

Recommendations for the Open Access Transition

Strategic and practical anchorage of Open Access in informational provisioning of research institutions

Recommendations of the Ad-hoc-workgroup Open-Access-Gold in the priority initiative “Digital Information” of the Alliance of Science Organizations in Germany

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Objective

The following “Recommendations for Open Access transition” have been compiled by the Ad-hoc workgroup “Open-Access-Gold” in the priority initiative “Digital Information” of the Alliance of Science Organizations in Germany¹. They are based on “Positions on creating an Open Access publication market which is scholarly adequate” as mapped out by the workgroup.²

They mainly address academic libraries as well as publishing houses and other actors in the field of scientific publishing. The recommendations are designed to help find orientation for strategic and practical anchorage of Open Access in the information provisioning of scholarly institutions.

Summary

The description of the Open Access transition, its mechanisms and actors, assigns a central role to libraries in this process and names various activities libraries may choose to actively observe their exposed role in the transition process.

In this context the following recommendations are formulated:

1. Strategic and practical anchorage of open-access in the information provisioning of academic libraries.
2. Anchorage of Open Access in the licensing practice.
It seems reasonable to close nationwide agreements with Open Access providers on general terms and conditions for scientific publishing in Open Access for all German scholarly institutions (Offsetting-contracts, APC-Framework contracts).
Libraries can negotiate such agreements for themselves or participate in nationwide options.
3. Financing publication fees for Open Access journals (APCs) through acquisition budgets.
This will successively ensue a shifting of funds from subscriptions in the acquisition departments to Open Access. A raise of funds for financing subscription fees out of the libraries’ own budgets or third party sponsoring (e.g. Open Access publication fund of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) should only be necessary on an interim basis, if at all.
4. Cross-institutional disclosure (open books) of subscription and Open Access fees as well as key data (ratios) on publication and related cash flow between academic institutions and publishers in Germany.
The aim is to support the development of transparent markets and price-structures for scientific publishing.
5. Installation of efficient and scalable processes and services at libraries to organize coverage (of the costs) for Open Access articles by academic authors.

¹ <http://www.allianzinitiative.de/handlungsfelder/querschnittsthemen/open-access-gold.html>

² Positions of the Ad Hoc Working Group Open Access Gold in the priority initiative "Digital Information" of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany (2015): Positions on creating an Open Access publication market which is scholarly adequate .
<http://doi.org/10.2312/allianzoa.009>.

1. Open Access Transition

The focus is on the publication market for scientific journals which today is characterized by the coexistence of subscription journals, hybrid journals and Open Access journals.

1.1. Definitions

Subscription journals offer access to scientific articles only through payment of defined fees (subscription fees) (Closed Access). They dominate the publication market today.

Hybrid journals are a sub-group of subscription journals. They require additional fees parallel to the subscription fees to allow single articles to be published Open Access.

Open Access journals are scientific journals whose contents and corresponding meta data are accessible directly by digital publishing, completely open on the internet. The modifier “open” contains financial, legal and technical aspects. It is required that contents, supplements and meta data of the publication are accessible in a standardized technical format and adequate standardized licensing terms. The aim is to offer free access to the contents to all scholars and ensure legally as well as technically its reusability, undeterred.

Open Access journals generally use various business and financing models. Commercial Open Access providers usually charge publications fees – Article Processing Charges (APCs) – for publishing articles in their journals. The business models employed to this end vary. At the same time academic institutions increasingly publish their own Open Access journals via platforms and self-publishing venture. This way they contribute to the development of a non-commercial Open Access publication market. These Open Access journals are funded and/or published directly by the scholarly institution and do not charge any fees.

The term *Open Access Transition* describes the conversion of the publication market for scientific articles from subscription to Open Access. The transition process is evolving gradually by increasing publication of articles in Open Access while conventional, even hybrid subscription and Open Access journals are being published in parallel (transitional period). The focus is shifting continuously from subscription to Open Access journals. In the long run it is intended to have Open Access journals replace the subscriptions.

In the face of globally [multi-national] acting providers and worldwide access to contents in Open Access the transition process can only come about globally. However, each country can contribute by implementing their measures to promote the process as long as these measurements are complimentary and coordinated and their aims do not defeat the purpose.

1.2. Mechanisms and actors

The transition to Open Access will greatly improve the information provisioning of scholarly institutions. The science organizations in Germany, universities and research funding agencies therefore support a comprehensive changeover of the academic publication market towards Open Access.

