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Sustainability of Open-Access Author Fund: A Case Study of Faculty Usage Patterns and APC Cost

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Abstract

The California State University, Los Angeles Library established a pilot program on Open-Access (OA) Author Fund in 2018. This article presents information about the management of the University Library's Open-Access Author Fund. Particularly, this article focuses on faculty usage of the OA Author Fund by colleges, disciplines, and publishers. Additionally, the authors examined the article processing charges (APCs) and self-archiving policies of the top open-access journals where Cal State LA faculty publish. This analysis will assist the University Library's Open-Access Group to understand if the University Library needs to provide additional funding and explore new ways to sustain the funding. Our research also revealed that librarians in specific academic areas can be more proactive in educating, explaining, and initiating conversations with disciplinary faculty about the benefits of open-access publications.

Keywords

Open-Access Author Fund, Open-Access Journal, Article Processing Charge (APC), Academic Libraries, Directory of Open-Access Journals (DOAJ)

Introduction

California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA), a mid-size, comprehensive university with approximately 27,000 students, is one of 23 California State University campuses. Cal State LA has a total of 1,619 institutional faculty members including full-time and part-time faculty (Institutional Effectiveness, 2021-2022).

The Cal State LA library established a pilot program on Open-Access (OA) Author Fund in 2018. This article presents information about the management of the University Library's Open-Access Author Fund. Particularly, this article focuses on faculty usage of the OA Author Fund by colleges, disciplines, and publishers. Additionally, the authors examined the article processing charges (APCs) and self-archiving policies of the top open-access journals where Cal State LA faculty publish and explored various options to sustain the OA Fund.

Literature Review

Academic libraries support open-access publishing and faculty authors in many ways; education about authors' rights, library programming for OA week events, journal publishing, and subsidizing APCs for articles in OA journals with author funds.

Libraries support open-access publishing for several reasons. One of the main reasons is that it provides greater visibility and research impact. It also increases opportunities for collaboration and easier access to information. Peter Suber explains how open-access benefits all.

OA benefits literally everyone, for the same reasons that research itself benefits literally everyone. OA performs this service by facilitating research and making the results more widely available and useful. It benefits researchers as readers by helping them find and retrieve the information they need, and it benefits researchers as authors by helping them reach readers who can apply, cite, and build on their work. OA benefits nonresearchers by accelerating research and all the goods that depend on research, such as new medicines, useful technologies, solved problems, informed decisions, improved policies, and beautiful understanding (Suber, 2012, p. ix).

University-wide open-access funds support the open-access publishing process by providing monetary support for researchers to publish in open-access journals. According to SPARC (2023), "A campus open-access fund is a fund set aside by an institution specifically to cover costs for researchers who publish in journals with article processing charges (APCs)" (para.1). Additionally, "The fundamental goal of an open-access fund is to support publication models that enable free, immediate, online distribution of, and access to, scholarly research" (SPARC, 2023, para. 1). APCs range from several hundred dollars to thousands of dollars (Maddi & Sapinho, 2022). To assist researchers with the high price of APCs, several libraries have created open-access author funds to assist authors with the cost of open-access publishing. According to SPARC Open-Access Funds in Action, Libraries have provided open-access funds since 2005 (SPARC, 2018). Today, more than 19,000 open-access journals are indexed in the Directory of Open-Access Journals (DOAJ, 2023).

In 2005, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC) established one of the first open-access funds. There are other well-known open-access funds that were first endorsed by Cornell University, Dartmouth University, Harvard University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cryer & Collins, 2011).

The establishment of a campus-wide Open-Access Fund was a common practice in North American Research Universities between 2009-2014 (Tananbaum, 2014). In January 2008, UC Berkeley established the Berkeley Research Impact Initiative, one of the first campus-based open-access funds in North America. By 2014, the program started supporting only those publishing in "pure open-access" journals and stop supporting articles in "hybrid" (subscription-based) journals (Teplitzky & Phillips, 2016). In 2013, the Academic Senate of the University of California adopted an open-access Policy. The University of California is the first institution in California to adopt an open-access policy ensuring that all future research articles authored by faculty at all UC campuses would have free access to all.

In the fall of 2011, the GVSU Libraries established an Open-Access Publishing Support Fund. Funding from this fund is intended to eliminate financial barriers that limit faculty and graduate student access to their scholarship (Beaubien et al, 2016). In 2012, the University of Kansas launched the KU “Open University” Open-Access Fund. There are several core guidelines that KU's OA Author Fund adopted from other institutions' open-access funds. The KU's selection criteria included using the Directory of Open-Access Journals (DOAJ) page to evaluate open-access journals. It is also important to note that KU's funding comes solely from the university administration, not libraries (Gyore et al., 2015). In 2012, an open-access subvention was developed by John Hopkins University (JHU) Library to encourage authors to publish in open-access journals. The Directory of Open-Access Journals (DOAJ) list was utilized to identify acceptable open-access journals (Sinn et. al., 2017). Due to JHU's private status and KU's status as a large public university in the United States, the open-access funding amount was significantly higher. The University of Colorado Health Science Library established the Open-Access Fund in 2013. The OA Fund group composed primarily of library faculty members manages the Open-Access Fund. A clear description of the program's acceptance criteria and how applications are evaluated is provided. OA Fund Rules and requirements are conveyed in detail on the library's website (Zuniga & Hoffecker, 2016).

