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# HOW TO ENABLE SMALLER INDEPENDENT PUBLISHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN OA AGREEMENTS

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The Association of  
Learned & Professional  
Society Publishers

**An independent report by:**

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## Executive Summary

The objective of this project has been to measure progress on Open Access (OA) agreements since the SPA-OPS project<sup>1</sup> ended in early 2020. The focus has been on OA agreements between consortia/libraries and smaller independent publishers<sup>2</sup> who face challenges in trying to negotiate and implement transformative OA agreements.

During 2020 there was a clear uptick in the number of OA articles published in hybrid journals, which reverses a downward trend in the proportion of total articles published as OA in hybrid journals between 2016 and 2019. Our expectation is that this increase will continue and that over the next few years the number of OA articles will increase by approximately 1.7% p.a., half of this being organic growth and half being driven by new OA agreements and increases in the number of papers covered by ongoing OA agreements. There is potential for more growth if the process for entering into and implementing transformative and fully OA agreements is made easier for smaller independent publishers.

A single OA agreement with an institution is much easier for a smaller independent publisher to administer than many article transactions, unless of course each library or consortium wants a different sort of agreement. Libraries and consortia invest hugely in making agreements with publishers happen; however, there is far less awareness within these organizations of how challenging they can be to implement. This sets up the conditions in which smaller independent publishers will struggle, as they lack the resources and scale of the largest publishers. More attention and care are needed, or smaller independent society publishers and university presses could be irreparably damaged.

We found that in certain countries, most notably the UK and Ireland, smaller independent publishers have successfully entered into open access agreements, and systems in place are to continue this trend. However, this success is not mirrored elsewhere in the world. Therefore our recommendations are structured by three geographic regions in this executive summary.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://wellcome.figshare.com/collections/Society\\_Publishers\\_Accelerating\\_Open\\_access\\_and\\_Plan\\_S\\_SPA-OPS\\_project/4561397](https://wellcome.figshare.com/collections/Society_Publishers_Accelerating_Open_access_and_Plan_S_SPA-OPS_project/4561397)

<sup>2</sup> In this report we use the term 'smaller independent publishers' to mean society publishers without a larger publishing partner, university presses, library presses, and small independent commercial presses. They may be fully open access, or may be in transition from hybrid open access and subscription publishing. These publishers make up the extremely long tail of scholarly publishing, and, because of their small scale, they all face similar challenges competing in the journal publishing market place.

## 1: Recommendations to stakeholders in the UK and Ireland

- 1.1 **We recommend that libraries, consortium staff, and smaller independent publishers involved in these open access agreements continue to share their experiences so that others, elsewhere in the world, can build on them.**

Particular strengths in the UK and Ireland are that:

- Some major funders provide block grants to universities and this funding is channeled to libraries, who are therefore in a stronger position to negotiate affordable OA agreements.
- Jisc employs a dedicated person within the consortium to reach out and negotiate open access agreements with smaller independent publishers.

There is constructive engagement between ALPSP, Jisc, and funders. This support is transforming the OA landscape, enabling open access agreements with a broader spectrum of smaller independent publishers than would otherwise have been possible.

It should also be noted that action in these countries is driving change in the rest of the world. For example, the open access agreements in 26 low and middle-income countries described within this report were only possible because the Wellcome Trust provided modest funding to EIFL and for project management.

- 1.2 **The one change we recommend is that consortia, rather than smaller independent publishers, should be responsible for assessing and driving the number of libraries that will participate in these OA agreements.**

## 2. Recommendations to stakeholders in the scope of cOAlition S member funders

- 2.1 The transition to OA requires change on the part of all stakeholders, and it is particularly crucial that there is active cross-stakeholder alignment focused on enabling smaller independent publishers to transition successfully. **We recommend the creation of a cross-stakeholder coalition driven by bodies such as ALPSP, cOAlition S, EUA, ICOLC, OA2020, and Science Europe.**
- 2.2 **We recommend that this coalition sponsors cross-stakeholder task and finish groups and events driven by ALPSP, ICOLC, and**

**OA2020, as detailed below.** We anticipate this work could largely be delivered through voluntary effort, but coordination by a neutral facilitator would be essential and might cost c. £20k.

2.3 **A specific recommendation is appropriate here on the role we envisage for ALPSP: that it serves as the focal point for input from small independent publishers in just the way OA2020 delivers for libraries and ICOLC for consortia.** We expect that ALPSP will wish not only to consult with its own members but to align with other relevant organizations such as the Association of University Presses and the Society Publishers Coalition. Together these organizations are well placed to represent members' interests, for example through:

- A simple webpage listing smaller independent publishers interested in OA agreements, along with their contact details, would be of enormous help to libraries and consortia seeking them out.
- Provision of advice and training to smaller independent publishers about how to communicate about OA with researchers in ways that will resonate with funders, libraries, and consortia too; why this cross-stakeholder alignment and engagement is essential, and how their communications and marketing functions need to evolve.

2.4 **We recommend that ALPSP, ICOLC, and OA2020 jointly convene the following groups:**

i. **Task & Finish Group 1** – to review, revise, and agree shared principles for transformative OA agreements between consortia/libraries and smaller independent publishers starting from the draft in Appendix 3. ***The work of this group is an urgent priority and if it could be finished rapidly then it could influence OA agreements reached in late 2021 for 2022.***

ii. **Task & Finish Group 2** – to review, revise, and agree:

- a model licence based on the principles agreed by Group 1 and starting from the SPA OPS Model licence (which is based on the Jisc Model licence but also informed by smaller independent publishers).
- a mechanism for keeping the model licence updated.

iii. **Task & Finish Group 3** – to review, revise, and agree a data template that publishers should present to start an OA agreement negotiation. The SPA OPS template should be the starting point. We are aware that an ESAC data analytics working group will produce some fresh recommendations from the library perspective in June 2021, and so a joint review by libraries and publishers of the

existing template is timely. This work should include a glossary with definitions of key terms (e.g. capping, corresponding author, eligible authors, eligibility dates) and consensus about the timing of offers from libraries to publishers (e.g. by the end of September each year).

**iv. Task & Finish Group 4** – to build on the ESAC workflows, and agree a much simplified set of minimum workflow requirements that consortia/libraries should expect of smaller independent publishers.

**2.5 After the task and finish groups have completed their work, we recommend that ALPSP, ICOLC, and OA2020 jointly convene two roundtable events.** Key stakeholders for these events include consortia/libraries, smaller independent publishers, NISO, intermediaries (e.g. CCC, OA Switchboard, Oable), and platform providers (e.g. submission and hosting platforms).

- The **first** event should focus on the *minimum* workflow requirements for smaller independent publishers and agree a plan and timetable for implementing these.
- The **second** event should focus on future workflow requirements (e.g. better links between author affiliations, grants IDs, and publications leveraging Wellcome’s investment to issue grant ID DOIs) and agree a plan and timetable for implementing these.

**2.6 We strongly recommend funders take steps to enable universities to aggregate all their expenditure with publishers via the library.** There are many ways this could be achieved. For example:

- Where jurisdiction allows, provide block grants to universities or their consortia to support full and transformative open access agreements with smaller independent publishers, with contributions based on the percentage of articles published which arise from your funding.
- If block grants are not possible, communicate to universities that 1-2% of grant funding or overheads received should be allocated to the library to ensure OA compliance, including via transformative OA agreements.
- Continue to track and enforce compliance with OA policies, with greater emphasis on achieving cost restraint as well as 100% open access.

