

Rt Hon David Willetts MP
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From the President, Sir Paul Nurse

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Our ref: PN/ST/JB

Dear Minister

Since 1665, the Royal Society has (in common with many learned societies) published scientific journals. In keeping with our role as the UK's national academy of science, the Society is committed to the widest possible dissemination of research outputs. Our own publishing operation is one of the most open access friendly of all science publishers and we have recently launched our own open access journal *Open Biology*. Widening access to scientific outputs is key in promoting discovery and harnessing the benefits of science in the future.

We welcome the recent report of the *Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings* chaired by Dame Janet Finch and strongly support its key recommendation that "...a clear policy direction should be set to support the publication of research results in open access or hybrid journals funded by Article Processing Charges (APCs)."

The report rightly emphasises the legitimate costs of peer review, dissemination and other elements of the scholarly communications process, and that it is essential that these costs are adequately met in any sustainable open access publishing system. The scientific community makes a major contribution to the peer review process and does so on a voluntary basis. This huge contribution of time and expertise is a vital part of how science progresses through scrutiny and self-correction. Yet it is often taken for granted in debate over the economics of science publishing.

We agree that APCs are the best mechanism for meeting these costs and that universities and research funders should implement-funded open access mandates to encourage researchers to publish in open access and hybrid journals. The cost of funding APCs is likely to be modest in comparison with the total costs of research and must be set against the longer term reductions in library spending on journal subscriptions as increasing amounts of scholarly information are available for free. Repositories and 'green' open access will also contribute to widening access although this may have less impact than some have argued.



President Sir Paul Nurse
Executive Director Dr Julie Maxton

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is the independent scientific academy
of the UK, dedicated to promoting
excellence in science

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The report also expressed caution about embargo periods. Posting articles in repositories is not problematic as long as the embargo period is not less than 12 months. At the present time, while the subscription publishing model remains the norm for a significant number of journals, embargo periods of less than 12 months will significantly damage the learned societies, including the Royal Society, which rely on income from their journals. Proceeds from publishing are reinvested in science by the learned societies to support academic conferences, dissemination of science, public engagement in science and support for research, especially for younger scientists. This would be put in jeopardy if learned societies lost their publishing income.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the report further with Government, with the aim of moving towards a sustainable model for open access publishing.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Nurse". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Paul Nurse

cc: Professor Sir John Beddington CMG FRS, Chief Scientific Adviser
Sir Jeremy Heywood KCB, CVO, Cabinet Secretary, 10 Downing St.