An international survey found that approximately one-quarter of libraries provided funding toward APCs (Lara, 2015). Grand Valley State University Libraries surveyed recipients of their open-access author publishing fund. Faculty surveyed indicated an “appreciation for their work reaching a global audience, particularly in developing nations, and evidence that their work had greater visibility, in some cases by virtue of being shared via less traditionally academic channels such as social media” (Beaubien et. al., 2016, p. 7).

In 2014 SPARC published the *North American campus-based open-access funds: A five-year progress report* which provided a snapshot of some of the successes, challenges, and impact of over 50 OA funds at North American universities. The SPARC's five-year report found a 467 percent increase in the number of schools providing open-access funds (Tananbaum, 2014). The SPARC's report also indicated that the launching of additional campus-based open-access funds at additional institutions will serve as a significant indicator of how this mechanism will affect scholarly communication over time. The report also presumed that securing sustainable funding from the university administration will be the key challenge in maintaining the campus-based open-access funds (Tananbaum, 2014).

With the growing trend of the establishment of open-access funds, it is not uncommon that some universities also stopped offering open-access funds. The sustainability of the funding is a critical issue for academic libraries. Several Canadian research libraries were surveyed to explore how open-access publications were funded. There were nine respondents who indicated that open-access publishing was mostly funded from the library's collections budget (Fernandez & Nariani, 2011). While some universities are utilizing the funding from the university administrations, others are using the library's collection development funding to maintain these funds. University libraries have always supported the creation of scholarly content, and libraries have always provided access to the journals and distribution of scholarly content. It is important

to note that the funds created to support open-access through APCs are typically administered separately and represent an additional cost to the library (Reinsfelder and Pike, 2018). As questioned by Reinsfelder and Pike (2018), “But do they have to remain separate? Could libraries effectively combine and strategically deploy traditional collection funds along with newer funds meant to further open-access?” (p. 2-3).

Academic librarians have led the effort to adopt campus-wide open-access policies and to develop sustainable funding mechanisms for open-access publications. It can be said that open-access has its origins in institute mandates to make funded research publicly available. The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) mandated an open-access policy in 2007 and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) mandated an open-access policy in 2008 (Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 2020; Sukhov et. al., 2016). The open-access mandates required “peer-reviewed articles to be available through PubMed Central within 12 months of publication” (Sukhov et. al., 2016).

Recently, in 2022, Dr. Alondra Nelson, the Deputy Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), submitted a new memorandum for the heads of executive departments and agencies, with the subject “Ensuring Free, Immediate, and Equitable Access to Federally Funded Research” (Nelson, 2022, p.1). The memorandum states that federal agencies “Update their public access policies as soon as possible, and no later than December 31st, 2025, to make publications and their supporting data resulting from federally funded research publicly accessible without an embargo on their free and public release” (Nelson, 2022, p. 1). This indicates that by 2025 federally funded research publications will be available to everyone immediately upon publication. Now that there is more support from research institutions and the government, this will encourage all authors to publish in open-access venues.

Aims

Even though there is literature on faculty perceptions of open-access publications, literature on faculty usage of open-access (OA) author funds is sparse. In our research, we focus on the disciplinary usage of open-access funds. The goal is to better understand the usability of the OA Author Funds across disciplines and the best practices to follow to sustain these funds. Our research questions include open-access publishers and journals where Cal State LA faculty are publishing and the Article Processing Charge (APC) of those journals. This analysis will assist us to understand if additional funding is required and explore new ways to sustain the funding. Additionally, these findings will assist us in further understanding the factors that facilitate fund allocation. Furthermore, our research also revealed in specific academic areas how librarians can be increasingly proactive to educate, explain, and initiate conversations with disciplinary faculty about the benefits of open-access publications.

Establishing an Open-Access Author Fund

At Cal State LA, the author established the Open-Access Author Fund in 2018, which initially offered a \$1,500 stipend to current faculty at Cal State LA who publish in entirely open-access journals. The primary goal of this program is to remove the financial barriers that prevent researchers from publishing in open-access journals. The University Library’s Open-Access

