



Open Access Mandatory?

A comment on the new policy from Research
Councils UK

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The Rise of Open Access

- Two main objectives
 - Ensure easier access to research output for a larger audience
 - Driving the price of journal subscriptions down
- Does the new mandatory OA policy from Research Councils UK meet the objectives?



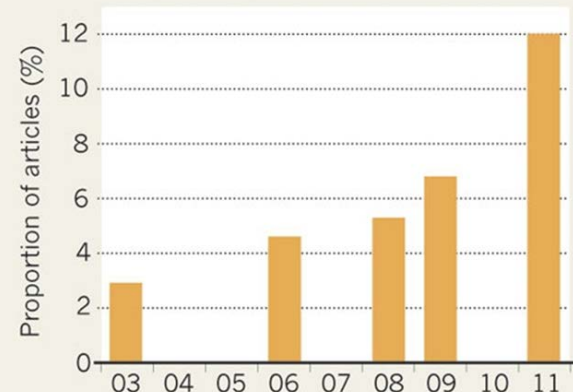
Open access

- «Green»
 - Pre- and post-print (i.e., before and after refereeing), but typically the final version before journal formatting
 - No fee
- «Gold»
 - Open access publishing
 - Payment of an Article Processing Charge (APC)
 - In the UK only around 5% (Gargouri, 2011)



RISE OF GOLD

The world's gold open-access articles are rising as a share of the total.



Source: Laakso & Björk, 2011.

Research Councils UK's new deal

1. All publicly funded research should *immediately* be made available free of charge (APC)
 - This should be the publisher's final, formatted version: i.e., «Gold»
 - The right to deposit the final version in a repository
 - Creative commons license
2. If alt. 1 is *not* offered by the publisher, the final post-print version should be allowed to be put in a repository
 - «Green» only if «Gold» is not offered (written version)



Open Access & Public Interest

- Public good aspect of knowledge creation
 - The «value» of research increases in the dispersion of the results
 - Knowledge is key for innovation and economic growth
- Dynamic incentives
 - Need to ensure that “outlet restrictions” does not have negative effects on incentives to publish



Open Access & Public Interest

- Public funding
 - Why pay twice (or even three times)?
- Someone has to pay (but all benefit...)
 - Classical public good problem → solved until now by paid subscriptions
 - ⇒ *under-consumption*
 - Pay to provide a public good is not a well tested model...
 - ⇒ *under-provision*



Open access and financial viability of publishing?

- Economies of scale and scope
 - Large fixed costs → Publishers need revenue
 - APC will not cover all costs
 - Even if the “gold” articles pay, others will not → May not have a significant impact on price of journal subscriptions
 - A major financial burden (at least in a transition period)



Price of access to research?

- Mandatory open access to drive the price of access to published research down?
 - Need alternative outlets that can be utilised as threat points
 - ...a need for true, high-quality OA-journals?
 - ...a need for **green** OA?
 - Without credible threats → not very likely that the overall price comes down
 - ...but the pricing model changes



Individual incentives versus mandatory OA

- Researchers' objectives:
 - Objective #1: Publish (or perish)! *"If it isn't published, it didn't happen"*
 - Objective #2: Publish in reputable journals!
 - Objective #3: Citations!
- What is the effect of mandatory OA on the "producers" of research?



Objective #3 vs mandatory OA

- May extend the potential circle of readers
- May result in higher impact of current research in policy making, in business strategy, in teaching etc.

Results

Papers:	1000	Cites/paper:	133.52	h-index:	147
Citations:	133518	Cites/author:	84030.27	g-index:	353
Years:	43	Papers/author:	757.58	hc-index:	78
Cites/year:	3105.07	Authors/paper:	1.63	hI,norm:	128

J Stiglitz from 1970 to 2012: bus,soc
Query date: 2012-11-21
Papers: 1000
Citations: 133518
Years: 43



Objective #2 vs mandatory OA

(if this was to be implemented in Norway)

- An example - Economics (Level 2 journals):
 - The "average" level 2 journal was founded in 1965 (median 1972)
 - The oldest level 2 journal was founded in 1886 (QJE)
 - The newest is from 2003 (JEEA); the second newest is from 1998
 - Of the 10 youngest journals, the average age is around 20 years
 - No "true" open access journals



Objective #1 vs mandatory OA

- The «love of gold»'s critical problem:
 - Move towards (a mandatory) «authors pay» principle
 - Restrictions on which outlet to choose
 - How to fund approx £50-60 million/year in the UK?
 - Less available funds for carrying out research?
 - Who decides which article is worthy of a piece of the APC block grant?
 - Where can we afford to publish?



Is the Research Councils UK's policy the right prescription?

- Does this solve the dissemination issue?
 - Yes.
- Does this solve the “dynamic incentives” issue?
 - Probably other factors that dominate.
 - A question mark regarding the effect of pay to publish both on quantity and quality.
- Does this encourage the entry of true open access journals?
 - No (although lack of funds may imply a switch to OA-journals for “poor” researchers)
 - ...but embargo on green OA in traditional journals may be longer than RCUK's requirement → may go for OA-journals



Is the Research Councils UK's policy the right prescription?

- Does this have an effect on the "bargaining position" of research institutions and publishers?
 - Yes.
 - On the positive side → May force journals to adopt at least a gold option
 - On the negative side → Too much focus on "gold" reduces the threat point in a bargaining process with publishers
 - The alternative becomes less of an alternative, which may shift the bargaining power towards publishers
 - A built-in inertia related to "take up" of new journals due to network effects



Summary

- If we want the price of publishing and the price of access to research to come down
 - ⇒ need to make sure that there are alternatives (true OA-journals, focus on «green» & «gold», not «gold» or «green»)
- Dissemination of research can just as well be achieved with «green» OA
- The effect of “pay to provide” on the overall output is not well known
- Important that it is not the authors that have to carry the burden of open access publishing
 - Neither in terms of payment, nor in terms of having to publish in “low quality” journals to receive public grants

