Planning for OA impact on journals

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Society of Biology discussion meeting:

Publishing in the Open Access Age

Leighton spoke about his new role overseeing the whole publishing operation for the Society for General Microbiology, and the issues that SGM and other societies face in relation to OA.

He began by discussing traditional commercial publishers, who have in many cases been slow to act on OA, although there have been pockets of innovation. Springer was considered to be the first to set out a clear position on OA and a choice for authors. Most commercial publishers now have a policy on OA and a degree of choice, although some have been slow to actively promote this.

SGM is a middling sized society with most of its revenues generated from publishing. SGM publishes four journals and owns three of them. The Society already makes articles openly available after 12 months for its proprietary journals; selling subscriptions to current year content provides vital revenue that supports Society activities.

Leighton is now looking at how to develop a sustainable business model for existing publications, and potentially expand to new areas.

For societies like SGM, OA will mean change on three levels:

1. Financial change – importance will vary depending on the Society's reliance on this income, and the extent and speed at which the core community will switch to OA.

2. Strategic changes – there are both challenges and opportunities in an OA model: these need to be thought through and factored in to short and long-term strategy.

3. Operational, back-office processes required to facilitate OA.

Main strategic points include how to attract and retain authors, how much content should be published, and the blend of that content. Potentially, there is a conflict between the amount of content needed to generate sufficient author fees to make an OA model sustainable, and maintaining the high quality (impact factor, high rejection rate) of established journals.

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Publishers will need to think even more about author satisfaction; commercial publishers do this well, with appropriate systems in place for authors to feedback on each aspect of the process. Societies must also ask challenging questions around existing journals- they may be attractive to libraries but are they optimally attractive to authors?

There will be a greater need to invest in journal analytics to understand where authors are publishing and why. Significant changes will be required to sales and marketing operations in an OA world, with an increased focus on authors and targeting key institutions.

Society publishers will also need to look at APCs; some predict a rush to the top (leading journals charging very high APCs) and a rush to the bottom (for new/low quality journals with very low APCs).

Sales will need to become more innovative: should subscriptions be 'bundled' with APCs for example? Does this make sense to budget holders?

Expanding into areas of publishing outside journals provides an opportunity to mitigate some of the 'risk' of going down the OA route.

There is a clear opportunity around semantic tagging of content: ensuring content is optimally discoverable. Once this is in place, new value can be created from 'mash ups' of journal content, e-books, databases, image banks etc. Societies should also consider what further publishing value exists in their conferences, meetings and workshops.

All of this will have implications for staffing and skill sets.

The most important thing is that your own community needs to be involved in shaping the priorities of a publishing strategy, including OA . A one-size-fits-all approach to society publications no longer works in this more complex environment.

Like many societies, SGM expects a mixed economy of author fees and subscriptions over the next 5-10 years. For such societies there will be an ongoing need to diversify, and to understand that there will be extra running costs while servicing both a traditional subscription model and an OA model.

There is opportunity in coming together, sharing information about what is working, and creating shared services for certain operational activities.

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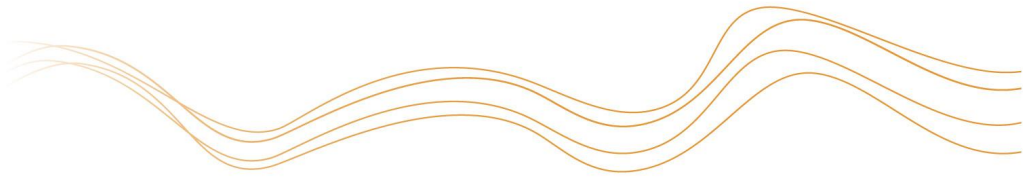
The commercial publisher perspective

- 12 years in publishing roles at Elsevier, most recently as Publishing Director
- Traditional commercial publishers have been slow/actively resistant to OA
- Pockets of innovation eg. Springer
- Elsevier boycott now at 12,846 researchers
- Driver for launching new OA journals now as much about content as revenue

The Cost of Knowledge

Researchers taking a stand against Elsevier.

Academics have protested against Elsevier's business practices for years with little effect. The main objections are these:

1. They charge exorbitantly high prices for their journals.

2. They sell journals in very large "bundles," so libraries must buy a large set with many unwanted journals, or none at all. Elsevier thus makes huge profits by exploiting their essential titles, at the expense of other journals.

3. They support measures such as SOPA, PIPA and the Research Works Act, that aim to restrict the free exchange of information.

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Scientists sign petition to boycott academic publisher Elsevier

Cost of Knowledge petition criticises 'exorbitantly high' price of Elsevier's scientific journals and the publisher's 'huge profits'

The SGM publishing perspective

- Revenues of £3.4m in 2011, providing 81% of all revenue for Society

- 4 self-published monthly peer reviewed journals, ~11k pages per annum

- Open archive >12 months for 3 proprietary journals

- A UK-based society with a global author and reader community

- New Head of Publishing appointed August 2012 to develop and execute new publishing strategy

- Emphasis on development of sustainable business model for existing and planned new publications

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OA at SGM today

- APC: £1,750

- A passive supporter of Gold OA – assisted authors without driving home message that we welcome Gold OA submissions

- Cumbersome in-house process to administrate – but not yet worth investing in anything more

- Open content >12 months for 3 journals, and >24 months for 1 journal

- Copyright remains with SGM – License to Publish under review

- Author self-archiving policy:

  NIH: SGM deposits in PMC 12 months after publication

  Others: Permission to deposit accepted article to be publicly available 12 months after final publication

- Slight upswing in data mining requests – no policy (yet)

