To:
Mr Chris Atkinson
Clerk
Science and Technology Select Committee
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PA

via e-mail: hlscience@parliament.uk

From:
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Introduction

1. The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) is the international organization for non-profit publishers. It has a broad and diverse membership of over 320 organizations in 37 countries who collectively publish over half of the world’s total active journals as well as books, databases and other products. ALPSP’s mission is to connect, train and inform the scholarly and professional publishing community and to play an active part in shaping the future of academic and scholarly communication.

2. ALPSP welcomes the opportunity to respond to the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee’s inquiry into the implementation of the UK Government’s Open Access (OA) policy on behalf of our members. There are a number of very important issues raised and we look forward to discussing these further.

3. Where this response indicates publishers, we include Learned Societies, whether they publish themselves or work with a publishing partner.

4. ALPSP was very pleased to see the formation of the group led by Dame Janet Finch and in particular the broad constitution of the group. It was very encouraging to see that such a group was able to work constructively together and to reach consensus on the way ahead.

5. We were also pleased to see that the UK Government were fully supportive of the findings of the Finch Group and endorsed them all.

Support for Universities in the form of funds to cover article processing charges and the response of universities and other HEIs to these efforts

6. We cannot comment directly on this, but would say that there has been concern expressed by authors to publishers with regards how this model will work. There is obvious concern from those working in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) as to the distribution of ‘funds for publishing’, many feeling that funds would be ‘drained’ by those working in the Scientific, Technical and Medical (STM) areas, where payment of Article Publication Charges (APCs) are already more common.

7. There is concern as to how Universities will distribute such funds and how the work of one researcher might be ranked against another should the situation arise that funds become inadequate for the research outputs of that institution. Who is responsible for deciding who gets to publish when and where and how might this affect the careers of researchers? This question over a researcher’s freedom to publish has not previously been brought to the fore in quite such a vivid way.

8. Publishers, particularly small ones, are understandably concerned that their businesses will be under threat should an appropriate level of funding for APCs not be available to support open access publishing. Learned Societies provide much in the way of support to their academic communities and in many cases, the funding for this is derived from their publishing programmes. A survey by the Biosciences Federation in 2009 found that Learned Societies contributed twice as much financially to UK Higher Education Institutions as they received from them². If APCs cannot sustain Learned Societies income, such support to the academic community will be under threat.

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²http://uksg.metapress.com/content/rt327514t0126320/?p=ab32a2a5d39843999cde4838e9aec67d&pi=13
Embargo periods for articles published under the green model

9. There has been considerable concern amongst ALPSP members regarding the short term embargoes that have been announced as a requirement by RCUK. There is a general feeling that if no contribution is made to pay for the services provided by publishers, then demands on how those services are provided are not appropriate.

10. In addition, these short embargoes do not follow the recommendations made in the Finch Group report, nor what the Rt Hon David Willets said in the UK Government’s acceptance of Dame Janet’s proposals: “Where APC funds are not available to the publisher or learned society, for the publication of publicly-funded research, then publishers could reasonably insist on a longer more equitable embargo period. This could be up to 12 months for science, technology and engineering publications and longer for publications in those disciplines which require more time to secure payback.”

11. Publishers have made considerable strides towards delivering their side of the ‘balanced-package’ of measures resulting from the Finch recommendations. Publishers are committed to providing compliance with RCUK’s Gold Open Access policy as far as they are able and where it is relevant to their business model, which includes consideration of the global publishing market, not just the UK.

12. RCUK have not yet provided clarity with regards their demands on embargo periods where an APC is not paid. Publishers want to be reassured that embargo periods are sustainable in order to continue to deliver what is required to move towards the UK Government’s preferences for open access publishing.

13. There is a popular misconception that publishers do not contribute to the peer review process and that this is all done by academics. Whilst the actual reviewing and commenting on the papers is indeed carried out by academic peers of the article authors, publishers invest heavily in supporting that process, making it as simple, streamlined and secure as possible for those reviewers. Security of such systems is critical. Some publishers even go as far as to employ subject specialists (qualified most commonly to degree or PhD level) to assist in reviewer selection, ensuring that authors’ manuscripts do not end up at the desktop of their competitors. Reviewer details have to be kept secure and maintained, for example when a reviewer changes jobs, location or indeed their subject specialty. Reviewer performance can also be recorded, which can help to ensure that particularly slow reviewers do not continue to hold up the process.

14. Authors rightly demand swift reviewing times; publishers employ database systems or in some cases, staff, to ensure that reminders are sent to reviewers to keep the peer review process flowing.

15. Publishers, or the Learned Societies themselves where they have the in-house staff, will also provide what could be referred to as a ‘triage’ service, again using appropriately qualified staff to ensure that submissions are of an appropriate subject and conform to the guidelines laid down by that journal.

16. All this saves the academic editors and reviewers valuable time, but comes at a cost. Such costs are expended before the article reaches the Accepted Manuscript stage, the stage at which it has ‘passed’ peer review and the comments from reviewers have been incorporated. Recouping this portion of the costs of the overall process is the reason that ‘green’ open access requires embargoes. Green open access is not free and at the present time is primarily supported by the subscription model.

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2 [http://www.niso.org/news/pr/view?item_key=8a7904a59c448610fac0949fcde7d7d1de9923d7](http://www.niso.org/news/pr/view?item_key=8a7904a59c448610fac0949fcde7d7d1de9923d7)
17. If articles are made freely available in a period of time as to warrant that institutions no longer feel the need to purchase subscriptions, they will cancel, as indicated by a survey completed in 2012. The numbers speak for themselves, with only 56% in the STM area continuing to subscribe and an alarming 35% in AHSS indicating they would continue to subscribe to journals where the majority of content was accessible 6 months after publication.

