

## The Time Has Come...For Next-Generation Open Access Models

Celeste Feather  
LYRASIS, celeste.feather@lyrasis.org

Sara Rouhi  
PLOS, srouhi@plos.org

Anneliese Taylor  
University of California, San Francisco, anneliese.taylor@ucsf.edu

Kim Armstrong  
Big Ten Academic Alliance, kim.armstrong@btaa.org

Author ORCID Identifier: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5907-7606>

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/charleston>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

An indexed, print copy of the Proceedings is also available for purchase at:

<http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/series/charleston>.

You may also be interested in the new series, Charleston Insights in Library, Archival, and Information Sciences. Find out more at: <http://www.thepress.purdue.edu/series/charleston-insights-library-archival-and-information-sciences>.

---

Celeste Feather, Sara Rouhi, Anneliese Taylor, and Kim Armstrong, "The Time Has Come...For Next-Generation Open Access Models" (2019). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284317200>

## The Time Has Come . . . for Next-Generation Open Access Models

*Celeste Feather, Senior Director of Content and Scholarly Communication Initiatives, LYRASIS, celeste.feather@lyrasis.org*

*Sara Rouhi, Director, Strategic Partnerships, PLOS, srouhi@plos.org*

*Anneliese Taylor, Head of Scholarly Communication, University of California, San Francisco, anneliese.taylor@ucsf.edu*

*Kim Armstrong, Director, Library Initiatives, Big Ten Academic Alliance, kim.armstrong@btaa.org*

### Abstract

Libraries, consortia, and publishers are exploring new models to support open access (OA) content. Native OA journal publishers are facing a different set of challenges as there is no existing library subscription base to transform into support for OA. Author-pays OA models are challenging to the ecosystem for a variety of reasons. Large institutions with heavy scholarly output may pay more, small institutions that use the content but publish less are wondering what role they will play, and authors from the Global South may not have funding to pay article processing charges (APCs). What new models are under exploration to address the complexity of funder mandates, reduce the administrative burden of complex APC models, and be more inclusive of a diverse community?

### Sara Rouhi, PLOS

With most of the OA conversation now dominated by the notion of a transition to OA, what does this mean for those native OA publishers, like PLOS, that are already OA and have been for years? If our focus as an organization is to ensure that research is discoverable, accessible, and useful in order to create a more equitable system of scientific knowledge and understanding, are we done?

APCs are not inclusive and therefore, as a community, we are not done. The next stage of OA has to include models and research objectives that remove barriers to both access and being published. If authors or their research budgets have to pay APCs, we are always leaving critical communities out in the cold. Early-career researchers can't always afford APCs. Many fields don't receive grant funding that can cover APCs. Funding and publishing practices in other parts of the world don't align with OA as modeled by the Global North, meaning many global researchers do not have the funds to participate in author-funded models.

Equity in OA is a key topic that publishers should be examining as we continue to evolve our ideas around open. If APCs are the end point of this current transitional period fueled by Plan S, we have made reading open and publishing closed. This is not the end point we hoped for and not the end point we should settle for.

As PLOS explores alternatives regarding OA, we are going back to our roots and reexamining the business models and vehicles that can make it all happen and keep it sustainable. Open for whom? And open how? These questions are at the core of our considerations, and we are examining a mixed economy as part of our future.

Many of the challenges PLOS and most other native OA publishers face are different from those of other publishers. In this time of transition, we don't have any titles to move from paywalled to open. Our content is already open and closing it is obviously not an option. We have no existing subscription legacy pricing and therefore no immediate base on which we can derive new kinds of pricing that are not APC-based. APCs cannot cover the cost of higher article selectivity in top-tier journals. Bigger publishers can afford to have journals that lose money because their larger stable of offerings can simply balance things out. PLOS only has seven journals, even if *PLOS ONE* happens to be among the biggest in the world.

We are exploring new models to determine which ones may provide a sustainable alternative to APCs. Bundled APCs, or lump sums for an institution's annual recurring spend, are in high demand by groups like the California Digital Library and European consortia. These lump sum payments help to free authors from having the responsibility to manage payments. Journal supporter-based models

require collective action by a group of institutions that share the cost for supporting a subset of journals. This model is particularly suitable for our more selective journals, *PLOS Biology* and *PLOS Medicine*. The challenges around this model are not small. We need to have the right combination of incentives and consequences to make the program compelling to participants. We're working on identifying that combination of carrots and sticks and have great library partners helping us on this approach. Finally, transitional models could provide PLOS with bridge funds to give us time to pilot new approaches. We are exploring partnerships with other funders and publishers to maintain near-term revenue while piloting. While not a particular model in itself, the transitional approach underscores the importance of trialing and piloting to get something right. We understand that the next model may be one we haven't thought of yet.