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# All publishers should be planning for OA at 3 levels

- Financial – the dependency of the society on the journals, and extent + speed at which the core author/subscriber community may switch to OA

- Strategic – the challenges and opportunities OA creates for new and existing products and services, which may extend outside traditional publications

- Operational – the back office and other requirements necessary to facilitate OA

**Sustain and diversify your content, and your revenues**

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<u>Financial</u>

Case Study: The impact of a UK mandate <u>alone</u> on OA would have less significance for SGM than a US, pan-European or China mandate

Only 11% of SGM articles include a UK author

All papers
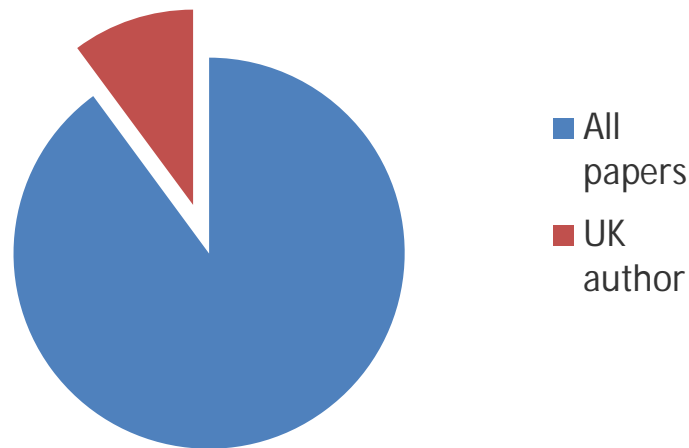
UK author

Estimated 33% of these UK articles are RCUK or WT-funded

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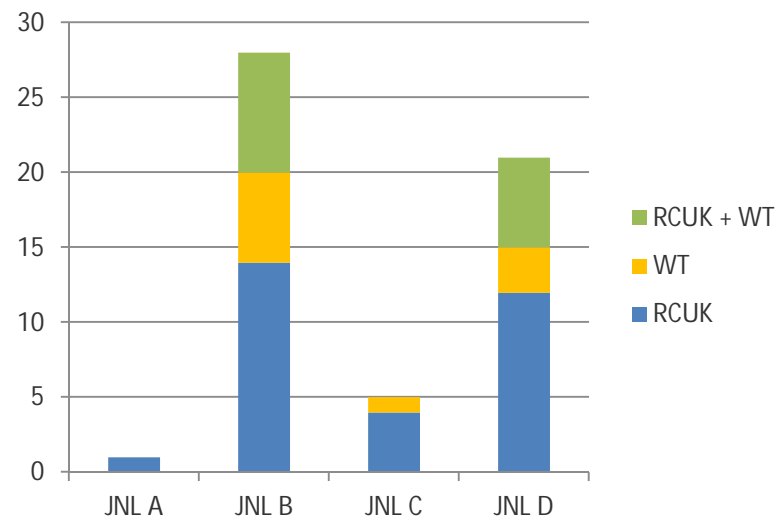
Strategic
Retaining and growing author share

- Gold OA requires publisher to think strategically and commercially about the quantity, quality and type of content we aim to publish

- A journal looking to increase its rejection rate will create a 'gap' in APCs that will need to be met elsewhere

- The impact of REF and the rush to get IF >5

- Measure author satisfaction – and respond accordingly

- Critically review existing journals and their attractiveness to authors - not subscribers

- In current environment, Gold OA provides best opportunity for new journal launch

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Strategic
Re-thinking Sales and Marketing

- Re-direct sales and marketing emphasis to authors – and probably key institutions – over time. Faculty author relationships may become even more important than the traditional 'library relations' sales relationship

- Monitor APCs and market forces: will there be a 'rush to top', or bottom?

- Innovative bundles of author fees plus subscriptions, or 'Buy sub, get OA credits free'?

- Ignore high-growth countries at your peril – consider bespoke marketing

- Invest in market intelligence and bibliometrics

- Implications for S&M organisational structure, training and development needs

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<u>Strategic</u>
Diversification and growth

- Mitigate the 'risk' by expansion into areas of growth – E-books? Databases?
- Think about opportunities around semantic tagging of content

  - discoverability

  - new products

- Think about translations
- Think about mash-up products
- Think about capturing conference, workshop, and other content
- Engage audience in product and technology development

Diversifying a publishing portfolio must be driven by the information and workflow needs of the community

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Operational (selected examples of change)

Sales & Marketing

- Transition from Library Marketing to Author / Institution / Funding body focus
- Yet, maintaining S&M traditional function during transition: INCREASED COST

Editorial

- Plans required on mix of content, target rejection rate, waiver policies, fixed or differentiated APCs per article type, Editor awareness, text-mining policy

Finance

- Initiating institutional or funding body OA accounts, bundling authors fees + subs, delivering meaningful budgets during hybrid

Back office

- Implementation of CC-BY, efficient workflow for processing APCs, impact on permissions, tracking trends, shared service cost-efficiencies **and much more…**

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A possible OA future for a society publishing programme

- Support Gold OA as a sustainable business model – if it proves so

- A mixed economy of subscriptions + APCs, with a managed transition to OA should a tipping point be reached

- Diversification – mitigate the reliance on journals

- Prepare to incur 'dual running' costs for however long a transition would take

- Re-define workflows, systems and (in some cases) job roles that factor in OA

- Leverage opportunities around semantically-tagged content, whilst adhering to CC-BY license arrangements

- Partner with other societies (potentially across geographical and subject area boundaries) to take advantage of shared services and invest in new products/technologies

- Make your policies simple and develop appropriate messaging per audience