

# What are the effects that two author-fee subsidy programs have on researchers' work practices and publishing behaviors?

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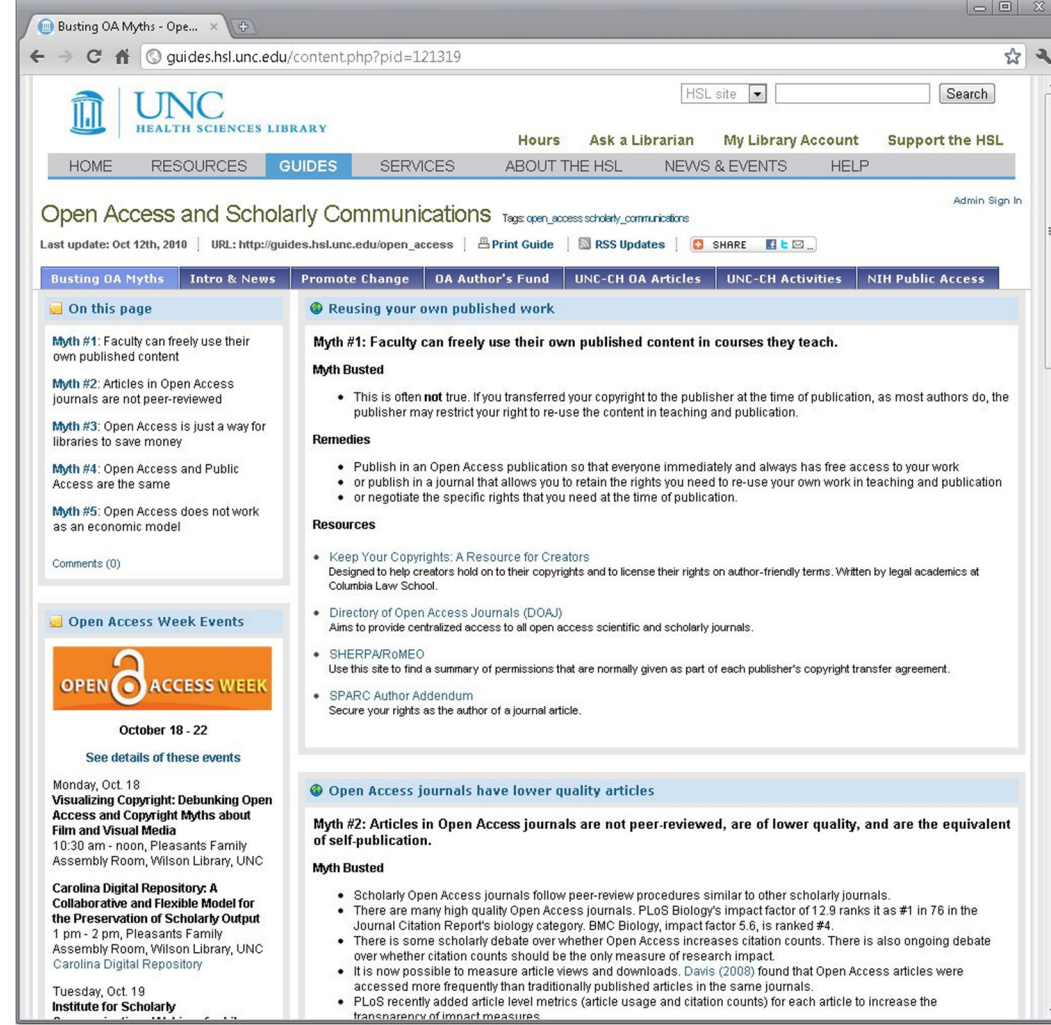
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## Campus context

The UNC Health Sciences Library supports a variety of methods to encourage the widest possible access to scholarly content produced by UNC faculty.



Emerging alternatives or complements to 'traditional' publication practices include publishing in open access journals; self-archiving manuscripts; submitting pre- and post-prints to institutional- and disciplinary-repositories; and complying with funding agency mandates for sharing results from federally-funded research. Each of these alternatives bears an associated set of economic, temporal, technological, and procedural challenges for authors. This in-progress pilot study elicits perspectives of UNC authors—particularly regarding the ways in which these individuals utilize support services provided by campus administration, University Libraries, and agencies that fund their research.