**2.7 We recommend that libraries and consortia ensure their open access strategy includes smaller independent publishers and that they invite them to present offers for affordable, cost-neutral open access agreements.** Other useful guidance and strategies are available at the OA2020 website<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/apcsbw8p>

- 2.8 As much as possible, **we recommend that smaller independent publishers reach out to consortia in these countries, ensuring that the consortia are aware that such publishers offer open access agreements and are prepared to talk to them.** Some smaller independent publishers are offering agreements which are excellent value for money, but consortia are not necessarily aware of them.
- 2.9 **We would encourage publishers who closely link the price of OA agreements to article volume to think very carefully about more equitable models.**

### 3: Recommendations for stakeholders in countries where funders are not part of cOAlition S

- 3.1 The **International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC)** is well positioned to play a significant leadership role in this area; it has already started on this course with its recent conference where a panel consisting of representatives from Information Power, the Rockefeller University Press, and American Physiological Society were invited to present their experiences of transformative open access agreements. **We recommend that ICOLC sets up a steering group to lead this work, facilitates the sharing of experiences across its membership, and further develops and adapts – or indeed takes ownership of – the model licence for open access agreements and data collection sheet available at <https://www.alpsp.org/SPA-OPS-project-report-and-toolkit>.** This will save smaller independent publishers and library consortia duplicated work and effort and help establish standards.
- 3.2 The **Global Research Council** and **Science Europe** are best placed to **commission research to clarify what research funders are currently paying for open access publishing in total and what percentage of their research budgets is going to institutions to fund open access.**
- 3.3 **We strongly recommend that funders centralize their OA funding via universities and their libraries.** Where jurisdiction allows, provide block grants to universities or their consortia to support transformative open access agreements with smaller independent publishers, with contributions based on the percentage of articles published which arise from your funding. If block grants are not possible, funders should communicate to universities that 1-2% of grant funding received should be allocated to the library to ensure OA compliance, including via OA agreements.
- 3.4 **We anticipate that it will be easier for universities and research institutions if funders take the preceding steps, but even without this there is more that can be done by these institutions. Our recommendations are:**

- Senior leaders to convene discussions on campus to bring the library, finance, and research departments together to solve two problems: effecting a full transition to OA while saving money. Cost sharing between these stakeholders within the university can ensure there is a large enough pot of money to underwrite OA agreements.
- Finance departments have a larger role to play in ensuring that the university complies with funder OA policies, including for cost-constraining forms of transformative OA agreements.
- Priority for OA agreements to be considered for smaller independent publishers such as societies and university presses whose missions are most closely aligned with those of the university.

3.5 **Leadership is needed within the library community to champion a different way of working with small independent publishers.** These mission-focused and worthy organizations are an integral part of the research community and complement library strategic aspirations.

**We recommend that libraries ensure that their open access strategy includes smaller independent publishers and that they invite them to present offers for affordable, cost-neutral open access agreements.** Other useful guidance and strategies can be found at the OA2020 website<sup>4</sup>.

3.6 As much as possible, **we recommend that smaller independent publishers reach out to consortia in these countries, ensuring that the consortia are aware that these publishers offer open access agreements and are prepared to talk to them.** Some smaller independent publishers are offering agreements which are excellent value for money, but consortia are not necessarily aware of them.

3.7 **We would encourage publishers who closely link the price of OA agreements to article volume to think very carefully about more equitable models.**

#### 4. Timescales

Finally, **we considered and rejected requests to include recommendations for funders to relax the Plan S timescales.** Without doubt these timescales are challenging and stressful for some. They are also, if we are to be entirely open and honest, unrealistic. However, the pressure they introduce has been exceptionally good for driving change and surfacing real challenges faced by stakeholders. As reflected in our recommendations, more cross-stakeholder working is needed if these challenges are to be overcome. Building alignment between funders, consortia, libraries, and smaller publishers will take some effort and time but is essential, and the time to start is now.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/apcsbw8p>



## Introduction

During 2019, cOAlition S and ALPSP commissioned Information Power to [compile an overview of business models that can be used by society publishers to accelerate the transition to Open Access publishing](#). This resulted in the publication of a report and a toolkit for transformative Open Access (OA) agreements containing a model agreement and data-sharing template. The toolkit was based on shared principles co-developed by libraries and publishers.

Most learned societies are non-profit organizations. Their activities typically include holding regular conferences for the presentation and discussion of new research results and publishing academic journals in their discipline. While learned society publishers support open science and would like the journal articles they publish to be open to people all over the world, a full transition to OA is a serious challenge to their existing business models. Most learned society publishers currently have a *hybrid* approach, with the larger part of their revenues usually coming from subscriptions paid by academic libraries, and a smaller part coming from transaction charges called *Article Processing Charges* (APCs). These fees are typically paid by an author using grant money so that their research articles can be published immediately and made freely available to everyone. So-called hybrid open access journals (subscription journals in which some of the articles are open access) do not align with the OA requirements of some funders and institutions. Our role in the SPA-OPS project was to help learned society publishers find new business models that would provide them with a sustainable future whilst still complying with these requirements.

Our report included an overview of 27 different approaches and business models, and the models with strongest support were the transformative OA agreements. This model advances OA one library or consortium at a time. Transformative agreements are contracts between consortia/libraries and publishers that include both OA publishing services and reading services (if any content is paywalled). They remove or reduce friction by eliminating the need for authors to pay Article Processing Charges (APCs) or other transactional charges for their OA publishing. Academic libraries and library consortia provide the lion's share<sup>5</sup> of funding to journal publishers, so if libraries transform their purchasing power to support OA publishing, this is a powerful driver for change in publishers. Changes in library purchasing create an environment in which fully OA journals can thrive, and hybrid OA journals can transform to being fully OA.

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<sup>5</sup> Journal revenues are estimated as: subscriptions by academic libraries (68-75% of the total), corporate subscriptions (15-17%), advertising (4%), membership fees and personal subscriptions (3%), and various author side payments (3%) on page 22 of *The STM Report An overview of scientific and scholarly publishing* by R Johnson, A Watkinson, and M Mabe. Retrieved from [https://www.stm-assoc.org/2018\\_10\\_04\\_STM\\_Report\\_2018.pdf](https://www.stm-assoc.org/2018_10_04_STM_Report_2018.pdf).

The term 'transformative agreements' gained a high profile from inclusion in Plan S where they are envisioned as a mechanism to accelerate the transition to OA<sup>6</sup>. Libraries in [OA2020](#) pioneered transformative agreements and have an additional driver: to constrain the spiralling cost of OA publishing in hybrid journals<sup>7</sup>. However, only some of these agreements advance funder and library strategy.

The sponsors of the original work approached us in late 2020 and asked us to review progress on OA agreements during 2020 with four key objectives:

- To see what had happened and measure the progress of OA agreements since the original project ended and to see where agreements have been reached.
- To talk to the key stakeholders – librarians, library consortia, society and other independent publishers – and try to understand why agreements have been successful, or, in the cases where no agreements have been brokered, why not.
- To convene a roundtable of key stakeholders to discuss how best to support the acceleration of open access.
- To produce a report and a set of recommendations aimed at the stakeholders which, if implemented, might lead to more OA agreements with society and other independent publishers.

From January-March 2021 we talked to stakeholders during interviews, workshops, and a roundtable event; conducted desktop research and an online survey; and used Dimensions and ESAC data to understand how OA agreements developed in 2020. We appreciate the contributions of all the participants, who are named in the acknowledgments section at the end of this report.

This report describes the outcome of this research, presents a detailed analysis of the challenges that stakeholders have experienced with transformative OA agreements, and recommends steps that stakeholders can take to change the way OA money flows from funder to institution and steps that can be taken to enable more cost-effective OA agreements. We recommend that four cross-stakeholder task-and-finish groups take rapid action in 2021 to agree principles, a model licence, a data-gathering template, and a minimum workflow for use between consortia/libraries and smaller independent publishers. In 2022 focused work is needed between these stakeholders, intermediaries, and platform providers to implement the minimum workflow and explore future options and timescales.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.coalition-s.org/faq/what-is-a-transformative-agreement/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://esac-initiative.org/about/transformative-agreements/>

## Types of OA agreements

At least 12 types of transformative and fully OA publishing agreements operate in the market today and these are described in **Appendix 1**. These agreements exist under many labels in different parts of the world and go by such names as Publish & Read agreements, Read & Publish agreements, or Subscribe to Open. The PLOS Community Action Publishing program is an example of a fully OA agreement.