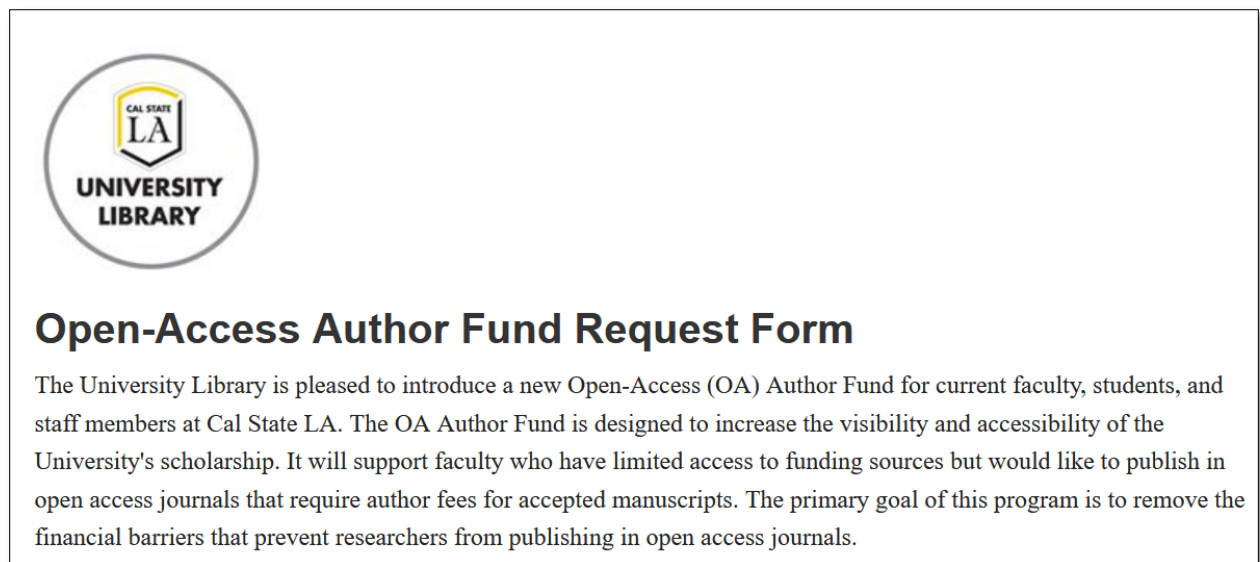
Group is responsible for coordinating and managing the funds. In the beginning, all current Cal State LA full-time lecturers, adjunct, tenure-track, and tenured faculty were eligible to receive funds. Beginning in 2021, the Open-Access Fund broadened its availability to include staff and student authors to be eligible to receive the funding.

The Open-Access Author Fund main page was created on a LibGuide page where one can gather all the information about the Open-Access Author Fund (Fig. 1).

<https://libguides.calstatela.edu/openaccess/oafund>

Figure 1

Open-Access Author Fund LibGuide Page



Also, the OA Fund submission form is embedded on the Open-Access LibGuide page along with the timeline information, and the requirements for the funding eligibility. A separate FAQ page was also created to answer any questions applicants may have.

<https://libguides.calstatela.edu/openaccess/faq>

There are several requirements to receive funding. The University Library only provides funds for articles that meet the following criteria:

- Published in an entirely open-access journal.
 - Hybrid journals or delayed open-access models are not accepted;
- The journal's open-access policy and fees are posted online;
- The journal is listed in the Directory of the Open-Access Journals ([DOAJ](#)) or follows best practices for scholarly publishing as identified by [DOAJ](#).

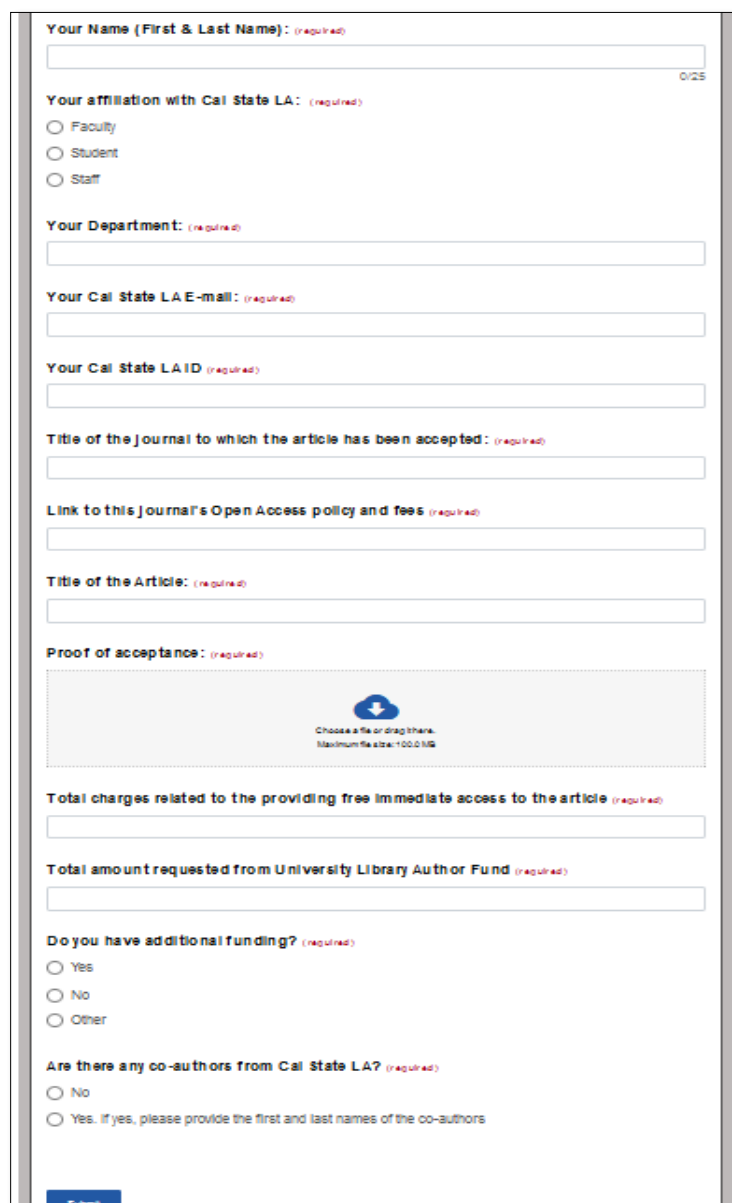
Initially, the University Library's Open-Access (OA) Group offered funding multiple times to the same faculty members within an academic year. Due to limited funding, the OA Group changed the criteria and currently, faculty members can participate in this program only once