There are different approaches to promote the transition to Open Access, e.g. political specifications to monitor public behavior of researchers, concerted discontinuance of subscriptions at a defined date and influencing the publication market through adequate contract models. Design and management of these models and their terms are the primary task of academic libraries. They play an exposed strategic role in the process of transition to Open Access.

Today various European countries focus on so-called “Offsetting contracts”. These try to gain momentum for the transition to Open Access by allocating subscription fees and article processing charges (APCs). There is hope that these contracts prove to be an adequate means to shape the transition.³

Having this in mind the following instruments are regarded as supportive in the transition process:

- APC framework contract with attractive terms for publication in Open Access.
- Offsetting contracts with attractive terms for publication in Open Access.
- Transition terms⁴ in subscription contracts with hybrid business models as an additional incentive for transition to Open Access
- Hybrid business models, as long as the problem of “double dipping” can be reasonably excluded.

All instruments should be used and tried out complementary as long as the context seems adequate. So far no insights have been gained on the practical consequences for the transition process.

The intent of all measures is to reach a critical amount of publications in Open Access. Here, Offsetting contracts seem to be most promising due to the direct connection between subscription and Open Access. The focus should be on them.

For the last few years and still today the funding of publication fees for Open Access journals (APCs) has been provided by academic institutions and research funding agencies additionally to existing acquisition budgets, e.g. “Open Access publication funds”⁵.

To reach a sustainable financing of the Open Access models a redeployment of such funds is necessary that are now spent for subscription. Here again academic libraries play a major role. An analysis by the Max Planck Digital Library (MPDL) predicts that the transition intended from subscription

³ As is the case in Great Britain with contracts with IOP, Taylor & Francis, RSC, Sage und Springer Nature, in the Netherlands with Springer Nature and in Austria with IOP and Springer Nature. However it has to be kept in mind that the existing Offsetting agreements were settled as “Big Deals”, meaning they had considerable volume. The positive aspects of these contracts go along with typical drawbacks of “Big Deals” (danger of restraints of competition, opacity concerning the calculation of fees, perpetuity of existing price levels) that have to be alleviated.

⁴ Transition terms guarantee that subscription journals convert into Open Access journals under certain conditions.

⁵ Workgroup Open Access in the primarity initiative „Digital Information“ of the Alliance of Scientific Organizations in Germany (2014): folder “Open-Access-Publikationsfonds” <http://doi.org/10.2312/allianz0a.006> .

to Open Access will hold a high savings potential, globally as well as nationwide.⁶ Proceeding on the path of transition from subscription to Open Access in Germany is desirable to reduce costs in the long run.

To be able to actively observe their role in the transition process academic libraries must predispose conditions to meet this end.⁷

Below are recommendations phrased for strategic and practical anchoring of Open Access in the information provisioning of scientific institutions for orientation:

2. Recommendations for Open Access transition

2.1. General Conditions

With the "Position on creating an Open Access publication market which is scholarly adequate"⁸ the workgroup Open-Access in the priority initiative "Digital Information" of the Alliance of Scientific Organizations in Germany issued the first paper stating central requirements for the conditions of Open Access. It is intended to give scholarly institutions orientation (quality assurance, transparency, cost structure of Open Access offers from publishers etc.).

It is recommended to anchor these aspects into the institutional practice.

2.2. Licensing Practice

Academic libraries can contribute considerably to the steering of the transition process by developing and realizing contract models. Closing contracts following the publication model is not only a practical but also a strategic instrument to further the transition process.

2.2.1. Status Quo

First steps to anchor Open Access rights in nationwide licensing agreements for subscription journals have been taken in the context of national and alliance licenses funded by the DFG. Both forms of Open Access, green and gold, are focused upon.

- During the years 2004 through 2010 the DFG has funded extended acquisitions of closed data collections (among others journal archives) within the program for national licenses to be accessed by all institutions predominantly publicly financed. Towards the end of the funding program negotiations included the right for authors affiliated to authorized institutions and

⁶ Schimmer, R.; Geschuhn, K.K; Vogle, A. (2015): Disrupting the subscription journals' business model for the necessary large-scale transformation to open access. <http://doi.org/10.17617/1.3>

⁷ see: workgroup Open-Access in the priority initiative "Digitale Information" of the Alliance of Scientific Organizations in Germany (2012): Open-Access-Strategien für wissenschaftliche Einrichtungen. Bausteine und Beispiele. <http://doi.org/10.2312/ALLIANZOA.005>, and: Ad-hoc- workgroup Open-Access-Gold in the priority initiative "Digitale Information" Alliance of Scientific Organizations in Germany (2015): Positions on creating an Open Access publication market which is scholarly adequate. <http://doi.org/10.2312/allianzoa.008>.

