

STM urges funders to retain hybrid open access as an option in the future

Hybrid open access options were introduced almost from the very start of the open access movement. In hybrid open access a subscription journal offers its authors the choice to make their article free to read globally through payment of an article publication charge (APC). By opening up established subscription-only journals through hybrid OA options, publishers have helped facilitate wider author choice and a landscape where researchers have the greatest potential to advance their fields.

The significance of the role of hybrid journals in delivering open access has been widely recognised by policy-makers across Europe. For example, in the UK, the Finch Report 2012¹ recommended that there should be support for publication in open access or hybrid journals. Universities UK *Monitoring the transition to Open Access, 2017*² demonstrated that the UK's leading global position within open access has been driven by OA publishing in hybrid journals. VSNU's *roadmap open access 2018-2020*³ similarly confirmed the importance of hybrid open access in contributing to developments in The Netherlands.

Hybrid open access has a number of advantages during the transition from a subscription to an open access world:

- Academic freedom to publish in the journal of first choice, regardless of business model, is retained for authors
- Authors are able to comply with funder and institutional open access mandates and continue to publish their work in journals that are at the centre of their communities
- Publishers are enabled to experiment with transitioning existing legacy titles from subscription to open access

Hybrid open access helps facilitate wider author choice.

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A recent study by the Publishing Research Consortium⁴ showed how these benefits are positively perceived by scholars, and likewise has highlighted the different paths researchers would need to take were hybrid options not available.

A key conclusion of the study was that take up of open access is dependant on the eligibility of journals to use open access funds from either their research funding body or their institution. If these funds are not provided for hybrid journals authors face a stark choice between publishing in their journal of first preference, or in a journal which they do not feel is adequate for their purposes:

Practically all respondents indicate that the match between the to-be published paper and the scope and quality of the journal are the top criteria for journal selection. One of the reasons why OA plays a minor role in the selection process, even in cases when Gold OA publishing is seen as mandatory, is that the **availability of an OA option in Hybrid journals is taken for granted by many respondents**. PRC Report Conclusions

There has been a concern from the outset of hybrid journals that operating two business models within the same journal could look like “double-dipping” – getting both subscription and open access income from the same article. To avoid this, the publishing industry has developed a number of methods aimed at reflecting the amount of open access in a journal including altering the journal subscription list price; or developing separate mechanisms, such as prepay schemes or offsetting schemes, to support institutions in managing the costs of both subscription and open access. Publishers recognise that the costs for institutions must be sustainable in the same way that publishers themselves need to be able to operate sustainable business models.

Shutting down a publication option for authors, especially where it contributes significantly to the transition to open access is not the answer.

For all these reasons STM urges funders and other institutions to continue to support authors’ academic freedom to select the journal of their choice by allowing payments for hybrid OA articles.

¹ *Accessibility, sustainability, excellence: how to expand access to research publications*

<https://www.acu.ac.uk/research-information-network/finch-report-final>

² *Monitoring the transition to Open Access*

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/monitoring-transition-open-access-2017.pdf>

³ *VSNU’s roadmap open access*

<https://www.vsnu.nl/Roadmap-open-access-2018-2020-English/assets/vsnu-roadmap-open-access-2018-2020-en.pdf>

⁴ *Hybrid OA and author choice*

<http://publishingresearchconsortium.com/index.php/prc-documents/prc-research-reports/77-hybrid-oa-and-author-choice-final-report>

If funding is not provided for hybrid journals, authors face a stark choice.

The publishing industry has developed a number of mechanisms to support institutions in managing the costs of both subscription and open access journals.

Shutting down a publication option for authors is not the answer.