during an academic year. In this way, we are able to offer funding to additional faculty members. During the pandemic, due to budgetary constraints, the funding amount was reduced from \$1,500 to \$1,000. However, a faculty member may receive a maximum amount of \$1,500 if co-authoring the article with a student author.

Below is the screenshot of the OA Author Fund form where faculty are required to submit the open-access journal and article titles, link to the journal's OA policy and publication fees, and proof of acceptance email from the publisher along with other information.

Figure 2

Open-Access Author Fund Request Form



The screenshot displays a web form for requesting an Open-Access Author Fund. The form is enclosed in a light gray border and contains the following fields and sections:

- Your Name (First & Last Name):** (required) - A text input field with a character count of 0/25.
- Your affiliation with Cal State LA:** (required) - Radio buttons for Faculty, Student, and Staff.
- Your Department:** (required) - A text input field.
- Your Cal State LA E-mail:** (required) - A text input field.
- Your Cal State LA ID:** (required) - A text input field.
- Title of the journal to which the article has been accepted:** (required) - A text input field.
- Link to this journal's Open Access policy and fees:** (required) - A text input field.
- Title of the Article:** (required) - A text input field.
- Proof of acceptance:** (required) - A dashed box containing a cloud icon and the text "Choose a file or drag them. Maximum file size: 100.0 MB".
- Total charges related to the providing free immediate access to the article:** (required) - A text input field.
- Total amount requested from University Library Author Fund:** (required) - A text input field.
- Do you have additional funding?** (required) - Radio buttons for Yes, No, and Other.
- Are there any co-authors from Cal State LA?** (required) - Radio buttons for No and Yes. If Yes, a text input field is provided for the names of the co-authors.

A blue "Submit" button is located at the bottom left of the form.

Methodology

In this article, the faculty usage of the Open-Access Author Fund by college from 2018-2022 was analyzed.

Figure 3

Usage of Open-Access Author Fund by Colleges

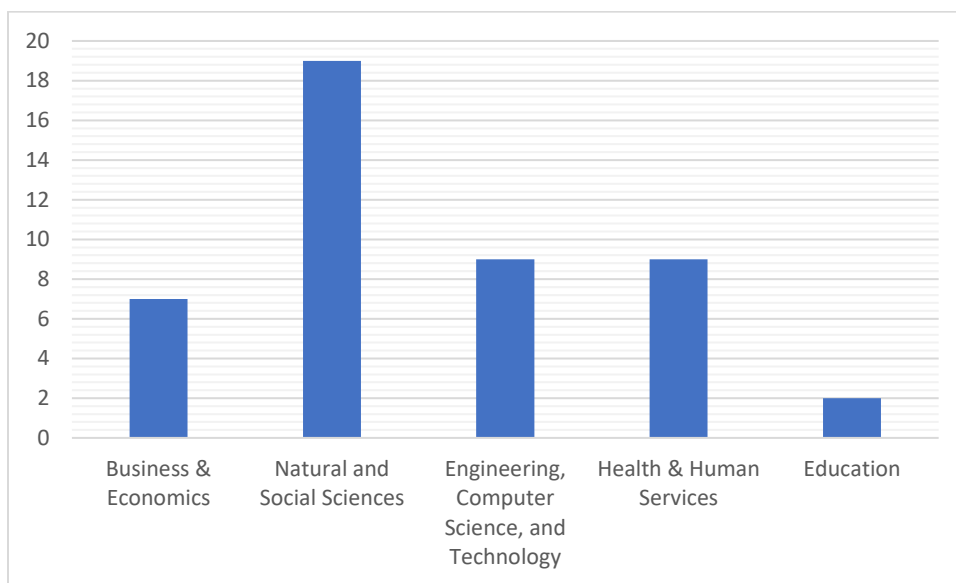


Figure 3 demonstrates the Open-Access Author Fund recipients by colleges. As shown in the graph, faculty from the College of Natural and Social Sciences (NSS) are the heaviest users of the OA Author Fund. It is noteworthy that NSS is also the largest college on our campus with 12 departments including many science disciplines like Biology and Chemistry and Mathematics. Usage of OA funds is somewhat similar among other colleges namely the College of Business & Economics, Health & Human Services and Engineering, Computer Science and Technology. Interestingly, very few faculty members from the College of Education have utilized the Open-Access Author Fund.

