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Library Involvement in Faculty Publication Funds

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Abstract

Academic institutions are experimenting with different models for the administration of funds designed to assist faculty who face prohibitive journal publication charges, and libraries are becoming key players in this trend. Findings are reported from a survey-based, qualitative study of small and medium-sized academic libraries involved with faculty publication fund establishment and administration. The survey results are considered in light of the broader research questions: How are libraries engaging as facilitators of scholarly publishing, and what successes and challenges are they facing in this new role?

Introduction

For many faculty authors, article publishing charges (APCs) can be a significant financial burden and deterrent against publishing, particularly in open access (OA) journals. To address this, some colleges and universities have begun creating faculty publication funds, also known as author funds, to assist authors in paying APCs. This is a new approach that has been embraced by many academic institutions as a way to support their faculty members' efforts to publish in both OA and traditional journals.

This poster provides findings from a targeted, survey-based study of eleven small and medium-sized academic institutions in the United States where the library has been involved in the creation and/or administration of a faculty publication fund. The study looks at a variety of factors related to the development and implementation of these funds, including procedural, political, and campus cultural aspects.

Methodology

An Internet search was conducted to identify academic libraries involved with currently existing faculty publication funds at their institutions, and basic information about each fund was gathered from their websites and from the 2014 SPARC document, "Open Access Funds in Action."

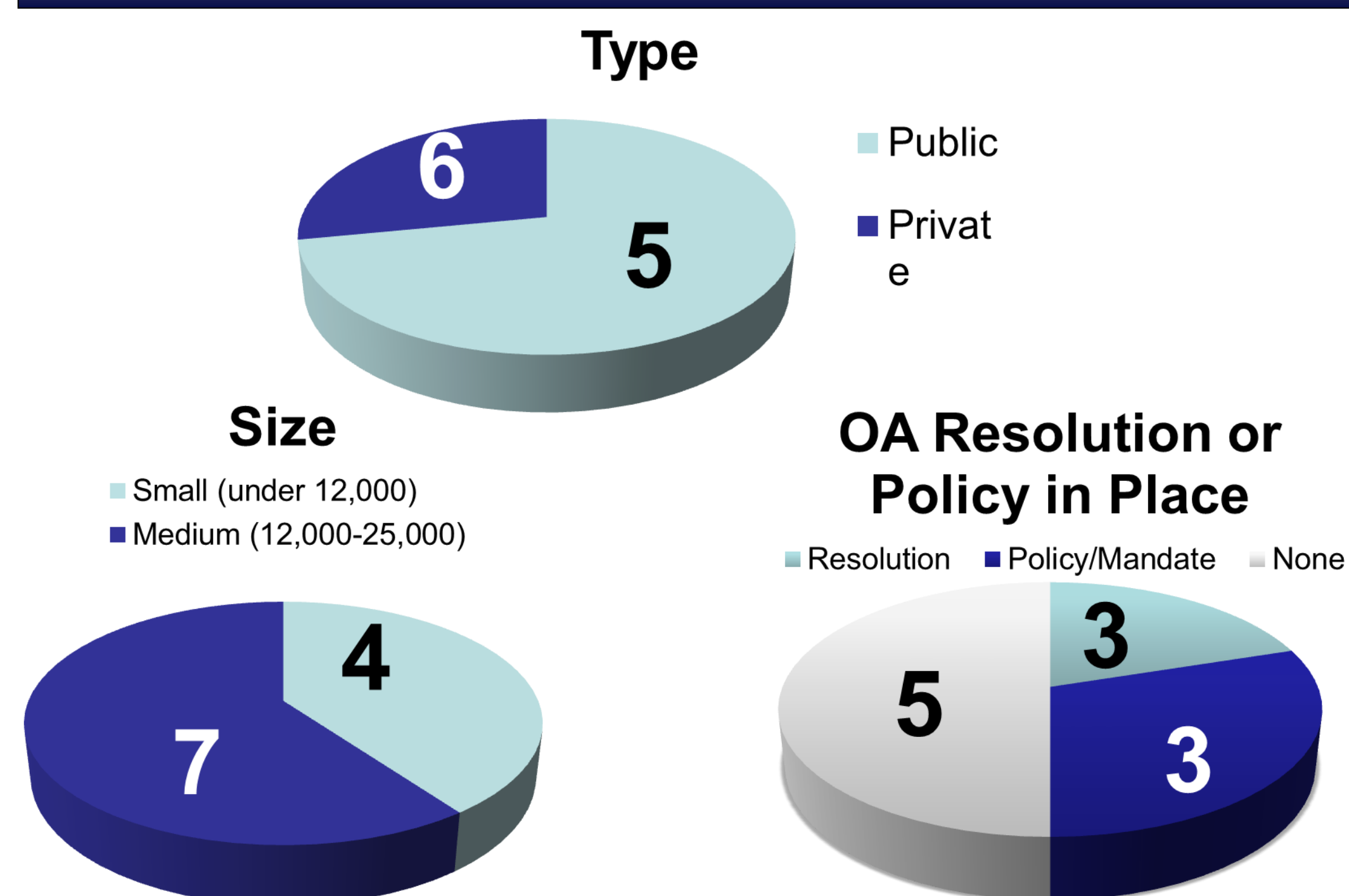
Small- and medium-sized institutions were targeted, with an arbitrary limit set at 25,000 students and preference given to institutions that provide both undergraduate- and graduate-level programs. A total of sixteen libraries were identified, and from each one a librarian involved in the fund's administration was contacted requesting participation in an eight-question telephone survey.

