

Norwegian Read & Publish agreements – an overview

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Abstract

During the course of 2019, Unit (the Norwegian Directorate for ICT and Joint Services in Higher Education & Research), who acts as the Norwegian coordinator of Open Access and licence negotiations, landed Open Access agreements with the four major academic publishers. This article gives an overview of the key elements in the agreements with Wiley, Elsevier, Springer Nature and Taylor & Francis.

Keywords:

Open Access, Read & Publish agreements, Academic publishers, Elsevier, Wiley, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis

Background

Norwegian [national goals and guidelines for open access to research articles](#) were launched in 2017 by the Ministry of Education and Research. The overall goal is to make all publicly funded Norwegian research articles openly available by 2024. One of the specific guidelines states that "Institutions and consortia that negotiate agreements with publishers shall ensure that these agreements promote open access without increasing total costs, and that the terms and conditions are open and transparent" (Ministry of Education and Research, 2017). The foundation was set for Unit, national coordinators of open access and negotiations with publishers. During the following two years, Unit has negotiated Read & Publish agreements with the four largest academic publishers. By the end

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of 2019, agreements have been reached with Wiley, Elsevier, Springer Nature and Taylor & Francis – this article provides information about agreements with these four publishers.

Unit also has a Read & Publish agreement with De Gruyter and an offsetting agreement with the Institute of Physics. Agreements with several other academic publishers are under negotiation. For more information and details on the deals, visit <https://www.openaccess.no/>.

Details of the deals

Wiley

The agreement period is 1.1.2019 to 31.12.2021. Open Access publishing is included for all OnlineOpen (hybrid) and fully Open Access journals. Approximately 113 society journals are excluded. Read access is unchanged from previous agreements.

Since the agreement was signed in March 2019, Open Access publishing came into effect April 1 for fully Open Access journals and May 1 for hybrid journals. Articles that are accepted for publishing after these dates and until the end of the agreement period, are eligible for Open Access publishing.

A limited number of articles can be published Open Access during the agreement period. By the end of the agreement period, the number of articles will gradually increase to approximately 110 % – compared to the 2018 publishing output of the participating institutions.

With a price increase in the first year of about 12 % compared to previous subscription costs, the agreement cannot be defined as cost neutral. However, the price comparison does not include previously paid APCs, either directly from researchers, research projects or institutional Open Access publication funds. The latter is widespread in Norway and they usually support only fully Open Access journals.

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Elsevier

The agreement period is from 1.1.2019 to 31.12.2020. Unit and Elsevier signed the agreement in April 2019, this becoming the first Read & Publish agreement ever for Elsevier (Davis 2019).

Publishing rights are included for approximately 2200 journals, both hybrid and fully Open Access journals from Elsevier and partner presses. Around 400 journals are excluded from the deal, including Cell Press titles and the Lancet. Read access is to the ScienceDirect Freedom Collection.

Open Access publishing came into effect on May 3. Articles submitted during the entire agreement period (1.1.2019–31.12.2020) are eligible for Open Access. In addition, Elsevier offered to do a retrospective flipping from closed to open of all articles published between January 1 and May 3. This campaign meant that authors had to resign the publishing agreement and go through the Open Access workflow. It was first carried out by Elsevier and had varying results. In collaboration with Elsevier and Unit, the institutions themselves have tried to contact the authors a second time. This is a work in progress, but preliminary results show a significant increase, however far from full coverage.

A limited number of articles can be published during the agreement period. This covers approximately the research output of participating institutions, published in the journals that are included in the agreement.

Elsevier is by far the most expensive consortium agreement in Norway. Nevertheless, it is the only cost neutral Read & Publish agreement of 'the big four'. The price increase is based on the previous subscription cost only, and it is within the regular range of around 3–4 %. Any previously paid APCs are not included in the baseline, paid by either research projects or institutional Open Access publication funds.

