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Faculty Perceptions of OA A Quantitative Analysis

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Routes to Open Access journal publishing are **still unclear** to many faculty, and **doubts over quality and credibility** remain.

Faculty perceptions of Open Access: A quantitative analysis

Introduction

A quantitative survey of faculty perceptions of Open Access (OA) publishing was conducted at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), a small liberal arts style University in the United Arab Emirates.

The survey aimed to assess faculty perceptions of the credibility and quality of OA publishing. We were curious to discover the range of interpretations and understanding of OA amongst our faculty members in order to inform ongoing outreach and scholarly communications activity.

Low numbers of OA outputs (affiliated to AUS) in Scopus and low deposit rates in the AUS DSpace repository suggested a hesitancy to engage with open access journal publishing via green or gold routes.

Additionally (at the time of survey) faculty were not exposed to local funder or organizational mandates on open access, or access to institutional sources of funding for OA publishing. Although we have a range of disciplines and experience, we assume faculty perceptions have largely been formed by their own research principles, exploration of journal submission processes, co-author interaction and limited institutional messaging.

Results were intended to inform scholarly communications outreach and planning activities by the Library, Research Office and other administrative offices.

Methods

AUS faculty, researchers, and staff with an institutional email address received an invitation to participate in an online survey distributed using the Qualtrics® Analytic Suite.

Respondents had to meet basic eligibility requirements:

- Have affiliation with AUS
- Express their informed consent
- Be 18 years of age or older.

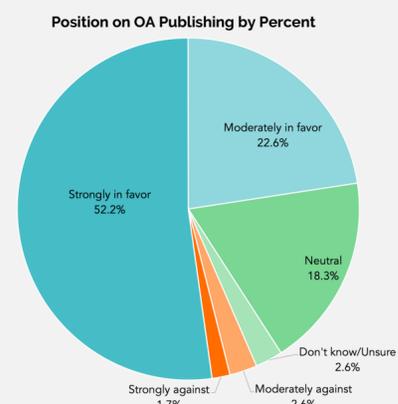
This study's response rate is 29.3% and the completion rate is 85.1%, with an n of 134.

Besides pertinent demographic and institutional affiliation items, the survey instrument included items concerning:

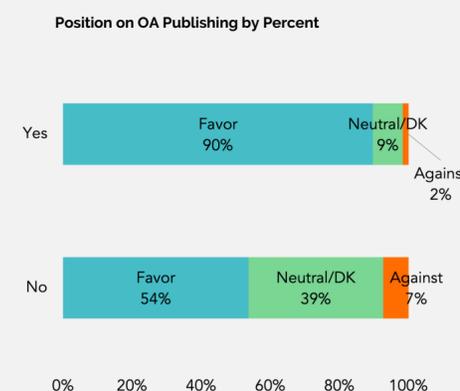
- Position on OA publishing overall
- Publishing behaviors and interests.
- Familiarity with OA publishing models
- Experience with OA publishing

Descriptive frequencies and multivariate analyses were calculated via the Qualtrics® Analytic Suite. Relationships between variables are acknowledged by the analysis with chi-squared tests of significance used to report statistically significant results.

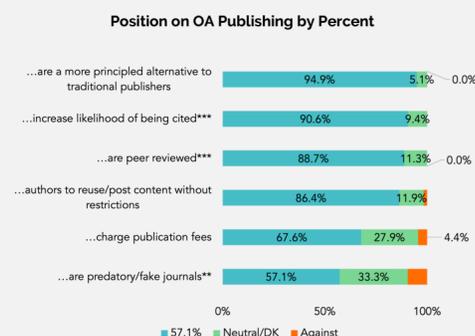
Results



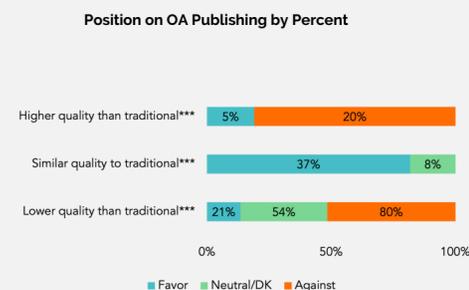
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Peter Suber's (2006) paraphrased definition of OA as "a set of principles and a range of practices through which research outputs are distributed 'online, free of cost or other access barriers'" ("Open Access," 2021), was used to establish context for the survey questions.

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Discussion

Results indicate continued uncertainty around identifying quality journal venues (that hard-to-shake 'predatory' label), the suitability of OA outputs for tenure and promotion purposes, and a cautiousness amongst faculty at all levels that appears higher than that reported in similar studies.

We have a group of faculty who are neutral or moderately in favor of OA who acknowledge some advantages yet remain wary of OA publishing, don't entirely understand the nuances of hybrid and fully gold OA journals, and have not published in these journals.

On a positive note, there is a core of faculty who are supportive of open access on principled grounds. Faculty consider open access outputs to have a citation advantage, are willing and comfortable using OA sources in their own research and that authors have more control over reuse and distribution of their work.

The Library, Research Office and Dean-level groups are now working towards clarifying and promoting open access for research outputs and addressing the uncertainties identified by the study.

Response and implementation

An institutional OA fund was piloted in 2019-2020. Managed by the Research Office, it was supported by an advocacy campaign by the Library. Gold and hybrid outputs from the University doubled in this period (as per Scopus), but pleasingly so did green outputs (also Scopus).

The Research Office, under the auspices of the Provost, as continued to support the OA fund from 2021 and continues to receive applications from AUS faculty.

The Library has recruited a Scholarly Communications Librarian to lead on topics such as bibliometrics, open research including open access, and research impact.

Advocacy has been intensified in this area has included:

- Open Access week series of webinars
- Research Impact Challenge
- Faculty-instigated workshop and LibGuide on Predatory Publishers and Conferences
- Refresh of Research Support LibGuides
- Identification of 'Champions' in AUS faculty