Managing open access: the first year of managing RCUK and Wellcome Trust OA funding at the University of Glasgow Library

Based on a paper presented at the UKSG seminar 'Managing Open Access', London, 20 May 2014

Many institutions have been awarded funds by the Research Councils UK (RCUK), in the form of a block grant, to cover the costs of article processing charges (APCs) for open access (OA). This article discusses how this grant (and also the open access fund awarded by the Wellcome Trust) is being managed at the University of Glasgow. It looks at the overall policy for managing these funds at the University and at the systems and processes set in place by the University Library to deal with this new area of activity. There are significant challenges for institutions in managing individual APCs and the article discusses some of these challenges. The new Research Excellence Framework (REF) policy on open access was introduced in March 2014 and will have implications for the management of open access by institutions. Finally, the paper looks at where next for OA management at the University.

Context

Research Councils UK (RCUK) revised their open access (OA) policy[1] from 1 April 2013 so that article processing charges (APCs) could no longer be built into grant applications; instead universities receive a block grant to cover these costs. The University of Glasgow received £408k for 2013/14.

RCUK accept both gold OA (payment of an APC to the publisher to make the version of record open access) and green OA (availability of the accepted final version of the article in an institutional or subject repository, often after a publisher-defined embargo period). RCUK set a target for institutions of 45% open access in the first year of assigning their block grant.

The Wellcome Trust has a strong OA policy[2] and it gives some institutions funds to cover APCs. Many other funders (for example, the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK) also have OA policies and although they have not historically allocated funds to universities to cover APCs, costs can sometimes be recovered.

University of Glasgow's approach to open access

At the University of Glasgow, the University's Research Planning and Strategy Committee (RPSC) has overall responsibility for the University's approach to funder requirements for open access and took the decision that green OA is the preferred route whenever possible. The members of RPSC felt strongly that internal processes for the management of the OA funds made available by RCUK and the Wellcome Trust should be low barrier for our academic staff and researchers. The Library was asked to manage these OA funds (taking over responsibility for the Wellcome Trust fund of c£90k at the same time as the new RCUK fund) and to work with RPSC to devise processes for allocating them.

SUSAN ASHWORTH
Deputy Director

VALERIE MCCUTCHEON
Research Information Manager

LAURA ROY
Senior Assistant Librarian: Acquisitions and Access (Serials)

University of Glasgow Library

The process we have set in place is very simple: authors are asked to e-mail a generic e-mail address whenever they have a research output accepted for publication. Library staff then undertake to advise the author to ensure that an appropriate open access pathway is determined for their output, bearing in mind the University's preference for the green route to open access. Once the Library receives notification that an output has been accepted for publication, we check to see if payment for open access is appropriate based on the output type, the funder's OA policy and publisher copyright/embargo policies.

Library open access service

The Library has created an open access service that is becoming recognised across the University and which is seen as easy and efficient – feedback from our academic staff has been excellent. We participated in the Jisc Total Cost of Ownership Project[3] and found out we are currently committing the equivalent of 3FTE in staff time to manage open access. Our procedures are working very well from the academic perspective, but it takes a lot of effort and staff time to maintain those levels of satisfaction and a significant challenge will be to maintain satisfaction as demand scales up, which we anticipate it will as more academic staff hear about funder policies on open access and about HEFCE's policy on the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF)[4].

> "… a significant challenge will be to maintain satisfaction as demand scales up …"

In the first year of the RCUK block grant (1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014) the OA e-mail address received notification of 453 outputs and paid for 208 APCs. From 1 April 2014 to 31 August 2014 we received notification of 327 outputs and paid for 168 APCs, and notifications are continuing to increase.

The Library has taken on responsibility for open access from end-to-end:

- *Engagement*: the OA team is working its way around every School, Research Institute and Group within the University to brief academic staff about the funder requirements on open access and what will be required in order to make their outputs eligible for the next REF.

- *Triage*: the OA team assesses each output notified to it on acceptance to see what open access requirements pertain (funder, REF eligibility). Authors are advised accordingly.