Figure 4

Faculty Usage of OA Author Fund by Disciplines

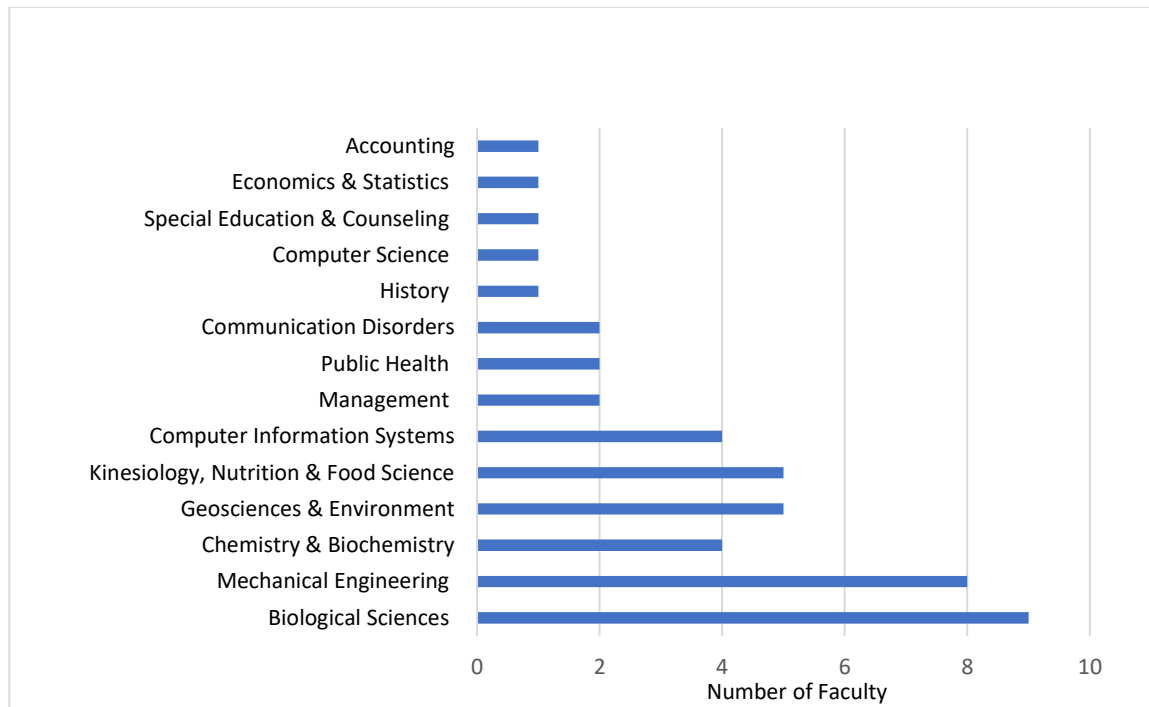
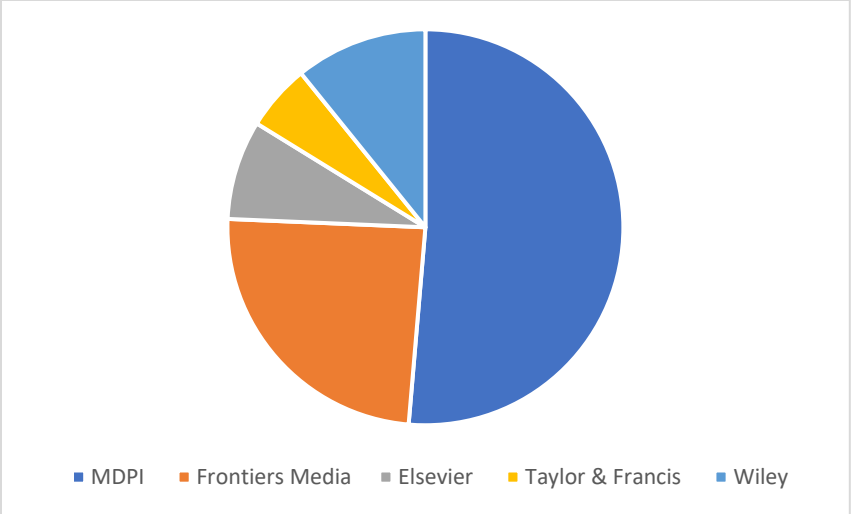


Figure 4 demonstrates the individual departments that utilized the OA Author Funds. The top five departments are Biological Sciences, Mechanical Engineering, Chemistry & Biochemistry, Geosciences & Environment, and Kinesiology, Nutrition & Food Science. Among the five top departments, Biological Sciences, Chemistry & Biochemistry, and Geosciences & Environment are departments within the Natural & Social Sciences (NSS). Mechanical Engineering, our second highest department, is from the College of Engineering, Computer Science & Technology (ECST). The Department of Kinesiology, Nutrition, & Food Science is from the College of Health & Human Services (HSS). Most of Cal State LA's faculty who utilized the OA Author Funds are from three colleges: NSS, HSS, and ECST. This graph also reestablishes the fact that the faculty from science and engineering disciplines are more supportive and motivated of publishing in open-access journals. Very few faculty members from the College of Arts & Letters have participated, which is understandable.