In short, these are exciting times for PLOS, and all those who are committed to evolving approaches to achieve equity in open knowledge. We welcome all engagement with the community as we address these issues.

### **Anneliese Taylor, University of California, San Francisco**

The University of California is actively pursuing transformative publishing agreements inclusive of both "read" access to publisher journals and open access publishing for articles published by UC authors. This decision is led by a coalition of support from the libraries through the UC-wide Council of University Librarians, the Faculty Senate body, and UC leadership, which is expressed in our "Call to Action for Negotiating Journal Agreements at UC" (<https://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/2018/06/championing-change-in-journal-negotiations/>). The Call to Action expresses UC's core principles for publisher agreements, which are cost containment and open dissemination of our authors' work.

Our primary approach with read & publish agreements (aka transformative or open access agreements) is to redirect our spend on licensed subscription content, to paying for publishing for our authors through subsidized or full coverage of article processing charges (APCs). "Negotiating With Scholarly Journal Publishers: A Toolkit from the University of California" (<https://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/open-access-at-uc/publisher-negotiations/negotiating-with-scholarly-journal>

-publishers-a-toolkit/) is a resource for negotiating open access publishing agreements put together by UC's Elsevier negotiation team. It is based on UC's experience with data gathering and analysis, coalition building among stakeholder groups, negotiating this type of agreement, communications, and access alternatives in the case of a failed negotiation. While read & publish agreements offer the promise of vastly increasing the rate of OA publishing for the UC system, we recognize their potential for putting native OA publishers like PLOS at a disadvantage. Subsidies can skew an author's decision about where to submit their work for publication, and so we need to be mindful of that when we sign deals with non-OA publishers.

Aside from being a pioneer in OA publishing and open research, PLOS is a very important publisher for the University of California. UC authors have embraced publishing in PLOS journals, from its highly selective journals like *PLOS Biology* and *PLOS Medicine* to the broad-spectrum *PLOS ONE*. Our publication rate with PLOS is on par with other key publishers, and ranks 12th when it comes to volume of articles published. There are about 550 articles published by UC corresponding authors in PLOS journals annually, which represents 2% of the overall publication rate. They've tapped into research grants, discretionary funds, and probably their own pockets to pay APCs to get published there.

And so the California Digital Library and UC Libraries have been in discussions with PLOS about the possibility of extending our multipayer model for APCs to PLOS journals. The premise of this model is a flat APC subvention by the library of, for example, \$1,000 for all UC corresponding authors, coupled with grant funds covering the APC remainder for authors who have such funds, and library support for the remainder for nonfunded authors. Because this would represent a new expenditure for the libraries, we would use special funds to achieve a two-year pilot. Discussions with PLOS are ongoing, and review by both our Transformative Agreement Negotiating Team and the Council of University Librarians will determine whether we move forward with such an agreement.

### **Celeste Feather, LYRISIS**

The LYRISIS membership includes over 1,000 U.S. higher education libraries from all types and sizes of institutions. We routinely confront the great diversity among these and are trying to develop programs

and initiatives that appeal to a broad swath of our community. There are far more mid-sized and small institutions than large research institutions. The challenge is to find opportunities for everyone to engage in a diverse array of open content programs and initiatives.

We define open content as that which is free to read, and this inclusive umbrella encompasses many activities that are all working toward a common goal of providing access to knowledge and information without asking users to pay. While OA scholarly content is a key topic for research libraries, open educational resources, or classroom texts, are often more relevant to teaching institutions. Libraries use different metrics to determine the return on investment to their parent institutions, and these metrics drive their actions. Library support for open content, not surprisingly, must align with the goals of each local institution.

The OA conversation now in the Global North is dominated by strategies to create more open content in journal packages, mostly through pay-to-publish models. Less research-intensive institutions with communities that do not publish in large volume are left wondering what their role might be. Models for OA scholarly content must become more relevant to more types of institutions. We need more types of approaches.

Why should libraries of all types be motivated to engage in OA? There is little evidence that OA will save anyone money in the near term.

