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Opening the Door to Open Access: Successes and Lessons Learned with an Open Access Author Fund Pilot Program

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Abstract

Background:

In an effort to respond to faculty requests for assistance and to support open access publishing by West Virginia University authors, the West Virginia University Libraries established a pilot program for an Open Access Author Fund (OAAF) in August 2016. The fund has now been operational through two academic years.

Methods:

WVU Libraries used \$30,000 from its operations budget to establish the fund. A webpage was designed by the library web team to outline the criteria and to link to an application form. The primary criteria were that the journals needed to be totally open access, not a hybrid; should be listed in DOAJ or OASPA, and indexed in a scholarly database.

The fund was promoted at New Faculty Orientation and by outreach to liaison faculty members and graduate student classes. Two librarians vetted the journals in the applications to ensure that they met the criteria, and a committee consisting of faculty from across campus approved all applications. Article processing charges for approved applications were paid directly to the publisher.

Results:

Over 2 years, 61 requests were received and 49 were funded. Requests were received from a variety of STEM disciplines, with Health Sciences representing 33% of the total. Opportunities for educating users were found in regard to hybrid and predatory journals, and the process was improved with the addition of a preliminary checklist to be completed ahead of the application. Usage and viewing statistics were phenomenal for the funded articles from the journal's websites, especially when compared to usage via subscription databases.

Conclusion:

The OAAF has proven to be a popular service offered by the Libraries. In addition to increased exposure for WVU authors, outcomes include a new library-sponsored workshop on open access publishing and plans to pursue more money for the OAAF through the Provost or Research Offices of the university.

Article Processing Charges Funded

Average	High	Low
\$1160	\$1900	\$295

College	School	Applicants	Funded
Health Sciences Center	Medicine		
	Emergency Medicine	3	3
	Medicine	1	1
	Occupational Therapy	1	1
	Orthopedics	3	2
	Otolaryngology	1	0
	Pediatrics	1	1
	Physiology, Pharmacology & Neuroscience	1	1
	Pharmacy	3	2
	Public Health	6	5
Davis	Animal & Nutrition Sciences	6	6
College of Agriculture	Forestry & Natural Resources	2	2
	Fisheries & Natural Resources	2	1
	Plant & Soil Science	5	3
Eberly	Biology	3	2
	Communication Studies	1	1
College of Arts & Sciences	English	1	1
	Geology/Geography	4	3
	Physics & Astronomy	7	7
	Sociology & Anthropology	2	2
Statler College of Engineering	Computer Science & Electrical	1	1
	Engineering & Mineral Industry	1	1
	Mechanical & Aerospace	3	1
Education & Human Services	Learning Sciences & Human Development	1	1
Physical Activity & Sports Science		2	1
	Total	61	49