⁸ Ad-hoc-workgroup Open-Access-Gold in the priority initiative "Digitale Information" of the Alliance of Scientific Organizations in Germany (2015): Positions on creating an Open Access publication market which is scholarly adequate. <http://doi.org/10.2312/allianzoa.008>.

institutions of their own right to publish their articles as included in the data corpus in the version of the publisher in institutional or special field repositories.

- The policy to anchor the green road in the licenses has been systematically pursued and continued in the follow-up program of the alliance licenses within the context of the priority initiative “Digital Information” of the Scientific Organizations in Germany. The Guidelines of the DFG stipulate expressively the right to secondary publication of the final version with an embargo as short as possible.⁹
- Some alliance licenses for subscription journals state the right of authors of joining institutions to grant discounts on APCs on those journals that are offered as genuine Open Access journals.¹⁰

In addition to the previously mentioned approaches from the context of licenses funded by the DFG, license agreements have been closed at local and even consortia levels with Open Access publishers that steer the conditions of the publication cost model. The ad hoc workgroup “open-Access-Gold” did a survey on the basis of selected member libraries by way of random sampling.

2.2.2. Prospects

On the basis of experience up to now we suggest to tie up activities and further develop varieties of models to contribute to the transition process more effectively.

We recommend starting negotiations with Open Access providers on general terms and conditions for all scientific institutions in Germany, centrally and supra-regionally, despite the described complexity of local processes. Nationwide negotiations are preferred.¹¹

Institutions that want to assume fees for their researchers for APC contracts may rely on these terms i.e. financing and assuming of costs will be realized by the institution.

However, the Open Access publication model requires a revised approach and strategic realignment of contract structures that reach across institutions and work supra-regionally and nationwide in order to realize the above described standards at no extra cost.

In view of the positions described in the following paragraph “Processes” “Opt-in contracts” seem particularly difficult where joining is possible at any time without detailed calculation of hitherto cost and incidental publication. Additionally, framework contracts need to be flexible enough to accommodate to the demands of the joining institutions regarding the handling. Negotiations for Offsetting models can take a leaf out of the existing alliance licenses with Open Access Gold components.

⁹ see: http://www.dfg.de/formulare/12_181/12_181_de.pdf as well as workgroups “Nationale Lizenzierung” and „Open Access” in the priority initiative “Digitale Information” of the Scientific Organizations in Germany (2012): Open-Access-Rechte in Allianz- und Nationallizenzen: eine Handreichung für Repository-Manager, Bibliothekare und Autoren. (A paper for repository manager, librarians and authors) <http://doi.org/10.2312/allianzoa.004>.

¹⁰ An exception is the agreement with the Royal Society of Chemistry that applies the model “Gold for Gold”.

¹¹ For orientation on the definition of general terms and conditions we recommend Positions of the Ad Hoc Working Group Open Access Gold in the priority initiative “Digital Information” of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany (2015): Positions on creating an Open Access publication market which is scholarly adequate . <http://doi.org/10.2312/allianzoa.009>, see in particular pages 28-33.

2.2.3. Contract models

In the following, the existing instruments for contracts will be outlined.

Open Access framework contracts

- Definition
A framework contract defines conditions for publication in original Open Access journals like discounts on APCs, authorized authors, invoicing and quality standards.
- Application level
The closing of framework contracts seems possible for institutions, regional and supra regional consortia as well as nationwide. Contracting party to the publisher would in this case be the institution or consortia.
- Transition effect
In view of the desired transition of the publication market to Open Access, framework contracts are valued as an important organizational instrument. Academic libraries may start from here to build new processes and services as far as publication is concerned (e.g. counseling for authors, analysis of publications, invoicing of APCs).
- Recommendation
 - Having in mind the desired shifting of funds from subscription to Open Access the merging or joint view on Open Access publication funds and subscription budgets is recommended. The more money is spent to finance Open Access publications the less is needed for subscription [the more subscription spending needs to be cut down]. Reductions on subscriptions should by all means promote the sustainable financial safeguard of the publication funds.
 - An important condition for contracts in Open Access frameworks are transparent and efficient business processes as far as authors and institutions are involved. It is therefore recommended even where cross institution and supra regional contracts are concerned to keep the financing and accounting at a local level.

