, scientific institutions need to take into account both the costs of accessing digital content (for example licensing), and the expenditures for scientific publishing (for example APCs). For this, the costs of Open Access publishing must be accounted for – for the whole scientific system rather than just individual institutions.

If institutions make their payments for Open Access publishing publicly available, the financial flows from the institutions to different publishing houses can be compared. Over time the development of the costs can be observed and analysed, which will improve transparency of the financial flows, contribute to increased comparability, and promote competition in the future Open Access publication market. For this reason, confidentiality clauses in framework agreements for Open Access publishing fees should be avoided.

The ‘Open APC Initiative’ already provides a platform that allows publication costs to be aggregated and publicly documented, and for cost structures to be analysed. The corresponding data are entered there in machine-readable form and made available under open licences (Open Data), so that the costs can be compared and investigated across institutions.

Science Europe has a long-term commitment in supporting the implementation of Open Access in the research publishing system in an efficient and sustainable way. As such, it recommends that scientific institutions participate in the ‘Open APC Initiative’ to create a more transparent and competitive Open Access publishing market.

Science Europe and Open Access

Science Europe is an association of major Research Funding and Research Performing Organisations in Europe. In 2013, its Member Organisations agreed on a set of common principles to support the transition to Open Access, including the requirement that funding of Open Access publication fees is part of a transparent cost structure. In 2015, they also adopted a set of minimum standards for Open Access publishing services provided by scholarly publishers, to ensure scholarly and technical quality and cost-effectiveness of Open Access-related services.

Additional Information

This recommendation is based on a similar initiative by the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany. See <http://doi.org/10.2312/allianzoa.013> (in German).

For more information on the 'Open APC Initiative', please see:

- ▶ <https://www.intact-project.org/openapc/>
- ▶ <http://treemaps.intact-project.org/> (data visualisation)

For more information on the 'Science Europe Principles on Open Access to Research Publications' (published in April 2013, updated with a set of minimum standards for Open Access publishing services provided by scholarly publishers in May 2015), please see <http://scieur.org/opennew>

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