Five of these types of arrangement have emerged in only the last year. Given the dynamism in the market, we anticipate further models, names, and vocabulary to emerge. This is a healthy feature, and we recognize and welcome all the hard work that has been done to develop OA agreements that advance the key goals of maximizing OA while also providing funders and libraries with value for money.

However, this dynamism and the range of different models cause considerable challenges for both libraries and publishers in entering into these agreements, implementing workflows, and scaling. It appears high time for standardization of workflows and reporting, particularly a clear set of minimum standards that can be realistically expected for those publishers with 30 or fewer journals and limited infrastructure and staff capacity.

While transformative agreements are primarily used for journals, experiments are also now underway to trial their use with books. One example is the Opening the Future business model pioneered by Martin Eve and Frances Pinter and used by the Central European University Press<sup>8</sup>.

## The status of OA agreements

When we began our work, it became clear from conversations that the uptake of OA agreements between libraries and society and other small independent publishers<sup>9</sup> was quite good in some places, for example the UK and Ireland, but a lot lower in most jurisdictions. This was disappointing to hear, particularly as that the number of OA agreements had been growing steadily, and there was a clear step-change in 2020.

OA agreements are now the norm for some library consortia in some parts of the world and these consortia are most likely to be in Northern Europe, or in parts of the United States such as California<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://ceup.openingthefuture.net/>

<sup>9</sup> In this report we use the term ‘smaller independent publishers’ to mean society publishers without a larger publishing partner, university presses, library presses, and small independent commercial presses. These publishers make up the extremely long tail of scholarly publishing, and, because of their small scale, they all face similar challenges competing in the journal publishing market place .

<sup>10</sup> <https://esac-initiative.org/market-watch/>

Many new consortia around the world have begun to experiment with these arrangements during 2020. Both high income and transitioning economy countries are using OA agreements. For example during 2020, EIFL brokered OA agreements for two society publishers in 26 transitioning economy countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Lesotho, North Macedonia, Malawi, Maldives, Moldova, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. More information is available online here: <https://www.eifl.net/news/eifl-iwap-sign-free-read-publish-agreement>.

Most of the OA agreements are with the very largest publishers. The UK is unique in having had dedicated funding from the Wellcome Trust to enable Jisc Collections to hire a full-time member of staff to focus exclusively on OA agreements with society publishers.

We used the Dimensions database to look at recent trends in OA publishing and to reflect on possible future trends. We examined the number of papers published in fully OA journals listed in DOAJ, and the numbers published as OA in hybrid journals, combining the two to give the best estimate of papers satisfying the Berlin Declaration requirements for OA.<sup>11</sup> Over the past five years (2016-2020) the total number of papers published p.a. has increased linearly (this trend was unaffected by Covid, although numbers in 2021 may show an effect). Both the total number of OA articles published and the proportion of OA articles published in a given year relative to the whole increased steadily and linearly from 2016 to 2019, with a slight uptick in 2020 (Table 1).

	Total articles		DOAJ		Hybrid		Total OA	
	no.	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	
2016	3,521,536	609,404	17.31%	192,813	5.48%	802,217	22.78%	
2017	3,792,724	669,955	17.66%	201,968	5.33%	871,923	22.99%	
2018	4,015,183	756,719	18.85%	204,694	5.10%	961,413	23.94%	
2019	4,302,749	847,205	19.69%	218,812	5.09%	1,066,017	24.78%	
2020	4,571,460	988,015	21.61%	271,179	5.93%	1,259,194	27.54%	

Table 1 – Trends in OA publishing

<sup>11</sup> Dimensions has recently changed the way it categorizes Gold Open Access, moving to a definition which emphasizes availability rather than open licences. This has two consequences. Firstly, the number of papers reported as Gold has increased, and analyses of OA progress using their definitions (e.g. that by [Petrou](#) in the Scholarly Kitchen) will report higher percentages than those we present here. Secondly, the numbers here differ slightly from those we have reported previously based on Dimensions data; the trends, however, are similar.

The effect of transformative OA Agreements will not have been felt in any force until 2020, and this of course was an atypical year in many ways. The number of articles published continued to rise, and as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, some researchers had ample time to clear their backlogs of uncompleted articles. Others, struggling to move their courses online and/or to remote-school children, had less. For this reason, it seems likely articles may include a higher proportion reporting on older research, possibly with older funding conditions and depleted grants. There was also an enormous amount of research about Covid itself (estimated to be approximately 1.2% of the overall journal output for 2020) and most of these research outputs will have been published OA.

The dangers of attaching too much significance to an extrapolation driven by one atypical year hardly need emphasizing. With this caveat in mind, it is noteworthy that the number of hybrid papers published in 2020 shows a clear uptick (Fig. 1) and reverses a downward trend in the proportion of total articles published as OA in hybrid journals between 2016 and 2019. Approximately 46k extra hybrid papers were published over what might have been expected with a continued organic growth.

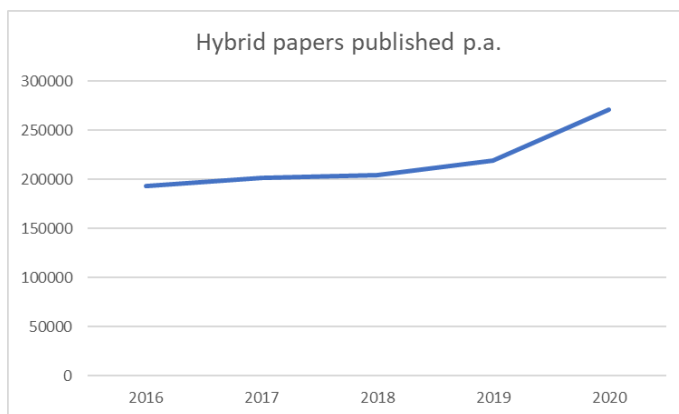


Fig. 1 Trends in open access articles published in hybrid journals

The ESAC Transformative Agreement Registry, although not exhaustive, provides useful data about the way specific deals are evolving, and in particular the number of hybrid OA papers covered by each deal from year to year. The registry lists agreements that would cover publication of 107k papers in hybrid journals in 2020. A substantial proportion of these would be papers that would have been published in hybrid journals in the absence of an agreement, but the overall increase of OA articles in hybrid journals is consistent with the argument that OA transformative agreements are driving the hybrid numbers up. As deals are renewed, some numbers decrease in the light of experience, but others increase, and overall the ESAC data to date shows that a further 14k papers, additional to the 2020 numbers, will be covered by OA agreements in 2021. We would expect this to be a hard minimum, as it is early in the year and we would expect more agreements to be added to the database as time goes on.

Our expectation is that the uptick in hybrid OA publishing will continue at the same sort of rate; the proportion of OA papers published over the next few years will increase by approximately 1.7% p.a., half of this being organic growth and half driven by new OA agreements and increases in the number of papers covered by ongoing OA agreements.

Around 86% of the papers covered by OA agreements listed by ESAC are from Plan S countries. This figure is consistent across 2020 and 2021. Assuming that the data is representative, this would mean that transformative OA agreements in countries with a Plan S compliant funder are driving an increase of approximately 0.73% p.a. over and above the organic increase in OA publishing, with a further 0.12% driven by transformative OA agreements in non-Plan S funder countries. These figures are poised to grow over time as the number of OA agreements expand.

A more precise determination will be possible once the agreements bed in further and the disruptions due to Covid subside. What is already clear is that the Plan S policy to support hybrid OA publishing only within the context of transformative OA arrangements is driving increased growth in OA publishing.

## Key challenges

It is clear that there are both challenges and opportunities. Some of the challenges are shared by all publishers, but many of the challenges are greatest for smaller independent publishers.