Offsetting contracts

- Definition
Next to access permission (subscription) to publishers' servers, Offsetting contracts contain Open Access options for articles published during the term of the contract by joining institutions from the corresponding publisher. In this case, publication costs and license fees are viewed together. The final costs of the closing will include a balancing of both cost modules. Different procedures may be applied. Offsetting is an advancement of hybrid models. The contested "double dipping", as the double financing of academic contents by way of article and subscription fees is called, is taken into account. Subscription publishers offer these contracts, and usually also make options for hybrid Open Access publications available. Examples for offsetting contracts can be found in Great Britain and Austria on a nationwide scale with publishing houses like Springer Nature, IOP, Sage, Taylor & Francis and others.
- Application level
The closing of "Offsetting contracts" seems possible for institutions, regional and supra regional consortia as well as nationwide. Contracting party to the publisher would then be the institution or consortia.

- Transition effect

Offsetting contracts are based on the existing corpus of scientific journals and directly enable the transition to publication models in Open Access, though for the time being for a certain number of publications in one publishing house only. All in all, therefore, the difficulty to establish an alternative Open Access publication model by founding numerous new journals proves to be obsolete. Additionally no extra funds need to be made available; it seems more likely from today's state of knowledge that an article fee based publication system holds more potential for significant cost savings than the subscription model.

To what extent an extensive transition to Open Access can be brought about by Offsetting depends on the number of contracts to be closed in the near future. Only when a critical amount of publications available in Open Access is reached, can the subscription model be replaced altogether.

- Recommendation

- A central condition for closing Offsetting contracts is the knowledge of the quantity and allocation of publications of the involved institutions with regard to a certain publisher as well as their respective license costs. Additionally it will prove beneficial if joining institutions have similar conditions to start from, like e-only contracts and about the same amount of licenses.
- In view of perspective negotiations, libraries should analyze their publication volume in the relation to publication houses and corresponding licensing fees.
- In Great Britain JISC has recently released a paper stating the principles for closing Offsetting contracts.¹² These principles are most welcome. In particular Offsetting contracts should aspire to promote the factual transition of the business model. In this context contracts should include the following rules:
 - article based accounting instead of lump-sum preliminary payments
 - successive decrease of pro rata access fees
 - successive reduction of guaranteed turnover volume in favor of adjustment to factual publication volumes
 - successive differentiating of pricing for ACPs on the bases of comprehensible criteria instead of lump-sums for entire journal portfolios.
 - scientific institutions and publishers are requested to jointly build sustainable models for Offsetting.

2.3. Cost reduction

To promote the transition to Open Access many academic libraries in Germany support authors of their institutions, e.g. by helping with separate publication funds for APCs.¹³ During an initial transition phase such funds, often provided temporarily by the DFG in Germany,¹⁴ prove to be a wise strategic instrument. The central idea of the transition to Open Access however is a shift to reduce costs for as many academic journals as possible.

¹² JISC (2015): "Principles for Offset-Agreements". <https://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/Global/News%20files%20and%20docs/Principles-for-offset-agreements.pdf>

¹³ see workgroup Open-Access in priority initiative "Digitale Information" of the Alliance of Scientific Organisations in Germany (2014): Open-Access-Publikationsfonds. Eine Handreichung. <http://doi.org/10.2312/allianzoa.006> .

¹⁴ Support program „Guidelines Open Access Publishing“, see: http://www.dfg.de/formulare/12_20/12_20_en.pdf.

Scientific institutions should therefore take both Open Access publication costs (APC) and subscription fees into account and integrate them into the budget. From the perspective of the institution increasing Open Access publication costs should result in shifting and reorganization of funds for subscription (and not lead to an increased demand for funds).

Libraries are advised to create the structural conditions precedent to the transition and keep both publication and acquisition funds as integral parts of their budget planning and administration in mind. Institutions with multilayered library systems in whose context subscriptions are being jointly funded should try to centralize the administration of funds to monitor and control the cash flow between publishers and academic institutions.

Reduction of costs in the context of the Open Access transition process reflects the handling of business models by Open Access providers: Parallel Open Access publication of articles from subscription journals following a hybrid business model are to be viewed with a critical eye since double financing is imminent (“double dipping”). As long as the costs for APCs and subscription fees cannot be allocated comprehensively, funding of such charges should not be granted. Extent and terms of funds for APCs are always to be disclosed by providers and scientific institutions to promote transparency of the market.¹⁵

2.4. Business Procedures

The Open Access transition requires shifting and changing of procedures and business fields in academic libraries.¹⁶

2.4.1. Data survey

In order to determine the required means of an institution for Open Access publishing, it is essential to state the publication behavior of their scientific authors. Not only do the publications need to be analyzed, as well as their distribution with regard to co-authorship across institutions, but these data also need to be put into relation with the subscription fees hitherto payed in their entirety or in relation to each provider. Other payments to providers from an institution should also be factored if applicable where they are not recorded by central organizations like academic libraries. Costs for color pictures or excess length are examples for such costs.¹⁷

In view of the transition process scientific institutions (resp. their responsible libraries) should possess data sets to be able to answer the following questions:

- Publication volume
 - How many publications were generated with participation of members of the institution in year x?
 - How many publications were generated with participation of members of the institution as “Corresponding Authors”?
 - How were the publications distributed across publishers?

