

Open Access and Publishing: Affordable? Accessible?

Glenn Waller
Department of Psychology

Experiences as a researcher

- I am all in favour of open science
 - But does the rise of open access journals really contribute to that?
- The demands of open access are potentially huge, in financial terms
 - To build my CV over the years at current prices would be likely to cost about £700k
- For a Department of 50 staff, each publishing six papers a year, that would be about £600k per year
 - I bet your Department does not get that to cover non-staff costs in a year.
- 50 such departments, and the bill for the University goes up to £30m per year
 - So who is going to pay that?
 - Library? Department? Staff members?

Experiences as a researcher

- Potential constraints on the researcher
- Only way to get open access is to get UKRI or equivalent funding
 - Not an infinite pot
 - As we know from when the library funding ran out in a recent cycle
- Even where it works, this model moves us closer to the US model
 - Where research funding becomes the academic's goal
 - Can that work where the available money is not at US levels?
- Limits our capacity to undertake research that is not funded that way
 - Student work
 - Charity funding
 - Blue sky research

Experiences as a researcher

- I want that list of predatory journals back...but until that happens, I always look out for:
 - Very cheap publication rates
 - Incoherent emails requesting 'you're noble participating'
 - Requests for the same paper recycled
 - Journals that have NOTHING to do with my work
 - Apparently respectable journals with professional looking presentation, but with vanishingly small rejection rates
- These do not get my time as a researcher, or as a reviewer
 - They certainly fill up my spam email folder

Experiences as a former Head of Department

- A lot of researchers want you to fund their paper being published as open access
 - It is always the best paper they have ever done (nope)
 - It is always 'guaranteed 4*' (no they are not)
 - It is always perplexingly hard to get into the top end journals in their field
- And it does not seem to matter that you have told them many times to approach the Department about this before submitting the paper, as budgets are miniscule
 - 'I did not realise that it meant my work'
 - 'But you are stopping me being returnable for REF' (an expensive 1*-2* paper is not going to help you, there)

Experiences as an editor

- I started before open access was a rising tide
- When it did emerge, such journals were claiming very high impact factors
 - Not wildly surprising, as the articles were free to view
 - Not that convincing, either, as the 5-year IFs started to look weak...
- But our IF was still rising, and we were not losing prestige
 - Still the specialist journal that led the field
- The pressure did not come from the editors or the authors
 - But it began to come from the publishers

Experiences as an editor

- Publishers started to layer in more and more income streams
 - e.g., writing assistance
 - Selling covers as advertising of specific papers
 - Selling support to make graphic abstracts
 - Promoting open access routes
 - Secondary journals that turn out to be open access, for your rejected paper
- More pressure on editors to promote these streams
- Most recently – local open access option deals with libraries
 - Wiley, Springer, PLOS One
 - Promising route, but no idea how that is going to get paid for long term
 - End up with fewer journals?