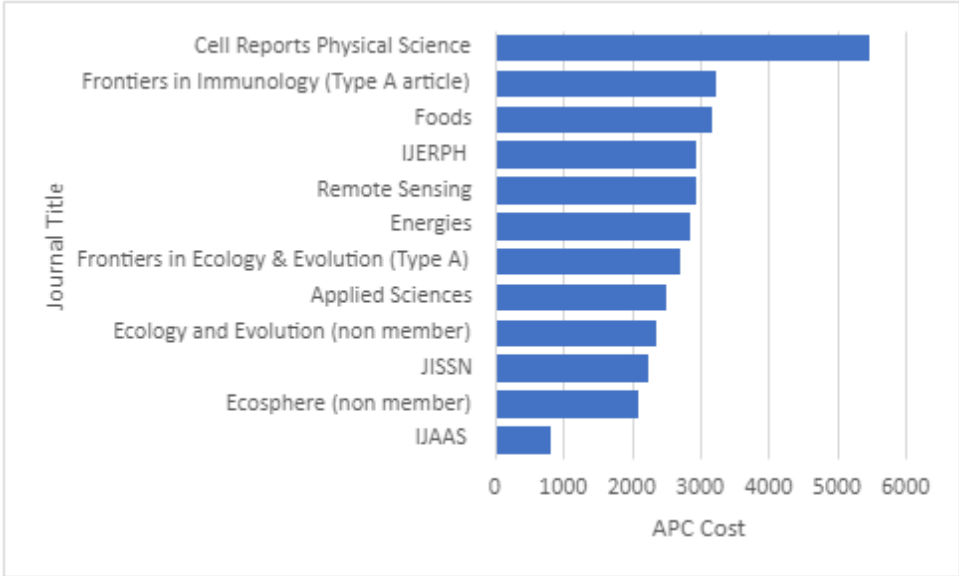
Figure 5

Top Publishers Where Faculty are Publishing



The above pie chart demonstrates the top publishers where Cal State LA faculty are publishing. The MDPI, Frontiers Media, and Wiley are the top three open-access publishers at Cal State LA. The OA funding requests for Elsevier journals were submitted in earlier years. Later, Elsevier and California State University (CSU) entered into an agreement in 2020 to provide CSU researchers with access to Elsevier journals and support open-access publishing (California State University, 2023). Therefore, no additional funding requests were received for the Elsevier journals after the year 2020.

Figure 6
Article Processing Cost (APC) of Top Open-Access Journals



The bar chart above shows the APC of the journals Cal State LA faculty published two or more times using the Open-Access Author Fund. The APCs were found on each journal website (Cell Press, 2023; ESA, 2023; Frontiers, 2023; IJAAS, 2023; MDPI, 2023a; MDPI, 2023b; MDPI, 2023c; MDPI, 2023d; MDPI, 2023e; Taylor and Francis, 2023; Wiley Online Library, 2023). The average APC is \$2,780. As indicated in the chart above, the *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences* (IJAAS) has the lowest APC at \$818. The other journals' APC is midrange between \$2,000 and \$3,225. The journal with the highest APC is *Cell Reports Physical Science* at \$5,460.

Table 1

Self-Archiving Policies among Popular OA Journals at Cal State LA

Journal Title	JW	AW	GR	SR	IR	AR	PR	NCR	NCW
Frontiers in Ecology & Evolution	X	X							
Remote Sensing (MDPI)	X	X							
Applied Sciences (MDPI)	X	X							
Cell Reports Physical Science – pathway b			X					X	X
Ecology and Evolution	X	X	X	X	X				
Ecosphere	X	X	X	X	X				
Energies (MDPI)	X	X							
Foods (MDPI)	X		X			X			
Frontiers in Immunology	X	X	X						
International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences	X						X		
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	X		X			X			
Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition	X	X							
Total	11	8	6	2	2	2	1	1	1

	Repository Type
JW	Journal Website
AW	Any Website
GR	Government Repository (PubMed Central)
SR	Subject Repository
IR	Institutional Repository
AR	Any Repository
PR	Paid Repository (Portico)
NCR	Non-Commercial Repository
NCW	Non-Commercial Website