¹⁵ In the context of the initiative OpenAPC the UB Bielefeld coordinates the disclosure of these fees in dialog with the workgroup “Elektronisches Publizieren” (electronic publishing) of the “Initiative für Netzwerkinformation” (DINI) (initiative for networkinformation): <http://github.com/OpenAPC>.

¹⁶ see APC-Assessment-Quiz of the initiative „ESAC- Efficiency and Standards for Article Charges“ that sets out to help scientific institutions/libraries with self-assessment regarding their procedures and strategies towards Open Access transition (<http://esac-initiative.org/apc-assessment-quiz/>).

¹⁷ At chairs and scientific workgroups expenses for color pictures and excess length are usually not being factored in records of cash flows between scientific institutions and publishers today. This fact weakens the negotiation position for scientific institutions.

- Subscription fees
 - How high is the lump-sum for expenses for access to academic journals in year x at the institution to all publishers; to each publisher?
 - How do expenses for subscription fees correlate with the number of publications by “Corresponding Authors” from the institution?
- Costs for Open Access publication charges (APCs)
 - How high is the lump-sum of expenses for APCs in year x at the institution (costs from the budget of the library or from budgets of other departments)?
 - How high is the average price for APCs in year x at the institution?
 - How do subscription fees of individual providers correlate with publications from the institution at this provider?
- Costs for other publication fees in Open Access journals
 - How high is the lump-sum of expenses for other publication fees in year x at the institution?
 - How high is the average price for other publication fees in year x at the institution?
- Costs for other publication fees in hybrid journals
 - How high is the lump-sum of expenses for other publication fees in year x at the institution?
 - How high is the average price for other publication fees in year x at the institution?
- Open Access part of the expenses (gold and green)
 - What percentage of publication were published in Open Access journals in year x?
 - What percentage of publication were made accessible in free repositories in year x?
- Other cash flows to individual publishers
 - (e.g. financial support for publication of certain journals)

2.4.2. Processes

Business processes managing subscription offers differ greatly from managing Open Access contracts. This holds true particularly for the handling of invoices for APCs which proves to be very intricate and granular. Open Access changes the business field of academic libraries. The organization of efficient processes between paying institutions and publishers is in its early stages.

With the increase of Open Access publishing even traditional publishers who now offer Open Access need to invoice per article and provide an appropriate reporting system. Where allocation with subscription fees is agreed on it is vital for the publishing house to recognize authors and their affiliation to a paying institution immediately since here the course is set for the later billing. This means publishers must make sure that they can identify those authors through their submitting and publication systems for whom certain terms and conditions like discounts on APCs, procedures of the central recording system or allocation with subscription fees apply. Scientific institutions or their libraries on the other hand need to confirm to the publisher as early as possible in the publication process the authorization of an author to claim the benefits agreed on.

These aspects should be taken into account before starting to negotiate. Should an institution aspire to get full coverage for APCs for authors from different institutions (e.g. in the context of a consortia)

an agreement needs to be reached on how the process of authorization and invoicing between the publisher and the joining institutions will be organized. No deal should be closed without the required confirmation of the handling of such a contract model. As a rule the more players are involved the more complicated the process becomes. Increased complexity will lead to a rise of transaction costs for the single article and runs the risk of rising APCs. The extra expenditures on the part of the institutions in consortia should be put into relation with the desired discounts.

3. Conclusions

The Open Access transition aims to change the publication models for articles in academic journals from subscription to Open Access. Different ways to get there are conceivable. Looking at the role models in neighboring European countries it seems like monitoring the process to anchor Open Access in the provision of information is particularly efficient. It is recommended to negotiate nationwide contracts containing APC and Offsetting conditions as well as to develop corresponding contract models. Libraries of scientific institutions play an exposed strategic role in this process of transition. They face the challenge to: integrate Open Access in the licensing practice, shift funds from literature budgets to finance publication costs and develop internal business processes to collect data on the volume of publications within the institution for controlling and management of Open Access contracts.

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