Ten fund representatives ultimately agreed to take part in the study. The University of Northern Colorado is included as an eleventh participant. Participants were sent the survey questions in advance and asked to schedule a thirty-minute phone call with the three-person research team.; the conversations were anonymized and transcribed. All data collected was thematically coded using concept-driven categories, with emerging patterns identified and analyzed.

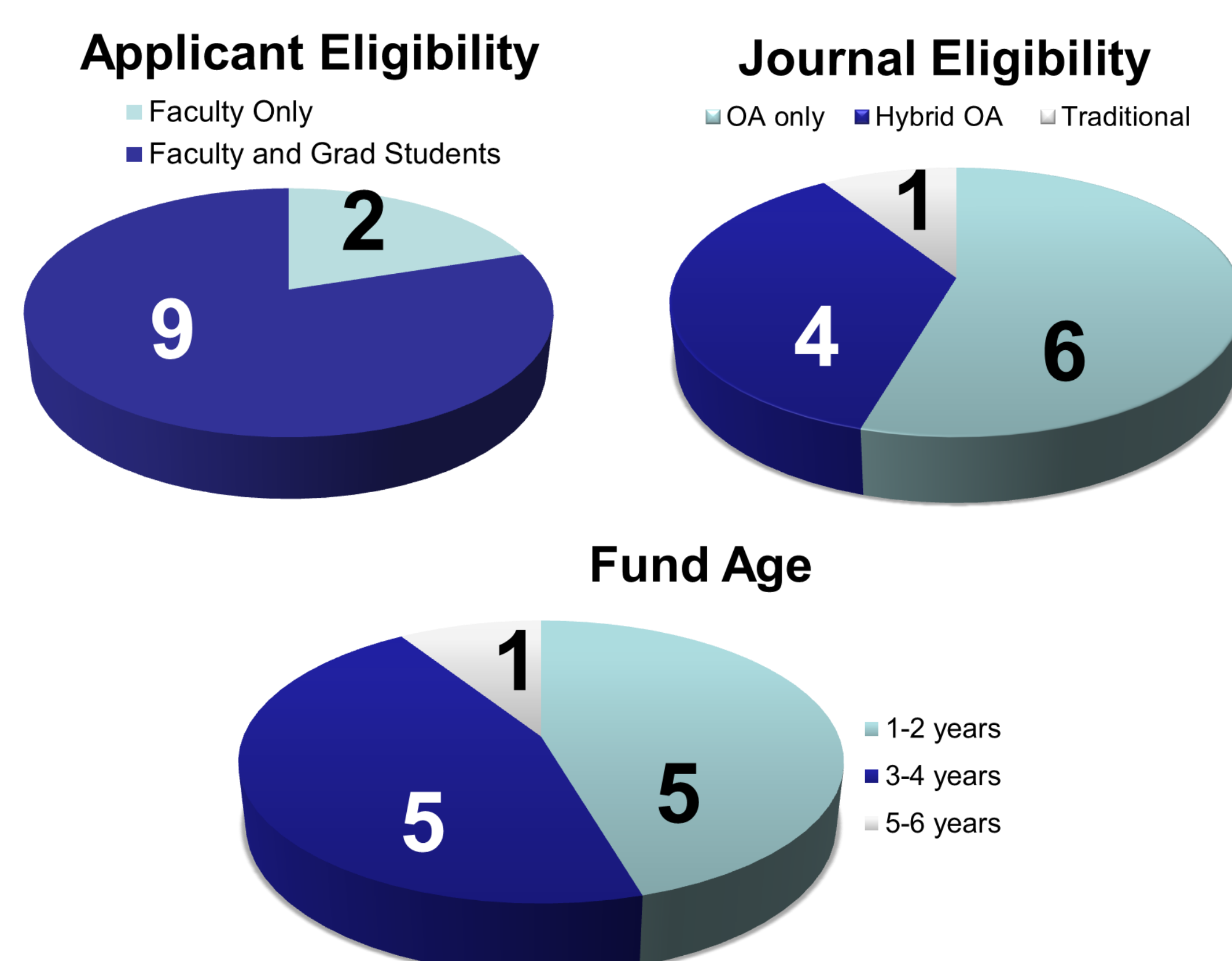
Survey Questions

1. What challenges did the library face in creating or helping to create the fund, including source of funding?
2. What expertise or assets do you feel the library brought to the table in this process?
3. Were there other driving forces in the creation of the fund than those stated in the purpose of the fund?
4. How were the eligibility criteria determined, and who makes the final award decision? (Were non-OA article processing fees considered, and why or why not?)
5. What challenges has the library faced in implementing the fund, such as marketing, fielding questions, clerical support, or others?
6. What is the makeup of the reviewing body, and how often does it meet to review the fund?
7. What has been the reaction to the fund by faculty and administration, and has it affected the way they view the library?
8. Do you feel the fund has been a success? Why or why not? Did having a pilot factor in?

Institutional Characteristics



Fund Characteristics



Conclusions

Common challenges encountered by libraries establishing a publication fund include:

- Slow uptake, with funds sometimes taking several years to become established;
- Difficulty in marketing/publicizing the fund;
- Difficulty in predicting the optimal/appropriate level of funding;
- Dealing with a low level of faculty awareness about open access.

Survey participants considered their funds successful for the following reasons:

- They provide opportunities for conversations with faculty about open access, scholarly publishing, author permissions, and library research services;
- Faculty authors provide positive feedback about the increased research impact and visibility of their work as a result of being able to publish in OA journals;
- The funds promote positive changes to campus culture around scholarly communication;
- The funds encourage a positive perception of the library among faculty and administration.

Participants report that publication funds have an overall positive impact on library/faculty relations:

- They serve to remind faculty that librarians are available to help them with their research and publishing needs;