### Financial challenges

**There is enough money in the current research system to transition all journals fully to open access, *but the money is not easily aggregated on university campuses* and is therefore not flowing in ways that facilitate OA agreements or empower universities to maximize value for money.**

Most funders channel their open access money through individual authors and their grants, rather than through institutions and libraries. or funders it is an important principle that researchers become attuned to the cost of publishing in journals and can make more informed publishing decisions.

We would firmly push back on the idea that the best way for funders to achieve their OA objectives is by placing OA money in the hands of their grant recipients. The complexity this generates powerfully benefits the largest publishers who are best positioned to invest in elaborate new systems. It also disenfranchises universities and libraries who are much better positioned to secure value for money from publishers as well as open access.

In the countries where funders have changed this and pay institutions and libraries direct, centralized payments drive powerful change. It means that the library is empowered for the first time to enter into cost-constrained OA agreements with publishers. The library's negotiating power, particularly with the largest publishers, is increased because they can negotiate holistically on behalf of all researchers on campus both for the cost of publishing and for access to the literature. Libraries have good governance mechanisms so that their purchasing decisions are informed by researchers and involve researchers on campuses very directly. It is the library that has an overview of total expenditure with each publisher, experience negotiating large agreements, and a mandate to secure services on behalf of everyone employed by the institution. Understandably, funders would want to be confident that libraries would insist on cost restraint by publishers and maintain authors' freedom to choose where to publish if they were to route their OA money via the library for OA publishing. Libraries are also well placed to inform authors in ways that make them more cost conscious as they make their publishing decisions.

**Researchers, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, in clinical subjects, and in practitioner-led areas such as education and social work continue to be disenfranchised from publishing OA unless agreements cover everyone on campus.** These researchers are least likely to hold research grants and cannot afford to publish OA if they are expected to pay

All this really matters. The landscape is changing and murky, and that makes it scary to make big business decisions that have life and death financial implications for our organizations.

Authors can object to OA in principle because they believe the money for it is coming out of research budgets.

Our society board and authors like OA. They just want it to be low effort.

The researchers on our campus do not want administrative hassle but do want to know we in the library are taking their concerns seriously. For example, the cost of Nature APCs has provided an opportunity for us to organize a webinar with researchers on our campus. We positioned the library as a partner in communicating their concerns to the publisher.

I manage five separate OA budgets for my institution. Each one runs in a different way and all are out of alignment with the timing of our agreements with publishers.

article processing charges (APCs). In some disciplines and for some journals these researchers make up the large majority of authors, and there is little prospect of those disciplines and journals being able to flip to OA unless they are included in transformative OA agreements. The particular challenge of transitioning journals with authors who are largely unfunded researchers was explored in detail in our original SPA OPS report<sup>12</sup>.

**Concern about the price models and affordability of journals is perennial in the library community. This historic concern is in some cases aggravated because transformative OA agreements, particularly from the largest publishers, can too closely couple price to the volume of published articles. This can drive more interest in zero embargo green OA and rights retention strategies which publishers find threatening, and perpetuates the dominance of STEM spend over the humanities and social sciences.**

Larger research-intensive universities expressed particular concern about pricing being too closely coupled to article volume. In some cases these institutions are reluctant to enter into OA agreements that are structured in this, for them, unsustainable way. This does not curtail their interest in OA and so increases their focus on zero embargo green Open Access and copyright retention policies.

**We would encourage publishers who couple the price of OA agreements closely to article volume to think very carefully about more equitable models.**

Through their services publishers provide value to authors, readers, *and* institutions. It is helpful to communicate the full spectrum of these services, to price them in ways that reflect their value to both teaching-intensive and research-intensive institutions. This proactive approach could also provide a better defence as publishers of all shapes and sizes genuinely feel quite threatened by zero embargo green OA model. Publishers seek clarity and a commitment to Gold open access so that they know there will be a revenue flow; they are also seeking a long-term commitment to give them the confidence to invest in scaling up their OA publishing further to comply with funder policies. But they will not get such agreement given the concerns expressed about pricing

We have been a bit taken aback by the offers that were coming in from the bigger publishers, whereas a lot of the smaller publishers offered more competitive OA deals.

The [large publisher] agreement really didn't work out very well for us at all. It was based on article volumes and was just a black pit for money.

Our university simply doesn't wish to spend anything more with publishers, including any of the APCs in the wild. We're very research intensive and there's no way we would be able to afford to pay for Gold OA for every single article published. If the move to Read & Publish agreements ends up redistributing more costs to us and other research intensives then they won't work.

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<sup>12</sup> See pages 49-50 of that report for further information – <https://www.informationpower.co.uk/spa-ops-project/>



models being too tightly coupled to published article volumes. More equitable and inclusive approaches are a win-win for libraries and publishers.

**Consortia who enter into OA agreements are grappling with how best to apportion costs internally to their members.** Librarians often consider a new model for cost allocation important for these agreements because it makes no sense to continue using the current model which is based on the print subscriptions of over 20 years ago. Consortia are experimenting with different approaches. The Austrian consortium uses two weighted parameters: previous subscription spend and article output. The Dutch consortium uses three equally weighted parameters: institutional funding, student FTEs, and number of articles. The Swedish consortium has a model, not yet implemented, which would be based on every institution paying 10% of the total, with the remaining cost distributed according to number of articles.

These agreements cover a spectrum of services that benefit authors, institutions, and readers, and all can be considered when setting prices or allocating costs. Ability to pay is another important factor to consider if crafting a more equitable system. These elements can be weighted in different ways, and changes can be introduced over time. Care is required to avoid major increases for some institutions, which could mean they would feel forced to consider stepping away from the consortium. Institutions will fare better in negotiations if all work together.

**Transparency is a core value for many stakeholders in the research community and needs to be a guiding principle not only for these agreements but for the ways in which they are structured and communicated.** Data used to inform price or cost allocation parameters should be as transparent as possible and based on publicly available data. cOAlition S has introduced price transparency requirements from 1 July 2022. There is clear interest from libraries in greater information sharing in a private context, for example about what the actual costs of publishing are, what level of surplus or profit there is, and how this is allocated.

**Society publishers working with larger publishing partners also would like greater transparency about OA agreements: which are being negotiated and how, what the total revenue is, and how this revenue is being allocated across their own and other titles.** They can feel helpless, trapped between a desire to work in close harmony with the research community and with research libraries, and feeling that they do not have enough insight to ensure their publishers are doing the right thing for the research community. Society publishers have requested action by other stakeholders, for example libraries and funders, to help them get more transparency from their larger publishing partners. This might be achieved, for example, by asking for evidence that this information is available transparently from the publisher as a requirement for OA funding or OA agreements. These society publishers would also appreciate access to independent advice and guidance to enable them to inform the agreements their larger publishing partners might be negotiating.

## The challenge of scale

Every single smaller publisher we have spoken to, without exception, has said that **starting conversations with library consortia is incredibly challenging**. They are the last publishers in the queue. One told us that they had finally got a consortium to talk to them, only to be told that because their journals only cost \$250 a year they were not problematic enough to warrant further conversation. We are told that the largest publishers are least likely to offer cost-constrained approaches to open access, and most likely to be using models that are tied to the volume of article outputs – yet still, they are at the front of the consortial queue.

The reverse is also true, and **consortia no longer have enough staff to work with a huge, long tail of smaller publishers**. The Society Publishers Coalition has made some attempts to respond to this concern by experimenting with a collective sales approach. But this has so far proved too challenging because every consortium and library is starting from a different place, every publisher is starting from a different place and their approaches to OA can be slightly different, and because competition law rightly limits what competitors can do together, including what information they can share.