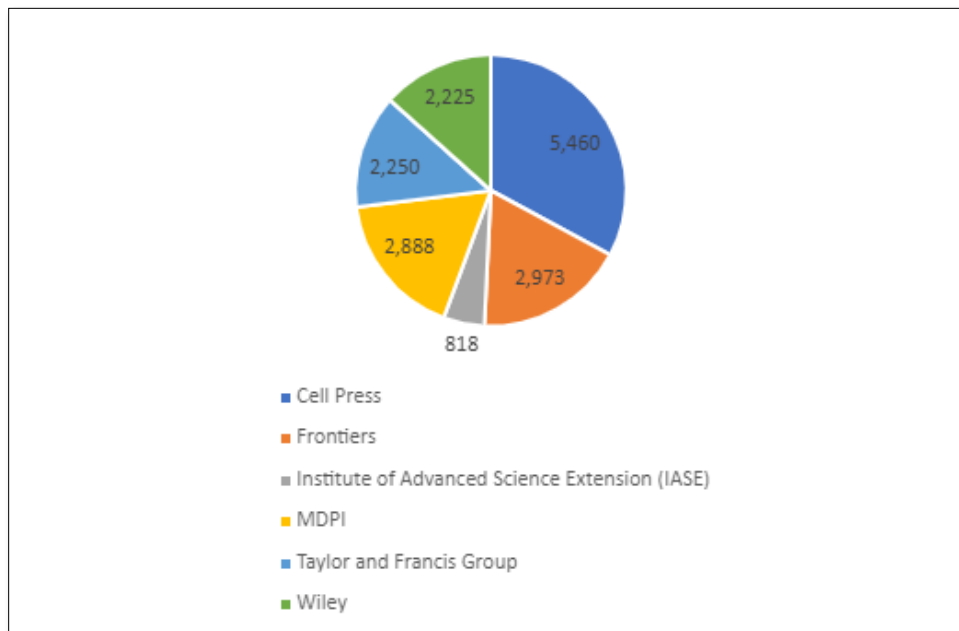
This table above shows the self-archiving policies of top 13 Open-Access journals Cal State LA faculty published in utilizing the OA Author Fund. The top 13 Open-Access journals are journals where Cal State LA faculty published two or more times. The manuscript is required to be deposited in one of the repository options listed. Of these journals, the most popular repository is the journal website, followed by any website and a named repository such as PubMed Central.

Less likely repositories to be used are subject repositories, institutional repositories, any repository, non-commercial repositories, non-commercial websites, and a paid repository such as Portico. Where PubMed Central is indicated as a repository, those corresponding journal publishers will deposit the article into PubMed Central (International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences, 2014; Sherpa Romeo, n.d.). A non-commercial repository can be a “web page hosted by an organization to provide access to the work from researchers working in a subject or range of subjects, at all times operating for a non-commercial purpose” (Cambridge University Press, 2023, sec. terms and definitions). A non-commercial website is a website that is not intended to make a profit. For example, a personal blog or a website for a non-profit organization would be considered non-commercial.

According to Sherpa Romeo (n.d.), a journal website is a “primary website on which a journal may make articles available for download” (Glossary). Additionally, any website refers to a “website or repository, including Author's Homepage, Institutional Repository, etc.” (Sherpa Romeo, n.d., Glossary). A subject repository is a “repository that only contains articles within a pre-set subject field” (Sherpa Romeo, n.d., Glossary). An institutional repository is a “repository that is associated with the Institution of the author” (Sherpa Romeo, n.d., Glossary). A non-commercial institutional repository is a “repository that is associated with the Institution of the author and is only used for not-for-profit content and re-use. Typically, an Institutional Repository will also be a Non-Commercial Institutional Repository” (Sherpa Romeo, n.d., Glossary). A non-commercial repository is a “repository that is only used for not-for-profit content and re-use” (Sherpa Romeo, n.d., Glossary).

Figure 7

Average APC Cost for Most Popular Journal Publishers at Cal State LA



These are the most popular publishers where faculty have utilized the Open-Access Author Funds. To create the pie chart above, the top 13 journals listed in Figure 6, “APC by Journal,” were separated by the publisher and then averaged by publisher. MDPI APC cost was listed in Swiss Francs and IASE APC was listed in Euros. Google Finance was used to exchange Swiss Francs and Euros to U.S. dollars.

APC varies widely from \$818 to \$5,460. The publisher of *IJAAS* is the Institute of Advanced Science Extension (IASE). The IASE is a “non-governmental organization (NGO) which is a not-for-profit organization that is independent from states and international governmental organizations” (IASE, 2020, sec. Open-Access). IASE considers itself an international journal and it is based out of Taiwan. IASE has the lowest APC at \$818 and is easier for authors to finance.