- They reinforce the view that the library is a trusted partner in conversations about scholarly publishing issues;
- They help the library to be perceived as a change agent with a commitment to meeting faculty needs.

Results

Fund Establishment

Six respondents reported establishment of the fund was driven by a dean or library director with a strong desire to support OA.

Sources of Funding

Six respondents reported partnering with other units on campus to fund the initiative, for example the Provost's Office, Office of Research, or academic departments.

Library Expertise

Eight fund managers said their library's greatest asset in the fund-creation process was a strong knowledge of OA publishing.

Promoting Open Access

Ten interviewees considered their fund to be a vehicle for promoting OA publishing on campus.

Quality Control

Eight librarians reported that quality-control measures to weed out predatory publishers were an important part of the application process.

Revising Guidelines

Seven respondents reported that the initial fund guidelines had to be revised or adapted over time to address issues, questions, or concerns.

Application Review

At five institutions, a single individual reviewed applications and made award decisions, while five had a committee. One fund had a hybrid model.

Marketing

Six interviewees indicated that word of mouth was their most important tool for marketing, and four reported recruiting subject librarians to promote the fund. Other marketing channels used included faculty LISTSERVS, campus presentations, Web/social media presence, items in campus periodicals, Open Access Week events, printed fliers or cards, and LibGuides.

Fund Uptake

Six funds were underspent in the first year. Most managers reported that usage rates increased significantly over time.

Usage Patterns

Two respondents noted that the life sciences dominated fund use on campus, while one reported a more significant number of applicants from the humanities.

Fund Sustainability

Two fund managers expressed confidence that their fund was stable, while six voiced uncertainty about the continuation of the fund.

Fund Success

All participants felt their fund could be considered a success by tangible and/or intangible measures.

Further Reading

This poster was adapted from findings reported in the following article, which offers a more in-depth discussion of the study:

Jane Monson, Wendy Highbly & Bette Rathe (2014). "Library Involvement in Faculty Publication Funds", *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 21:3-4, 308-329.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10691316.2014.933088>