- *Payment*: the OA team contacts publishers to arrange payment of APCs, organize prepayment deposits, and ensure that where the Library has paid to make an output open access, it is actually freely available on the publisher website.

- *Copyright*: the OA team advises authors about licensing for their papers, embargo periods and acceptable formats for green OA.

We have aimed to embed processes in existing services, rather than have a specific dedicated member of staff or group of staff. The Library's Research Information Manager, supported by others, does the initial assessment to determine whether payment of an APC is required to meet funder open access expectations, or whether deposit into the University's repository, Enlighten, will fulfil these obligations. Serials staff have the relationships with publishers and the expertise to raise and process invoices. They organize payment of APCs and manage our prepayment deals. Institutional repository staff pick up where we have advised that authors can use the green OA route and will follow up to obtain accepted final versions, ensure that publications are recorded in Enlighten, link to funders where appropriate and record licences in our repository.

> "We have aimed to embed processes in existing services …"

Challenges

The open access landscape is not consistent and each funder has a slightly different policy:

- some funders apply sanctions for non-compliance

- some funders have OA policies but make no funds available to pay for APCs

- some funders will cover page charges as well as APCs but some specifically will not

- some funders require deposit into Europe PubMed Central rather than institutional repositories

- funders will allow different embargo periods for green OA.

Publishers also have different OA policies, for example: embargo periods for self-archiving vary significantly; not all publishers have a clear policy on self-archiving; some publishers offer a paid OA option, some do not; some publishers charge additionally for CC BY licensing.

"The open access landscape is not consistent …"

This is confusing enough for those of us working with open access on a daily basis. It is deeply confusing for academic staff who may only engage with it once in a while. Our researchers are concerned to comply with their funders' conditions of grant but they also worry about whether their co-authors will consent to open access particularly if they are international. They have concerns about the costs of APCs (which can go from as little as £200 up to £4,000, our most expensive APC), about the sustainability of OA models for their learned societies, and about the quality of the accepted final version of articles deposited as green OA, compared to the published version.

Managing APCs on behalf of individual academics is challenging because the Library is stepping into the middle of the publisher-author relationship and attempting to be an intermediary for one part of that relationship – payment. Not all publishers have established processes that allow for that mediation, so for example they will send invoices directly to the author, in the author's name, which the Library cannot pay – we have to request new invoices, which can build in time delays for publication of the article. Authors are often e-mailed and given a short window of time (e.g. 24 or 48 hours) in which to choose and pay for open access. Again, Library staff have to find ways of stepping in and ensuring payment can be made within this time frame as most University finance systems are not set up to make these fast payments. Publishers will often chase up the author directly for payment, even where Library staff have requested an invoice, which may lead the author to think that payment has not been made. Library staff also have to ensure that they advise authors to choose the correct licence (normally CC BY) as we cannot be sure that publishers will automatically apply this licence when we pay an APC, and there have been instances where incorrect licences have been applied to articles where we have paid an APC, which means the paper is non-compliant with the funder's OA policy. There have also been instances where we have paid an APC and found that, on publication, the article has not been made open access. This means that Library staff have to check every paper to ensure that we get what we have paid for. Many publishers now have good OA support available on their websites, but not all of them, and it can sometimes be quite difficult to find out about a publisher's self-archiving policy, if they have one, or whether a paid open access option is available.

"… the Library is stepping into the middle of the publisher-author relationship …"

This all has the effect that managing each individual APC can be very time consuming, with processes varying from publisher to publisher (and sometimes between the different arms of the same publisher). Handling invoices for individual articles, tracking progress and ensuring that when papers are published they are made open access can be an involved and lengthy process. This time spent is being multiplied across many institutions. As a community of librarians and publishers, it would be helpful to find ways of making these processes simpler and more streamlined. Prepayment deals, where institutions deposit a lump sum with the publisher to be drawn down whenever an APC is paid, help with administration; although we need to be sure that the funds deposited will be used or refunded. Most of these arrangements work very well but some are not straightforward, e.g. some publishers only allow them to be used for a sub-set of their journal titles.