Figure 8

Faculty Participation by Academic Year

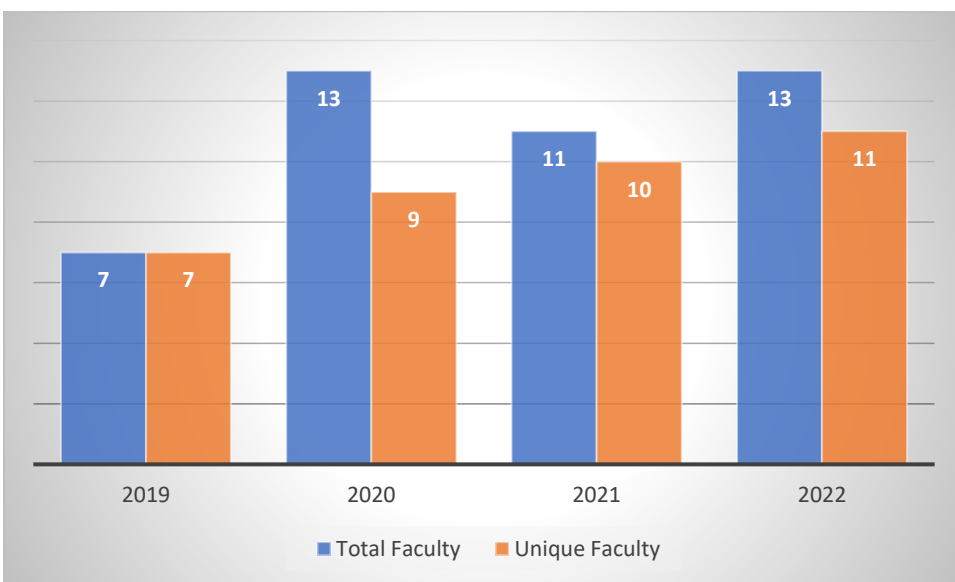


Figure 8 demonstrates the faculty usage of the OA Author Fund by year. The graph also includes information on unique faculty usage of the Open-Access Author Fund. During the first two years of establishing the OA Author Fund, we realized several faculty members utilized the OA-Author Fund multiple times within an academic year. As it is evident from the 2020 graph, the participation of unique faculty members has declined as the same faculty were awarded OA funds multiple times within an academic year. Therefore, the University Library’s Open-Access Group has revised the funding requirements and added a limit to the funding amount that faculty members can request within a fiscal year. According to the new policy, a faculty member can request up to the maximum funding amount of \$1,000 within a fiscal year. In recent years (2021, 2022), a few faculty members requested the OA Author Funds two times and split the requesting

amount to fully utilize the allocated \$1,000 amount. It is noteworthy that the OA Author Fund has a limited budget. This new requirement assists us to reward additional faculty members with our limited budget.

Faculty participation by rank

In terms of faculty participation by rank, we received participation from lecturers, and tenured, tenure-track faculty members. Unfortunately, it was not required to provide the faculty rank information on the Open-Access Author Fund Submission Form. Therefore, rank-based faculty participation information is not available due to a lack of exact data. General faculty participation information indicates that several tenure-track faculty members utilized the fund and continue to use the fund as tenured faculty members.

Challenges

First of all, in general, as indicated in personal correspondence, faculty are pleased that we offer an OA Author Fund that assists them in publishing in open-access journals. The allocated average \$10,000 Open-Access Author Fund was utilized by faculty members every year. However, the University Library's Open-Access Group has encountered several challenges in maintaining the Open-Access Author Fund. First of all, due to the Pandemic and budgetary constraints, the funding amount was reduced from \$1,500 to \$1,000. Needless to say, the Article Processing Charge (APC) is more than \$1,000 for the majority of the gold open-access journals. For that reason, faculty have to look for alternative funding options to cover their APC cost. A \$1,500 funding was offered when a faculty member collaborates with a student author. Afterward, we noticed an increasing number of submissions for the OA Author Funds with student authors. The scarcity of funding encouraged several faculty members to collaborate with their colleagues and students and request an additional funding amount.

In recent years, the University Library's OA Group had to decline two faculty submissions as the journals were not included in the Directory of the Open-Access Journals (DOAJ). It makes the OA group's work difficult when the journal is not listed on the DOAJ's page. In order to determine if the journal or publishers are predatory publishers, Open-Access Group members had to check the journal's website, *Ulrich's Web*, *Cabell's Journalytics*, and the journal's editorial board's pages. Additionally, *Beall's List of Potential Predatory Journals and Publishers* page stopped being updated, and that created ambiguity in determining a journal's validity. To complicate matters further, some publishers state on their pages that suspicious websites are making false claims about the validity of their publications.

University Library's OA Group encountered a few administrative challenges as well. The University Library's fiscal office reimburses the publisher directly because direct reimbursement to Cal State LA employees may trigger the fringe benefits tax. The faculty author needs to request the publisher for an itemized invoice billed to the author or Cal State LA. Additionally, the University Library's fiscal office can only reimburse the awardee if their published name matches the billing name. Otherwise, the awardee needs to request that the publisher rename the invoice in the awardee's name. This problem appeared when multiple authors from different institutions wrote the same article. Furthermore, University Library's fiscal office holds

processing of any OA Author Fund award requests during the fiscal year closing time which creates additional waiting time for the awardee to get reimbursed.

Funding Challenges

As we are approaching the fifth year of the Open-Access Author Fund. We must consider having a separate budget for the University Library's Open-Access Author Fund. The literature reviews show that many institutions utilize the funding provided by the Provost's office (Gyore et al, 2015). If we are unable to receive funding from the Provost's office, a separate budget must be allocated within the University Library's Collection Development funding to sustain the Open-Access Author Fund at Cal State LA.

The Click & Borchardt (2019) study involved building a dataset of almost 1,200 publications funded by library OA funds collected from 16 universities. Out of the 87 funds identified, only 55 (63%) were active as of July 2019 (p. 28). It proves once again that a steady funding source is extremely important to sustain the OA Author Fund at Cal State LA.

Conclusion

Cal State LA Library has successfully funded many publications using criteria created by the University Library's Open-Access Group. However, the funding amount needs to be increased to support more open-access publications especially since the average APC of Cal State LA faculty publications is \$2,780 with a range from \$818 to \$5,460. Simultaneously, the sustainability of these funds must be considered. Allocating funds within the University Library's collection development funds can be a solution. Alternative models to support OA Funds would be useful in the context of an ever-changing open-access landscape.

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