Another recurrent message from society and other small independent publishers is that **even when they secure a consortial deal they are still expected to speak to every single library member to secure opt-ins**. They report that libraries often have misgivings about OA agreements in principle, are not always convinced that they are sustainable and have no understanding that smaller society publishers usually offer cost-neutral agreements with no article number caps. Libraries are reported to be sometimes disdainful and adversarial, treating a society with 10 members of staff in just the same way that they might treat professional sales representatives from a large company. Libraries are also said to be conflicted, trying to work out whether and how to invest in their own publishing

The consortium must deliver impact, and frankly we get this from the largest publishers. We need to change our rules so that we can negotiate with smaller publishers; currently there must be interest from a minimum number of our library members for us to negotiate and smaller societies can have very niche subject areas that only appeal to a sub-set of our consortium.

We are just starting, and this is hugely time consuming. Every consortium wants a different model agreement.

We look at where our authors are publishing as an indicator as to which deals we would need to do. We welcome values alignment and are very keen to talk to society publishers whose members are active in our academic community.

Identifying how to contact non-subscribers who have authors that publish with us can be challenging.

services or to invest in and work with a society or smaller university press publisher.

We learned that **funders, consortia, and library members may want different things, or if they are aligned then in some cases this alignment took years to achieve.** Funders, for example, have price transparency requirements coming in from 2022 and some consortia will not engage happily with smaller publishers unless they are already fully compliant.

We heard recurrent requests from publishers of all kinds and intermediaries of all natures for a consensus on which requirements to design around.

There were also recurrent requests for shared education campaigns developed by funders, libraries, and society publishers aimed at authors, editors, and societies with larger publishing partners to clear up confusion about open access models, the challenges and opportunities, and to develop and deploy a shared vocabulary.

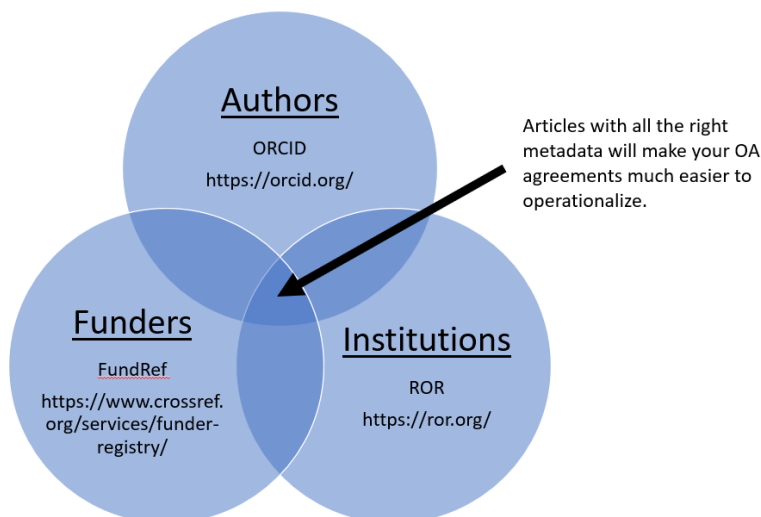
#### Data and workflow challenges

Data is an incredibly significant pain point for both libraries and publishers when implementing OA agreements. Without this it is difficult to form your own strategy, much less negotiate a win-win agreement.

It is not until all an article's authors, funders, and institutions are correctly identified that the publisher can fully assess whether and how it needs to be published OA, and who might pay some or all the costs. To develop sensible institutional offers, a publisher needs to have this information for all the articles relevant to that institution (e.g. at least all articles written by a corresponding author employed by that institution or subscribed to by that institution). To develop sensible consortial offers, a publisher needs to have this information for every institution in the consortium. It is worth noting that PLOS's new model CAP model is based on *both* corresponding and contributing authors<sup>13</sup>. If this model is adopted by others going forward, it will further add to complexity.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://plos.org/resources/community-action-publishing/>



The formulation of OA agreement offers is complicated by the fact that for articles already published OA a publisher may not really understand who paid the APC. To present a university or funder with an overview of the universe of papers relevant for them, a publisher needs to be able to link OA articles funded centrally by the university with those funded by departments or independently by researchers. So-called APCs in the wild<sup>14</sup> are a management challenge for most publishers and a specific problem for any library that needs or wants to manage some or all OA costs centrally. Libraries also have a difficult or impossible time pulling together an overview of all OA publishing with any specific publisher, because they do not typically have systems in place to track this either. Identifying relevant papers for any particular OA agreement can therefore be really challenging, and it is a shared problem across all stakeholder groups involved.

Therefore, affiliation data tops the list of pain points for publishers trying to operationalize OA agreements. This includes issues such as ensuring author privacy, ensuring that an organization's hierarchy is right so department names can be correctly associated with the institution, and ensuring that shared names or identifiers are resolved correctly. This information is business-critical and is needed as early as possible in the article workflow and certainly from the point of acceptance; publishers are largely reliant on authors for this data, which can

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.springernature.com/gp/open-research/apcs-in-the-wild>

be complex, so their business-critical data is only as good as the willingness and attention of the author who enters it. From an author's perspective, a key issue is that of multiple affiliations: if authors are not entirely sure who to credit, they may name every organization they are affiliated with or funded by, whether relevant for the paper or not. To top it off, the data is volatile, and affiliations can change: the employer at the time of submission may not be the employer when it comes to publication.

This affiliation information then needs to be joined to a wide array of other data within the publishing house, drawn from a wide array of sources:

- Data warehouse
- Editorial
- Finance
- Internal management reports
- Production
- Submissions

In other words, data is collected at every stage of an article's workflow. The data in all these systems will almost certainly disagree, so any prospect of automation will require a publisher to work across its organization to clarify definitions, implement new data practices, clean old data, and pursue systems interoperability. This may well be the biggest challenge relating to operationalizing OA agreements, and it is important to get it right, which will require time and money.

Most author touchpoints for a publisher are via the submission system, and then through the editorial and production process. So, all these systems and workflows will need to be reviewed and changed as necessary to support the introduction of OA agreements. This is a tricky task as publishers will not want to discourage submissions or slow down the publication process, but additional input is needed from the authors if they are to be presented with the correct OA publishing options and prices. There are sometimes quite complex matters for busy

The fate of small presses, commercial and non-profit, smaller publishers hangs in the balance. If the economies of scale can only be derived for big libraries and big publishers, then we have a big problem.

We have four to six members of staff working on data analytics to support these agreements.

There is a continuing role for subscription agents, they are essential if Subscribe to Open models are to work.

A standard base contract informed by shared principles would be so helpful.

We are implementing all our existing agreements manually. We view this as a learning experience so that we can experiment and learn how to automate later.

In the humanities there is a long tail of volunteer publishers, and journals that are published without any full-time publishing staff. These agreements add infrastructural cost to the business of publishing and some titles just do not have this kind of resource.

authors: for example, the idea of retaining copyright and publishing under a CC-BY-NC licence might immediately appeal, but does this mean the author has really considered how they will handle permissions requests if someone somewhere wants to use some of the article in a PowerPoint presentation? Publishers also need to provide the author with clear information about their funder or institutional OA policies and how they can comply.

These are not simple changes to make to systems and workflows. While many of the large commercial publishers have ample resources to get accurate data in-house, this is a huge struggle for the long tail of societies and library and university presses. Libraries do not have a good way of getting access to authorship, institutional, and funder affiliation data either. Consortia have the same challenges and concerns, as they are not getting a shared set of data across publishers nor even a consistent set of data across their member institutions from individual publishers.

The good news is that some excellent work is underway by the OA SwitchBoard<sup>15</sup> to facilitate the exchange of relevant data between libraries, consortia, funders, sales and subscription agents, and smaller independent publishers. A new custom connector is in development to facilitate the connection of different data silos within a publishing organization that does not have all the relevant data in one system, and few do.

Persistent identifiers including ORCID, DOIs, and ROR identifiers are essential and can really help if they are widely adopted and used. But they are not widely enough used and, even where they are in place, all of this data linking remains hard. So we must persevere with these efforts and be kind to one another and pragmatic in the meantime.