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Springer Compact

The agreement runs from 1.1.2020 to 31.12.2022 and includes publishing rights to all OpenChoice (hybrid) journals. *Nature*-branded journals and fully Open Access journals are excluded.

A limited number of articles can be published during the agreement period, covering more or less the total number of publications of the participating

institutions in these journals. Articles accepted during the agreement period are eligible for Open Access.

With a price increase in the first year of 10 % – compared to the existing subscription costs – the Springer Compact agreement cannot be defined as cost neutral. The baseline does not include previously paid APCs, paid by either research projects or institutional publication funds. Since fully Open Access journals are not included in this deal, institutional publication funds will have to continue supporting publishing in these journals, making the price increase even less favourable.

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Taylor & Francis

The agreement runs from 1.1.2020 to 31.12.2022.

Publishing rights are included to all Open Select (hybrid) journals. Journals with "premium APC" (higher APC) and fully Open Access journals are excluded.

A limited number of articles can be published during the agreement period, building up, by the end of the agreement period, to cover more or less the total research output of participating institutions published in the journals included in the agreement. Articles accepted during the agreement period are eligible for Open Access.

The agreement has two options connected to the price development. The first scenario is cost neutral, with a regular price increase for subscription packages of about 2,5–3 %. To keep the price increase at this level, the institutions have to let go of post cancellation access to their core subscriptions in the second year of the agreement (2021). Historically, Norwegian institutions have had post cancellation access to core subscriptions only, and not the entire package content. In the second scenario, institutions can choose to keep post cancellation access and pay a price increase of about 11 % in year 2. The baseline does not include previously paid APCs, either paid directly from research projects or institutional Open Access funds. As with Springer, fully Open Access journals are not included and Open Access funds will have to continue their support for these journals.

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Workflows and reporting

All agreements have automated workflows. At the point of acceptance, the publisher notifies authors of the opportunity to publish Open Access under the agreement. Crucial to a successful workflow is the publishers' ability to discover eligible authors during the publishing process. The publishers have various ways to do this, but the most common is an author's stated affiliation, as either a free text field or a drop-down menu. Springer Nature seems to be the most developed with three levels of criteria (institutional affiliation, email domain and IP address) where at least one has to be fulfilled. When accepted, the library approves or rejects articles in a library dashboard.

The workflows at the moment do not distinguish between authors with and without external funding. This means that the Norwegian Read & Publish agreements also cover articles where funds to cover APCs may be available from funders.

Reports of published articles are available in the library dashboard, with a variety of metadata. Only Taylor & Francis includes reporting on the institution's total publishing output in the dashboard, i.e. both Open Access and non-Open-Access articles. The other publishers only offer this on request.

Preliminary reflections

Given the short time that these agreements have been active, and two of them are not even properly implemented yet, it is too early to draw any conclusions. Nevertheless, there are some interesting experiences to reflect on.

Since there is a limited number of articles in each agreement, it has become very important to define and monitor eligible article types. There must be a connection between eligible article types and the source data for the agreement.

In general, the agreements and their variety of workflows are giving libraries a completely new set of tasks to manage alongside already existing ones.

With many more deals to come, one can only hope for the development of industry standards and interoperability.

Communicating the opportunity to publish Open Access is a challenge. The best way to reach every single author is through the publication process. Web pages and other information channels are merely supplemental. Therefore, the effort must be put into enhancing the information and messages that go out to the author during the publication process. Preferably, it should be a collaboration between publishers and libraries, with the opportunity to make adjustments at consortium level. The choice of license is one specific challenging area to communicate. On what basis does the researcher choose a license and how can we help them make an educated decision? It will be an important issue to work with in the future.

Last, but not least, what about hybrid vs. fully Open Access journals? Through institutional Open Access publication funds, Norwegian institutions have had a strong tradition for supporting fully Open Access journals and publishers. With the implementation of several Read & Publish agreements, Open Access publishing in hybrid journals has become increasingly available to Norwegian authors. We will need to monitor how this impacts the publication patterns and use of institutional publication funds going forward.

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