## Methods

- Iterative recruitment (via email and phone) of UNC authors for four cohorts, matched as closely as possible across discipline and academic rank
- 30-45 minute semi-structured interviews about specific open access/subsidiary-access articles
- Qualitative analysis of interview transcripts via an inductive coding process

## Cohort recruitment (to-date)

1. Recipients of UNC Open Access Fund subsidies for author-fees (i.e., application-based)  
4 participants: *Assistant Professor (1); Research Assistant Professor (1); Associate Professor (2)*
2. Beneficiaries of author-fee discounts at BioMed Central for UNC authors (i.e., affiliation-based)  
3 participants: *Associate Professor (2); Research Associate Professor (1)*
3. UNC authors who published articles in open access journals without on-campus support  
1 participant: *Assistant Professor (1)*
4. UNC authors who published articles solely in subscription-based journals



## Preliminary excerpts from interviews among cohorts 1 and 2

### Perceived opportunities

"Journal prestige [matters], obviously, and you'll notice that I'm specifically not saying impact factor...We just sort of generally say, 'Okay, what do I read? What do the people in my field read? What do the people in charge think are prestigious? For what do you get credit?'"

—from an Associate Professor

"One of the things about open access that's great, for other people, is that there's open access."

—from an Associate Professor

"The idea of a scientist is to find something and then make it known...If we don't publish, if we don't reach the people...then we are not accomplishing our mission. So if I cannot access [an article] from here, or in many cases they cannot access it from another country, I will not publish in that journal. Period. Because to me accessibility is the key point."

—from a Research Associate Professor

"In...a lot of sciences, things move really, really quickly, so I might be scooped by somebody else. So I may have invested time, and somebody else then publishes on this, and all of a sudden I no longer have any important thing to say."

—from an Associate Professor

"I wanted to do that one [article] open access, because if we didn't...it would have waited, and I doubt we would have seen anywhere of the uptake of people being excited. We got a lot of emails about how they were happy to use it, stuff like that, as well as the people accessing the site. So it was a clear win."

—from a Research Assistant Professor

"I think those three factors—layout, speed of access for readers, and a sort of quality control issue."

—from an Associate Professor

### Challenges and barriers

"The amount that you often receive is not enough to cover the entire cost, which means that you have to find money elsewhere to do it...The other problem...is that I don't know I have that money for sure up front. So, I have to decide where I'm going to submit, and without that money in hand, then my decision is going to be biased by the risk that I might try to submit to [a particular journal] and not get that money."

—from an Associate Professor

"Everybody has page charges these days. You're always going to pay to publish, but the open access journals can be substantially more."

—from an Associate Professor

"I've always been a little suspicious about open access journals, to be honest, and the review process, but, um...because I think, 'Come on, there's a conflict of interest,' right? You [editors] want to accept articles because you want the revenue, and why should you reject an article if it's, let's say it's on the line."

—from an Associate Professor

"I think [journal choice] probably becomes an important issue for younger scholars who are trying to build their CV and get promotion/tenure, and this is something that I think is a really important dynamic. Does someone risk publishing in these newer journals that don't have the same respect, that aren't counted on ISI [*Web of Science*]?"

—from an Associate Professor

"A lot of publishers now allow you to put an individual copy of your article on the Web or in an institutional repository...Not everybody is aware of that...What you have is a lot of renegades that run around and just do it anyway...you know, we're all doing this...Why aren't we saying we should be able to put our papers up and let our students use them or give them to other people?"

—from an Associate Professor

## Interview questions

### Main prompts:

- "Please tell me about this article."
- "Please tell me about the project that it reports about."

### Potential follow-up questions (selected examples):

- "When did you start to think about writing this article? At which stage(s) of the research project was writing something you thought about?"
- "Where else do articles related to this project reside? When were they published? Who authored them? Who was responsible for deciding where they would appear?"
- "What helped as you thought about where to publish? What hindered as you thought about where to publish?"
- "Why did you consider posting/publishing this article here?"
- "Are there any other places that you would have rather published/distributed this article? How difficult was the decision? Why did you decide against these options or for the option you selected?"
- "How typical is this process in your department?"
- "How did you approach any issues related to author-fees for this article?"

## Next steps

- Continued recruitment and matching across all four cohorts / Project completion: May 2011
- Reflect upon existing mechanisms for informing, educating, and supporting UNC faculty throughout the research and publication processes
- Expand this pilot study to incorporate other forms of university support for open access publishing and distribution, both at UNC and beyond

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