## Conclusion

Transformative and fully OA agreements are accelerating the transition to full OA publishing, and can support efforts to comply with funder OA policies. Austria, for example, reported that it has achieved 80-90% Plan S compliance, and that 60-70% of this has been achieved through 12 transformative OA agreements. Of the respondents to our survey (see Appendix 2), a third reported that these agreements had improved authors' ability to comply with funders' policies, and 26% reported improved relationships with consortia and libraries. The agreements are in principle easier for smaller independent publishers than article-level transactions would be.

So OA agreements do appear to be here to stay, but there are a variety of challenges at present that slow their growth; more needs to be done to simplify and standardize if they are to continue to accelerate the transition to OA.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://oaspa.org/oa-switchboard/>

# Acknowledgments

## Interviews

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Susana Garcia-Lorenzo, OECD  
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Julia Mortimer, Bristol University Press  
Claire Moulton, The Company of Biologists  
Sana Mulla, BMJ  
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Rachel Pietersma, Canadian Science Publishing  
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Jane Harvell, University of Sussex  
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David Prosser, Research Libraries UK  
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Sarah Roughley, University of Liverpool  
Helen Sharp, Cardiff University  
Tony Simmonds, University of Nottingham  
Alexia Sutton, University of Cambridge  
Sarah Thompson, University of York  
Niamh Tumelty, University of Cambridge  
Steven Vidovic, University of Southampton  
Dominic Walker, British Library  
Michael Williams, Cambridge University Libraries

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Stacey Burke, American Physiology Society  
Jonathan Dykes, Royal Irish Academy  
Antonia Glanfield, Royal Economics Society  
Malavika Legge, Biochemical Society  
Charles Lusty, Royal Society  
Gaynor Redvers-Mutton, Microbiology Society  
Elin Reeves, European Respiratory Society  
Maggie Simmons, Geological Society of London  
Stuart Taylor, Royal Society  
Paul Wearmouth, Biochemical Society  
Ceredig Williams, Bioscientifica

## Appendix 1 – Types of OA agreements

### *Association for Computing and Machinery model*

This is the most recent model to appear in the market and was developed by society publisher ACM in consultation with large, influential customer groups in the US. The model aims to choreograph a full transition for all ACM's hybrid journals. The entire customer base for these journals was analysed by the publisher and its large, influential customers. 2,700 universities subscribe and provide global revenue of \$20-21M each year. 80% of articles published come from the top 1,000 subscribers, but this group contributes only 32% of subscription revenue. The long tail of 1,700 subscribers only publishes about 20% of ACM articles while contributing 68% of revenue. Consensus has been built around the plan that it is equitable for 400 subscribers to pay more overall, 600 to pay roughly the same as they do now, and for the long tail of 1700 subscribers to pay less over time. There will be a transition period after which all articles will be published Open Access and no APCs will be charged.

### *California Digital Library pilot transformative agreement*

This model engages authors as well as libraries. The library or consortium contributes money in the form of a direct payment to the publisher to lower or subsidise transactional publishing payments by authors who can afford to contribute something toward the cost of APCs. This approach is designed to reflect the fact that researchers in the US can use their research grants to pay for publication costs if they choose but are usually under no obligation or mandate to do so.

### *Knowledge Unlatched journal flipping program*

This might be described as a choreographed transition model. In this case [Knowledge Unlatched acts as the choreographer](#). Librarians pledge continued funding for titles that publishers then pivot to publish OA. No APCs are charged, and all funding comes from participating libraries.

### *Libraria*

This [approach](#), which is being piloted in anthropology, archaeology, and neighbouring fields, involves pooled money from funders and libraries being used to fund Open Access publishing. The journals are long established and will transition fully to OA when this funding is secured. Libraria partnered with Berghahn Journals to launch [Berghahn Open Anthro](#) using the Subscribe to Open model.

### *National Open Science Partnership*

In the Netherlands, the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU), the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and Elsevier have reached an agreement that includes a capped read and publish agreement along with a commitment to jointly develop open science services to support Dutch research and public engagement with science. Metadata of publicly funded research outputs will be reused and enriched by Elsevier and potentially other organizations.

### *Fully OA agreements*

Libraries are also redirecting their subscription expenditure from traditional publishing partners to support born OA publishers. These are publishing companies that only publish open access, and do not have hybrid journals in transition from subscriptions to open access. Examples include the agreement between the Big 10 Universities and PLOS<sup>16</sup>, and agreements between a variety of institutions in Norway and Frontiers<sup>17</sup>.

### *Publish-and-read agreements*

A consortium pays a pre-agreed amount for papers published by affiliated authors, and everyone in the library/consortium gets access to the subscription content for no extra cost. The agreement between [Wiley and Projekt DEAL](#) in Germany provides one example.

This model shifts the cost basis of publishing to align *exclusively* with the volume of articles published by an institution. For this reason, it may be particularly challenging for research-intensive institutions and countries and library consortia within them. A more gradual approach to rebalancing or a broader basis on which to calculate and apportion costs could be helpful in research intensive places.

### *Read-and-publish agreements*

The amount of money currently paid to the publisher (for subscriptions and for a two- or three-year average of APCs) is paid, and in exchange authors can publish OA without paying an APC. In some instances – for example where a country publishes many articles with a specific publisher, or an increasing number of articles are being submitted to the publisher from authors in that country – additional money is made available by libraries or consortia. Consortia and their members are price sensitive and will sometimes cap the total number of articles for which they will pay to control costs.

Examples include consortial arrangements in the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, and at MIT, with publishers such as IOPP, OUP, the Royal Society of Chemistry, and Springer Nature via [Springer Compact](#).

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.btaa.org/about/news-and-publications/news/2021/01/21/big-ten-academic-alliance-and-plos-announce-publishing-deal>

<sup>17</sup> <https://blog.frontiersin.org/tag/norwegian-open-access-framework-agreement-2/>

### *Read, Publish, and Join*

The American Physiological Society first piloted this approach during 2019. In addition to offer reading and publishing services, faculty who serve as corresponding authors are offered a one-year free membership in the society.

### SCOAP<sup>3</sup>

This is another example of a choreographed transition model, with CERN serving as the choreographer with diverse dancers to align. Participants include libraries, consortia, governments, publishers, societies, and researchers.

The basic idea is that libraries direct current subscription expenditure to CERN rather than the publisher. CERN calculates the proportion of high-energy physics articles in participating titles that come from each country and assesses whether current library spend covers that country's participation or needs to be topped up in some way. If necessary, it liaises with national funders and policymakers about top-up funding. CERN then uses the funding pool to pay the APCs of all authors in participating titles. Publishers flip these titles to be fully OA rather than published on a subscription or hybrid basis.

The complexity of this approach means that it has been used on a modest number of journals, but it has made a real impact as all the journals are concentrated in high-energy physics. All the key journals in this field have fully flipped to Open Access in a sustained way. Stakeholders continue to collaborate to make the initiative work in a sustainable way.

### *Subscribe to Open*

This approach was developed by the publishing team at non-profit publisher [Annual Reviews](#) and is now used by the European Mathematical Association, IWA Publishing, Pluto Press, and others. It is designed to motivate collective action by libraries, which are asked to continue to subscribe even though the content will be published OA. If all current customers continue to subscribe, then that year's content is made available OA, as are all the backfiles. None of this content is opened if the number of subscribers decline, which discourages free riding. The subscriber base will be expanded to offset attrition, which is currently 1–2% per year. There is no library lock-in, as the publisher repeats this offer each year and customers again decide whether they wish to continue subscribing. Some publishers offer a modest c. 5% discount to libraries who continue to subscribe and offer this discount event if participation levels are insufficient to open the content in any given year. Any institutions that do not renew and that later return do so at the list subscription price and do not receive the discount.

This model positions the publisher as choreographer of change and transitions the entire journal to OA including content (e.g. book reviews) that is not APC-eligible. It leverages the conventional subscription process and existing library budgets, avoids the need to invest in transactional payment infrastructure, minimises customer disruption by using routine library accounts-payable processes, and avoids the prohibition some libraries face in paying for things that would otherwise be free.