Implications of the REF policy for open access

The new REF policy on open access was published in March 2014 and we are now publicising this within the University. The policy states that from 1 April 2016, in order to be eligible for submission to the next REF, the accepted final version of journal articles and peer-reviewed conference proceedings must be deposited into an institutional or subject repository within three months of the date of acceptance. The Library is working with the office of our Vice-Principal for Research to ensure that academic staff across the University are aware of the implications of this policy and understand how to comply with it. Again, we are trying to make our message as straightforward and as low barrier as possible for our academic staff – 'send us your acceptance e-mail and attach the accepted final version of your paper – we'll do the rest' (i.e. look at the paper to see if there are funders acknowledged, advise if payment of an APC is appropriate, apply the relevant embargo period, update the repository when the paper is published).

What's next?

We are currently trialling the Swets APC management tool[5]. This is in the early stages of development, and in its current form allows us to deposit a lump sum with Swets and then forward publisher invoices to Swets for deduction from this deposited sum. The tool offers an interface to allow us to view a specified set of APC details (Funder, Author name, etc.) and a balance statement.

In this early form, the tool saves some staff time in the processing of individual APC invoices. However, we hope that our early involvement will allow us to work with Swets to develop this tool further, utilizing a publisher agent's experience, relationships and processes to develop the tool as an intermediary agent between the publisher and author/Library; liaising with the publisher to obtain APC invoices, ensuring correct licence selection, making payment, checking that the paper has been made openly available and providing data in the appropriate format for reporting to funding bodies.

Staff at the University are frequently consulted by peers and asked to speak at events as experts on the topic of open access. We represent the community on a number of committees including the Consortia Advancing Standards in Research Administration Information (CASRAI)[6] and as the champion for the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA)[7] Open Access Special Interest Group.

We are leading a Jisc Pathfinder Project 'End-to-End – Open Access Process Review and Improvements'[8] with colleagues from the Universities of Kent, Lancaster and Southampton and with EPrints services. This project is looking at practical ways of capturing standard metadata requirements for all OA requirements, and at sharing best practice to improve the efficiency by which organizations manage open access. Workshop summaries, consultations and information are shared widely with the community. We actively promote networking with the various stakeholders, regularly working with the other Pathfinder projects, system user groups and Jisc.

References

1. RCUK OA policy:
   http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/openaccess/ (accessed 16 September 2014).

2. Wellcome Trust OA policy:
   http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/about-us/policy/spotlight-issues/Open-access/index.htm (accessed 16 September 2014).

3. Jisc Total Cost of Ownership Project :
   https://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/News/Releasing-open-data-about-Total-Cost-of-Ownership/ (accessed 16 September 2014).

4. HEFCE's Policy Guide on OA research:
   http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/rsrch/rinfrastruct/oa/ (accessed 16 September 2014).

5. Swets APC management tool:
    http://www.swets.com/news/swets-launches-open-access-apc-management-service (accessed 23 October 2014. NB at the time of going to press, this link was still functional. However, Swets has now gone into administration so this link may cease to function at a later date. The editors decided to leave this section in as it refers to a project that was being considered at the time the original paper was presented, in May 2014.)

6. CASRAI – UK Pilot Project:
    http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/di_researchmanagement/researchinformation/casraipilot.aspx (accessed 16 September 2014).

7. ARMA:
    https://www.arma.ac.uk/ (accessed 16 September 2014).

8. End-to-End – Open Access Process Review and Improvements:
    http://e2eoa.org/ (accessed 16 September 2014).

Corresponding author:

Susan Ashworth

Deputy Director, University of Glasgow Library, Room 810, University of Glasgow Library, Hillhead Street, Glasgow G12 8QE, UK

Tel: +44 (0)141 330 6703 | E-mail: Susan.Ashworth@glasgow.ac.uk

ORCID iDs: Susan Ashworth: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8649-5785 | Valerie McCutcheon: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0705-4832 | Laura Roy: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6462-7932