Fund Requests by College and Department

Open Access Author Fund (OAAF) Application Eligibility Checklist

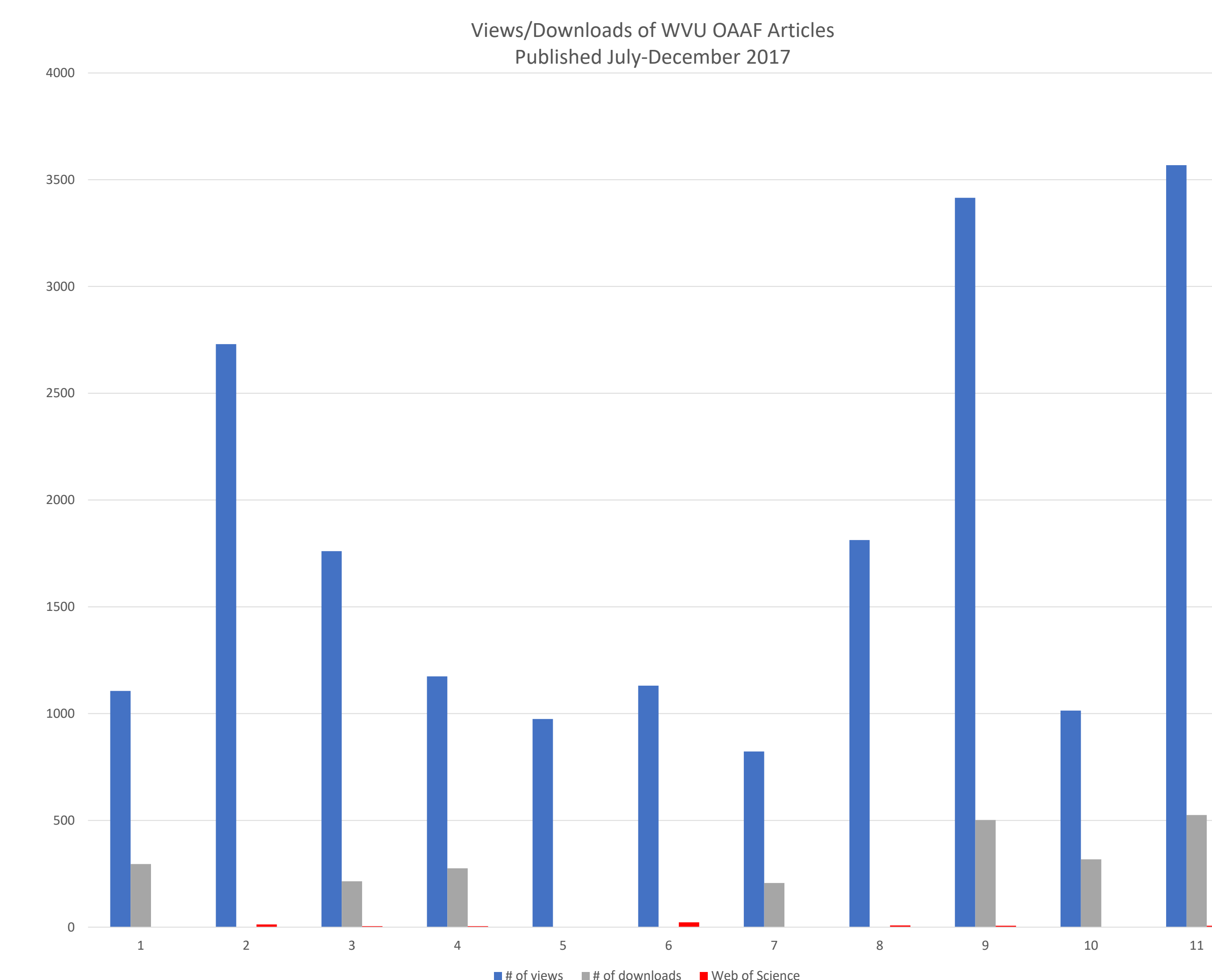
You must answer YES to all of the following questions to proceed.

- Are you seeking funds to publish in a fully open access publication? A fully open access publication does not require a subscription nor payment for individual articles.
- Are you employed or enrolled at West Virginia University?
- Are you requesting \$1,000 or less if at the Health Sciences Center, or \$2,000 or less if anywhere else in the University?
- Has your article been accepted?
- Will payment be made directly to the publisher? We do not reimburse for previous payment.
- Have you checked with your college for other funding sources? (i.e. the Eberly College Subvention Fund)

Lessons Learned

- There are faculty and graduate students who don't know what a hybrid or predatory journal is. This is a great opportunity for education and engagement.
- We found that we needed to include a limit on the number of times one person could be funded in a year; people were applying 2-3 times/year.
- Health Sciences researchers were capped at \$1,000 and all others were capped at \$2,000 to make the fund stretch as far as possible.
- Modifications were made both to the OAAF webpage and to the acceptance letter sent to awardees, emphasizing the importance of seeking funding through grant proposals and individual departments and colleges, and limiting awards to each individual to once per fiscal year.
- We also reiterated other avenues of financial support for open access from the Libraries, which include memberships in Hindawi and Cogitatio, where WVU authors receive a waiver of APCs, and BioMed Central and MDPI, where WVU authors receive a 15-25% discount on APCs. WVU publication numbers are dramatically increasing in 2018 in Hindawi and MDPI.

Journals funded include: *PLoS ONE* (6), *SAGE Open Medicine* (2), *Nutrients* (2), *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* (2), *BMJ Open* (2), *BMC Cancer*, *BMC Public Health*, *Harm Reduction Journal*



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3. Shamsseer L, et al. Potential predatory and legitimate biomedical journals: can you tell the difference? A cross-sectional comparison. *BMC Medicine*. March 2017, 15(1): 28-41.