### *Transitional Agreements*

During 2019, with an increase in negotiations between the Jisc consortium and small society publishers funded by Wellcome Trust and UKRI to help accelerate open access and Plan S, a new term for transformative agreements emerged: transitional agreements. These are transformative agreements in which the parties have agreed to recognise that a small number of such agreements is not enough to enable a journal to transform to fully open access but is a solid step toward an eventual transition. The distinct label is designed to signal to cOAlition S that if a minority of customers enter into transformative agreements then a full journal title transformation to open access is not going to be possible within the Plan S timescale of 2024 despite the good will of all parties to the transformative agreement.

## Appendix 2 – Survey results

### About the respondents

A total of 97 responses were gathered from publishers. Of these, 67 published their own journals, 13 published through a larger partner, and 13 did both. In addition, there were a couple of representatives of other types of organization (a medical library, a technology vendor, and an institutional crowdfunding organization).

A third of the respondents were based in the UK, and another third in the USA. 9 (10%) were German, and a further 14% were based elsewhere in Europe. The remainder were from China (2), Australia (2), Bangladesh (1) Canada (1) and "Global" (2).

50% of respondents were STEM publishers, 18% were HSS publishers, and the remaining 32% published in both areas.

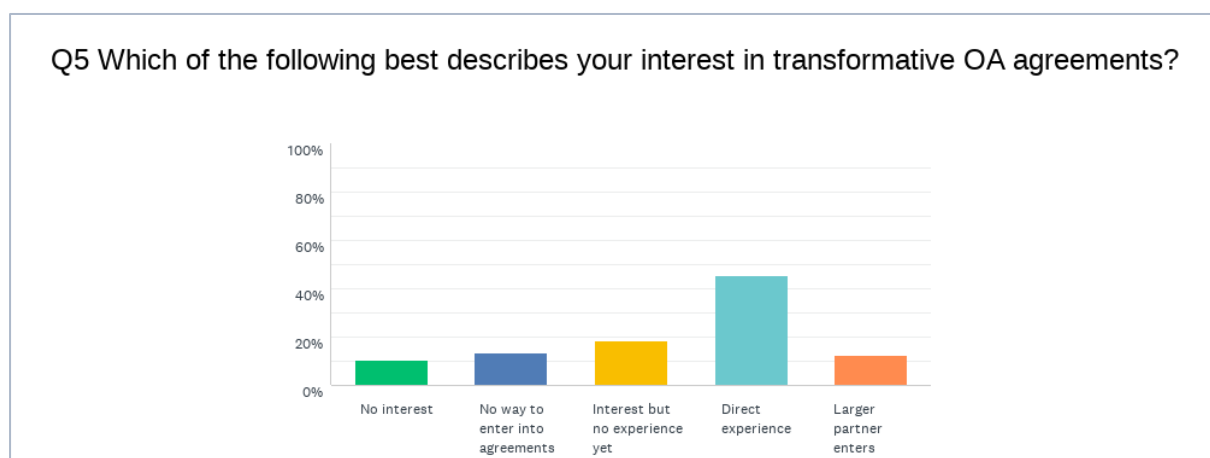
There was a wide range in the number of journals published:

1	2 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 20	21 to 50	50 to 100	200 to 1000	1001+
14	17	6	9	10	18	8	3

### Interest and experience of OA agreements

10 respondents had no interest in transformative OA agreements, 13 had no way to deal with them, and 18 were interested but had no experience yet. 45% of respondent had direct experience, and 12% had experience of entering into agreements via a partner.

As one might expect, all the larger publishers (200 journals+) had experience of these agreements. Of the 37 publishers with 10 journals or fewer, only 9 had direct experience, with a further 7 having experience through a larger partner. 6 of these smaller publishers had no interest in transformative OA agreements, 4 felt they had no way to deal with them, and 11 were interested but had not yet started.

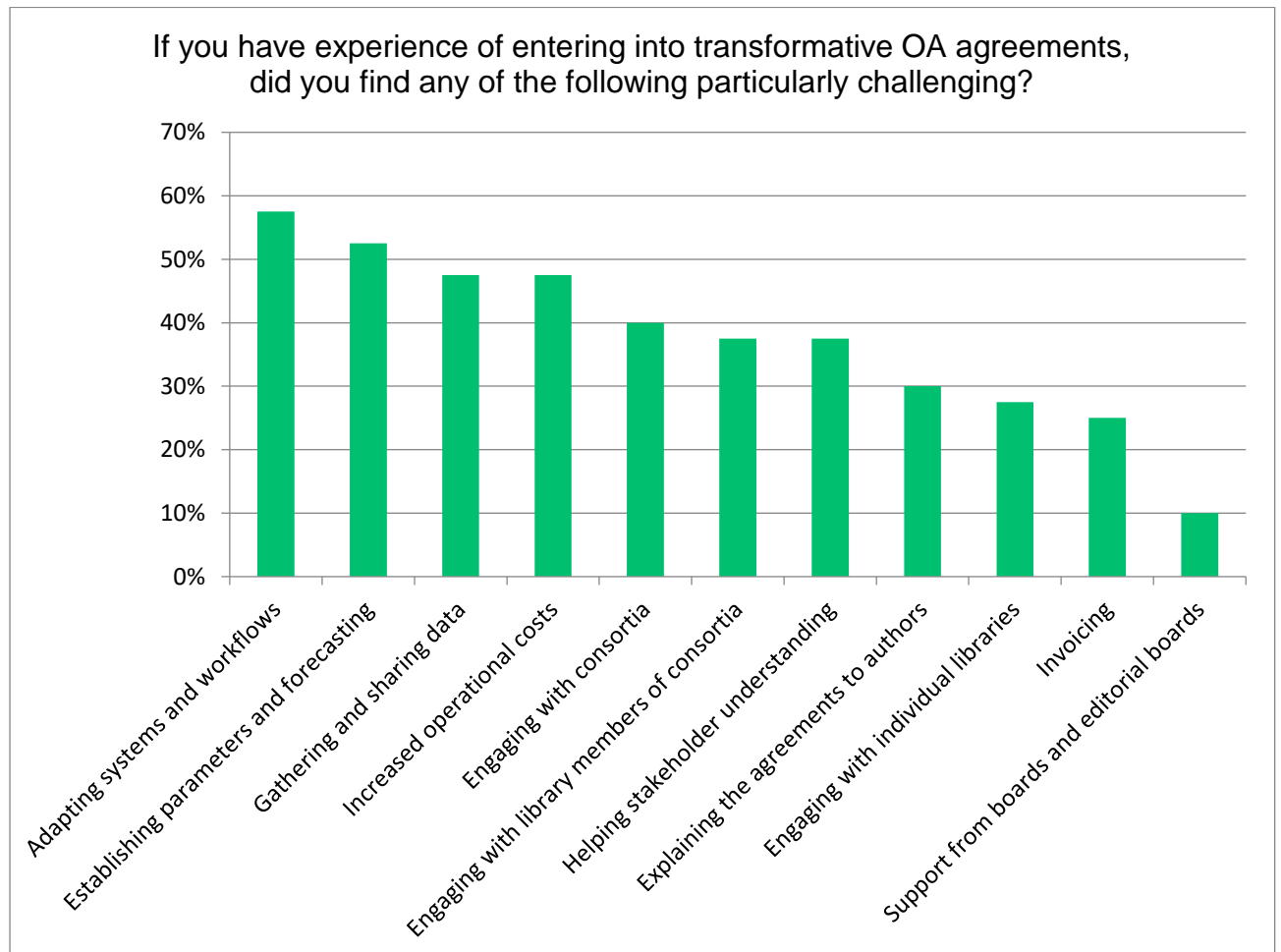


## Challenges and benefits

For those that had experience of transformative OA agreements, the top challenges were:

- adapting systems and workflows
- establishing parameters and forecasting
- increased costs
- managing and sharing data

Few publishers had difficulty engaging their management or editorial boards, although some found difficulty explaining the deals to authors.