18. Academic journal Editors, who are also authors, are also concerned about such short embargo periods. Many such concerns are voiced to their publishers but few have taken a public position on this. However in December 2012 the Academic Editors of 21 History journals made a public statement against not just the policies of Research Councils and other funders, but which expressed their dissatisfaction at the recommendations in the Finch Report of embargoes not less than 12 months. They felt that embargoes of 36 months would be more appropriate. In addition, they were not prepared to sign their Intellectual Property away with CC-BY licences either.

19. The Finch Group recognised that short embargo periods have the potential to disrupt the scholarly communications process and recommended that “it would be unreasonable to require embargo periods shorter than twelve months”. The guidance in this report is for policy makers to be cautious and to engage with the scholarly publishing community to agree an acceptable way forward.

20. It is the opinion of ALPSP that this engagement did not take place as a two-way dialogue with the Research Councils. On the same day as the UK Government announced its acceptance of the recommendations in the Finch report in July 2012, RCUK announced its new open access policy, allowing no time for engagement with others stakeholders in the scholarly communication process.

21. Since the announcement of the RCUK policy, there has been confusion as to what the policy actually means in practice. There have also been conflicting statements released on the RCUK website, with a statement at the end of November making it clear that the UK Government’s acceptance of the Finch Group recommendations did not apply to RCUK funded research. It appears that this statement has since been removed and RCUK are still discussing how the treatment of embargo periods, as recommended by the Finch Group and accepted by the UK Government, “impacts on the Research Councils’ position...”.

22. The RCUK policy is meant to be in place from 1 April 2013. This uncertainty does not provide any comfort to publishers that the policies they are implementing to support the UK Government’s preferred Gold Open Access publishing model will be met with the same level of support from the research councils.

Engagement with publishers, universities, learned societies and other stakeholders in the development of research council open access policies and guidance

23. As mentioned above and beyond that of the Finch Group, there has been little, if any, engagement with publishers in the development of research council open access policies, though there has been keen engagement to ensure that the policies, such as they are currently understood, are distributed to publishers.

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4 http://www.history.ac.uk/news/2012-12-10/statement-position-relation-open-access
5 http://www.researchinfonet.org/publish/finch/#8.29, #9.10, #9.11
6 http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/news/2012news/Pages/120716.aspx
7 http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/outputs.aspx
24. This lack of engagement has been most clearly demonstrated in the Research Councils belief that one version of mandate is appropriate for all subject areas. Even within the very broad subject areas of STM and AHSS, there are great differences between the individual research communities. For example, Mathematics is grouped within STM, but their publishing practices are much more akin to that seen in the AHSS field. Time to publication in mathematics is necessarily much longer than many of the other STM subjects, and the “life” of papers published in mathematics, meaning the use they have over time following publication can stretch back many decades. Even in the biosciences, often thought of as a very fast moving field, the “cited half-life” of articles can easily be 10 years or more.

Challenges and concerns raised by the scientific and publishing communities and how these have been addressed

25. ALPSP does not feel that challenges and concerns raised by scholarly or publishing communities have been addressed. The policies have been presented as a “done deal”, with no room for consideration of individual subject areas, researchers’ requirements and needs, or indeed the potential harm that could be imposed on the scholarly communications process.

26. It is very disappointing that such agencies feel it is necessary to impose, rather than engage. The Finch Group clearly showed what can be achieved when stakeholders discuss the issues and brainstorm solutions. Views, opinions, thoughts and solutions from all stakeholders can be considered and can reduce the potential for unforeseen consequences to arise. Fruitful conversations have been had with other funding agencies who were prepared to approach the table with an open mind.

27. The use of the CC-BY licence continues to concern some publishers, particularly, but not restricted to, those who rely on income from article reprints and reuse rights, most commonly by pharmaceutical companies. Under the CC-BY licence, such commercial companies would no longer require permission to reuse the articles. Publishers need to consider how they will replace this lost income.

28. Authors are also very unsure of, or unhappy about, the use of CC-BY licences. In addition to the comments made by editors of history journals (see paragraph 18), a recent study by OAPEN9 found that the majority of researchers in the humanities and social sciences would prefer the most restrictive form of Creative Commons licence, CC-BY-ND10.

29. It appears that the requirement for the CC-BY licence derived from a wish to facilitate text and/or data mining of published articles, but the need to extend this to allow commercial entities to make money from the published results of UK-taxpayer funded research has never fully been explained. Indeed, publishers have been working very closely with pharmaceutical companies as an extension to their Pharma Documentation Ring (P-D-R)11 to facilitate, both via licensing and via technology, their requirements for mining the corpus of literature of interest to them.

30. Publishers are also in discussions with institutions to implement text and data mining clauses within existing content licences, without the requirement for CC-BY licences. By this route, access would be much more wide-spread, rather than restricted to the portion of articles published under CC-BY.

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9 [http://www.oapen.org/home](http://www.oapen.org/home)
11 [http://www.p-d-r.com/](http://www.p-d-r.com/)
31. The issue of the cost of transition has been apparent for some time. Publishers have been addressing the transition in the manner most sustainable for them. Some have been able to make the leap into introducing fully OA journals; some have found that introducing a hybrid model allows them to manage the transition of their income more appropriately.

32. At the present time, there is simply not a one-size-fits-all model for all authors, subject areas or publishers. Forcing the issue is likely to cause damage to the scholarly communications process; speeding up the journey requires all stakeholders to be ‘on board’, effectively communicating to find the best solutions for all.

33. ALPSP, as always, remains willing to facilitate further discussion on these matters with our members.