OA is key to the future of higher education in the United States in at least one key way. All grand societal challenges of the 21st century *need* cross-disciplinary research in order to be addressed adequately, such as climate change, public health, uneven wealth distribution, inequality, and lots more. In order for the global community to take on these challenges and for higher education to maximize the impact of our research, content from many specialties and nations around the world needs to be readily accessible.

With respect to smaller colleges in the United States that are struggling financially and have little bandwidth to look beyond their doors, they are challenged to find entry points into many of the current open access models. Residential liberal arts colleges are generally a U.S. phenomenon. They are renowned for producing creative and innovative

scholars with a multidisciplinary focus. Society is looking to higher education for solutions to the grand challenges that require in-depth understanding of people across the globe. If we acknowledge that the larger mission of all educational institutions is to educate their students in ways that enable them to tackle the grand challenges of the day with knowledge, creativity, respect, and understanding, then supporting ways to make as much content as accessible to them as possible seems to fall in line with the liberal arts college mission.

What else can be done?

- Even if money isn't saved as we transform models, perhaps there are ways within the OA movement to fund *more or different kinds* of content with the *same* amount of money.
- Within Big Deal negotiations, perhaps we can redirect costs from paywalled journals to OA books by the same publisher that are more widely used than specialized journals across all sizes of institutions.
- By moving existing STM costs to other disciplines in this way, the humanities and social sciences may become less starved.
- More support for better discovery for OA content will help all libraries guide users to it more effectively. Observations about low use could be due to lack of awareness by users.
- There may be enough money in the scholarly ecosystem to make a global flip to open, but it will have to be redistributed in the United States in order to make pay-to-publish models for OA work. Could this grand flip be partially supported by different types of institutions supporting different types of open content that are most relevant to them?
- More library publishing programs will support diverse scholarly content out in the open. Local efforts in this burgeoning field are already providing many options to create and sustain open access content.
- Supporting a robust spectrum of publishing options that fit the needs of different authors and types of content will be helpful. Packaging digital content in the old-fashioned containers of "books" and "journals" isn't always the best option.

The great diversity among our U.S. institutions of higher education presents us with different challenges and opportunities in the open content space. We need to engage the whole community in the work ahead. This diversity is a positive aspect, not a negative one. We must develop new approaches to open up access to as much scholarly content as possible, using a variety of models and methods that best fit each type of content and each type of supporting institution.

### **Kim Armstrong, Big Ten Academic Alliance**

In June 2019, the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) made a commitment to advocate for an open ecosystem of publication, a concept that is fully developed in the document “Sustaining Values and Scholarship: A Statement by the Provosts of the Big Ten Academic Alliance” ([https://www.btaa.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/sustaining-values-and-scholarship.pdf?sfvrsn=5cc449f3\\_6](https://www.btaa.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/sustaining-values-and-scholarship.pdf?sfvrsn=5cc449f3_6)). With this support, the libraries have been engaged in shaping a set of principles and priorities for transformative agreements, as well as engaging in a number of campus conversations to build commitment from leadership, researchers, and authors. While the consortium is still in a planning phase before entering into publisher negotiations, Big Ten libraries may be independently pursuing their own agreements.

The BTAA has been fortunate to work with the University of California to replicate their methodology for data analysis. This analysis is a necessary step to model the financial impact of moving from a subscription-based agreement to a publish and

read agreement (or other models). The unique, or homogeneous, makeup of the BTAA members in the consortium is somewhat unique. All BTAA members are primarily “publish” institutions, and there are few, if any, executed transformative agreements that cover similar situations. Given the complexity of data analysis and the volume of BTAA publishing output, the Big Ten has committed to hiring a data analyst to provide support for this shift in scholarly publishing agreements.

Since each of the BTAA member libraries belong to multiple consortia, it is possible that any member may pursue transformational agreements with multiple organizations. This could actually provide opportunities for new types of partnerships among consortia, who are seeking to normalize and escalate the migration to a more open and affordable publishing environment. The more quickly that these new financial models move from one-off, boutique arrangements to replicable agreements with common elements, the library community and readers will benefit.

The BTAA members have enjoyed a long relationship with PLOS and were early participants in the membership program. As BTAA publishing in PLOS journals grew, the cost model escalation became unsustainable. Because BTAA places a high value on supporting native OA publishing, we have welcomed renewed engagement on sustainable business models that will support PLOS publishing. It is critical in these early stages of reforming financial support for academic publishing that we be open to experimentation, particularly given the wide array of publishers that research libraries support.