Comparing the smallest (<10 journals) and largest (>200 journals), the former were more likely to report having difficulty engaging with consortia, and less likely to report increased operational costs. Otherwise, the profiles were similar.

Other comments included:

Most authors in institutions covered by transformative agreements are unaware of these agreements and do not understand how to "access" funds for APCs via their institutions (even though this is all automated through the publisher's author portal). There has also been substantial concern among our Board and Trustees



that authors in LMICs are discriminated against as they are unable to publish OA in our hybrid journal, while those in higher-income countries can more often access APC funding via transformative deals.

Under an OA model where content comes from will be proportional to the revenue from that region. Under the subscription model revenue comes from where the readers are. So, we expect less overseas revenue in future and more revenue from our region. Our region is reluctant to pay us more for the publishing service we provide.

There has been zero engagement with faculty in the discussions and little willingness to consider this from consortia. We also find that some (not all, but most) have little willingness to consider the circumstances of unfunded researchers or smaller publishers. We have also found many unwilling to support open platforms in the agreements, only journals.

We implemented GRID/ROR at the Submission (eJP) which now flows into our ASM (Account Management System) for Billing but not without a lot of workflows mapped out.

A majority of publishers (57%) felt it was too early to tell what benefits might accrue from transformative OA agreements. A third reported that it had improved authors' ability to comply with funder's policies, and 26% reported improved relationships with consortia and libraries. One publisher reported that they had seen no benefits, and a couple reported increased revenue. The patterns were similar regardless of the size of publisher.

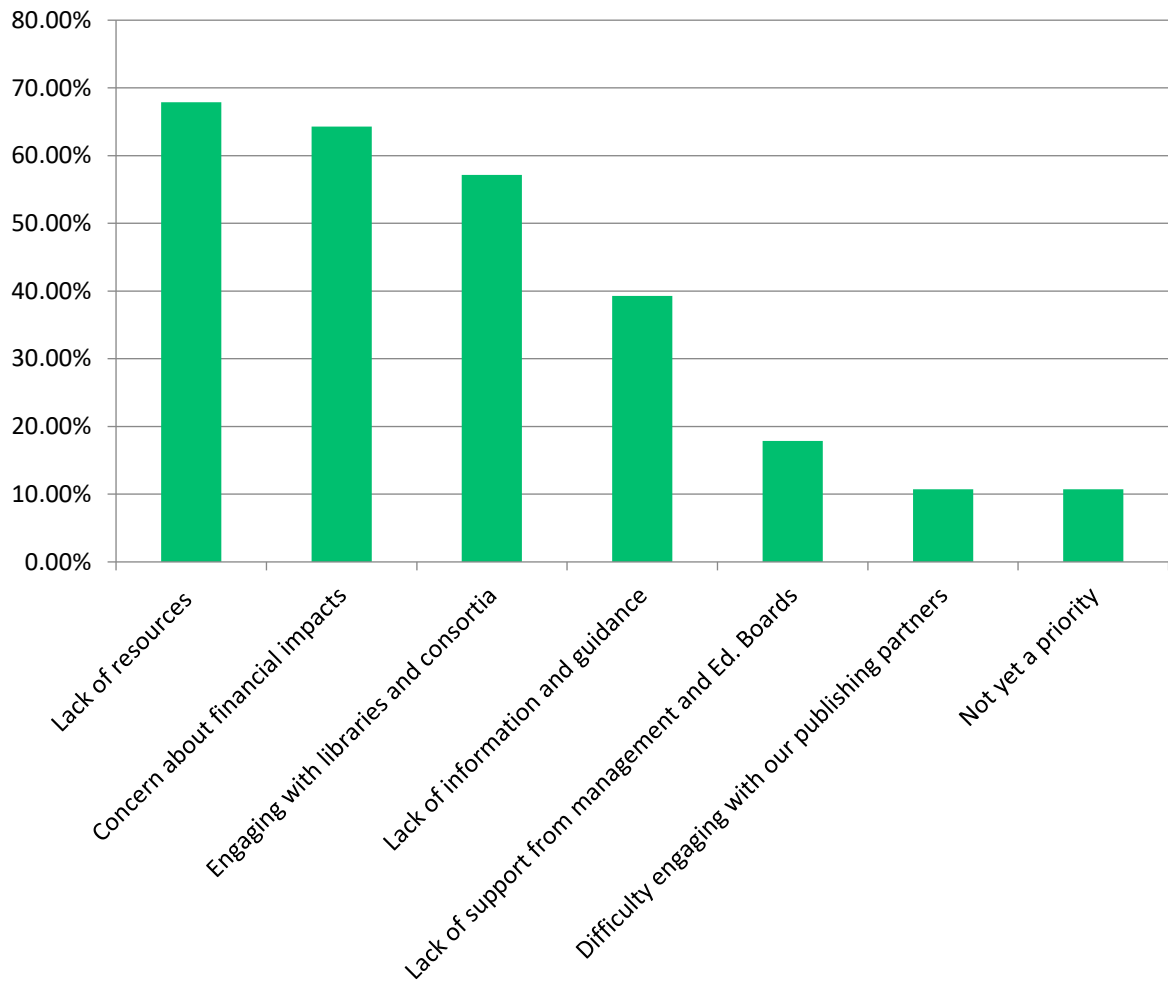
#### **Publishers not interested in transformative OA agreements**

Ten publishers reported that they had no interest in transformative OA agreements. Six of these were already fully OA, and two felt they were too small to be able to manage it. The other two publishers did not provide reasons.

#### **Barriers to adoption**

We asked those publishers who were interested in transformative agreements but who had not yet taken the plunge what they felt were the barriers. Lack of resources and concern about potential financial impacts were the main concerns. Over half also cited the difficulty of engaging with libraries and consortia. 39% felt there was a lack of support and guidance.

If you are interested in transformative OA agreements, but have not yet entered into any, what barriers might make it difficult for you to do so?



## Appendix 3 – Draft of shared principles for transformative OA agreements between consortia/libraries and smaller independent publishers

- Overall institutional expenditure to the publisher to be neutral or lower than current subscription + APC and other publishing expenditure combined.
- Annual inflation-linked increases are ok after this base is established.
- If the agreement is with a consortium, the base should be cost-neutral or decrease total aggregated spend by members, but the consortium is free to allocate this total cost amongst members in whatever way it chooses.
- To allow agreements to evolve to reflect changes in author choices over time they should be based on actual article numbers from the preceding 2 years and not on estimated publishing volumes.
- The institution that employs the corresponding author will be responsible for the costs of publishing that article OA.
- Unlimited OA publishing with no article number caps in hybrid titles, or if there is a cap then authors, with consent of the publisher, need to be able to make their accepted manuscripts available publicly with no embargo under a CC-BY licence.
- Differential geographic pricing based on means.
- There should be a commitment that future pricing approaches will be transparent, equitable, and linked to services provided to authors, readers, institutions, and society.
- Content published OA to be open in perpetuity under a liberal CC licence.
- Archival content to be free to all in the institution or consortium to access and read.
- Post-termination access to be provided to read content if/when an agreement ends.
- There should be explicit acknowledgment that the OA agreement is a mechanism for transition with the aim for the publisher to shift to full Open Access over time.
- Authors to retain copyright, and their articles to be published under a CC-BY licence. [There are sometimes reasons, as acknowledged in Plan S, that CC-BY-SA licences could also be used, or CC-BY-ND may be agreed in exceptional circumstances by cOAlition S funders.] Third-party content such as images or graphics is often included under a separate form of licence and this should be clearly labelled.
- The publisher should comply with the Plan S price transparency requirements from no later than July 2022.
- The agreement should last for at least two years, and ideally longer, to minimise administrative burden on both sides.
- The agreement should be shared publicly via (amongst others) the ESAC Registry.

