Tendering the purchase of open access publishing

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Flaws in the publishing market

• When libraries subscribe to journals, it is not a competitive market where they may shop for best value for money
• Open Access publishing may introduce a better market solutions
• I want to suggest a tendering process in order to obtain this
The traditional business model
– subscription based journals

• The market for scientific publishing is not efficient
  – Publishers enjoy «quasi monopoly» market power
    • Researchers prefer to submit manuscripts to essential journals
    • Researchers need access to the essential journals
    • The essential journals are not substitutable by alternative journals
    • Libraries have no option but to subscribe to the essential journals, no matter the price
  ⇒ If you publish a journal in this category, you may dictate the subscription price
  ⇒ Some journals cost far too much compared to an efficient market
Open access business model

• Pay to publish
  – Authors need to pay per article: Article Processing Charge (APC)
  – Author saves the APC by choosing a subscription based journal (TA)
  – To level out this disadvantage for OA-publishing, institutions may establish funds to cover the APCs
  ⇒ Authors send their manuscripts to preferred journals, irrespective of how small or big the APCs are
  – And journals preserve their monopoly power, and dictate the price
    – This is used as an argument against OA, especially the so called hybrid journals
How can we do better?

- How may we introduce a competitive and efficient market in open access publishing?
  - And still level out the OA disadvantage of the pay to publish-model?
- Publishing scientific articles may be viewed as services the public sector buys from the private sector
  - Q: How do the public sector buy services?
    - A: Through calls for tenders
- How can this be done for OA publishing?
Tendering OA publishing

- We need a fund with which to purchase
  - It may be a consortium of HE institutions
  - Or within the budget of the Research Council of Norway?
- Let's go tendering!
  - How?
How to tender

• Publishers are invited to submit their bids, including:
  – Which journals are part of the bid
  – Price scheme – APCs and other charges

• Selection criteria:
  – Price level (APCs and other charges)
  – Price (APC) compared to official list price (how much discount)
  – Subject coverage
  – Scientific value of journals (impact factor, DBH level and/or other measures)
  – True OA-publishing (Creative Commons-license)
  – Enhancing services
It’s a deal

- The fund ends up with a set of deals with publishers entering the best bids:
  - An overall consideration of quality of journals, price as well as price/list price-ratio
  - In the sum of all deals, a good subject coverage should be sought
- The number of publishers and journals included in deals, are determined by the size of the fund
  - An estimation of how far the fund will reach
- The tender may be run annually or at other intervals
Authors

- Authors’ APCs may be covered by the fund, if and only if they publish in journals within these deals
- Authors are free to publish where they wish
  - This is not a limitation of authors’ academic freedom (no more than today’s model)
  - OA-publishing is in the public’s interests – the right thing to do is to bargain (tender) for the best value for money
APCs

- Examples of APCs:
- Springer Open: EUR 500 – 1500
  Springer Open Choice: EUR 2000
  BioMedCentral: EUR 420 – 1840
- Wiley Open Access: EUR 1400 – 2500
  Wiley OnlineOpen: EUR 2200 (USD 3000)
- Oxford Open: EUR 2550
- Hindawi: EUR 250 - 1100
Limitation options

- The fund may cover only part of the APC
  - A maximum amount per article, or a predetermined portion of the APC
  - But still only from journals within deals
- Limitations will ensure that the fund will last longer
  - It is important that the fund is not emptied long before the fiscal year has ended
  - But limitations will mean that the disadvantage compared to subscription journals are not fully levelled out
Practicalities

- A consortium of institutions:
  - How to balance each consortial member contribution to the fund, and the payouts from the fund?
  - How to join the fund?
    - Fixed relative contributions, based on institution size or publishing activity?
  - Best suited for institutions with fairly equal subject coverage
    - The subject coverage in the sum of deals must be fairly equally (dis-)satisfactory to all institutions
Budgeting

• Where should the money come from?
• Publishing need to be paid for one way or the other
• It is not a question of new services to be paid for
• Just a question of route by which to pay it
The Research Council of Norway to finance the fund?
- We avoid the problem of balancing contribution and payouts
- Institutions biased towards subjects with high article publishing intensity will benefit most
- Already, the Research Council pays APCs through project funding
  - Pull these out and leave all APC financing to the tender fund?
Go for it!

- Consortial model:
  - We need institutions willing to commit funding to a fund
  - The fund needs to sufficiently big to be worth the bother
- What do we need?
  - Univ of Tromsø-researchers publish approx. 1000 journal articles annually
  - NOK 1 million (~ EUR 130 000) could cover APC for something like 12-15% of UoT’s journal articles
  - A consortial fund of 5-10 million NOK annually?
    - Would make it possible to run a tender
Little experience to build on

- To my knowledge, no one has run such a tender for the APCs
- SCOAP3 is one example of tendering for OA publishing
  - But it is a different model – OA-publishing of all high energy physics-articles
  - SCOAP3-experiences are anyway interesting to follow
- Why have tendering not been tried out more in OA?
  - Libraries are too preoccupied purchasing (access to) books and journals?
  - The OA-literature is there anyway – we do not need to bother?
  - Where the money goes in our budget is where our attention is?
- I think we should try it!

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Thank you!