

2014 review of the implementation of the RCUK Policy on Open Access

30 August 2014

Introduction

As the UK's national academy of science the Royal Society serves a dual role as a funder and as a publisher of research. The Society has given evidence to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee and the BIS Select Committee on the subject of Open Access policies^{1,2} and this consultation response builds on those policy positions.

In this consultation response the following definitions are used:

- 'green' open access is the self archiving, by authors, of articles in repositories which may have an embargo on access
- 'gold' open access is the publication in a journal of an article with immediate open access on payment of an article processing charge (APC)

The introduction of the RCUK Policy on Open Access has not been disruptive as the Society already offered open access publishing, and the Society has seen an increase in RCUK funded research being published 'gold' open access. However, Royal Society journals are not able to monitor the levels of 'green' open access articles.

The Royal Society's position on Open Access prior to April 2013

The Royal Society supports the widest possible dissemination of research outputs provided that this is done in a sustainable manner, whilst recognising the legitimate costs of peer review and the processes of quality control on which science depends.

In 2005, the Royal Society adopted a hybrid model for all of its journals offering authors the option of immediate open access in return for an article processing charge (APC). Articles published in this way are deposited in *PubMedCentral* on the author's behalf and are published under the Creative Commons attribution license CC-BY. In addition, the Society permit all authors to deposit the accepted version of their manuscripts (author post-print) in an appropriate subject or university repository with an embargo period of 12 months. Submitted manuscript versions (pre-print) may be deposited without embargo.

Subscription prices for the hybrid journals are set according to a transparent pricing mechanism which takes into account income received from APCs.

In 2010 the Society launched its first fully open access journal, *Open Biology*, followed this year by a second, *Royal Society Open Science*.

Compliance of Royal Society journals with the RCUK Policy on Open Access

Royal Society journals have been compliant with all RCUK Open Access policies since 2005. Authors can make their work openly accessible either via self archiving in repositories with an embargo of not less than 12 months ('green' route) or by paying an APC for the immediate Open Access option ('gold' route). These

options are available optionally on the hybrid subscription journals or as the only option on our exclusively open access journals.

The Royal Society welcomed the introduction of the new RCUK policy³ in response to the Finch Report as it expresses a preference for immediate 'gold' open access and supports the view that APCs are the best way to cover the legitimate costs of publishing.

Royal Society publishing policies did not require changing to ensure the Society's journals were compliant with the new RCUK policy from April 1st 2013, as 'gold' open access was already offered. The Society did, however, contact its authors by email to explain their open access obligations under the new policy.

RCUK funded research published in Royal Society journals

The proportion of authors opting for paid, immediate open access in the Society's hybrid journals has been increasing steadily since the Society introduced the option in 2005. In 2013, the percentage was 13.8% across all journals with the biological journals showing higher take up rates than the physical sciences journals. A marked increase (5%) was seen from 2012 to 2013 following the introduction of the new RCUK policy (See Figure 1).

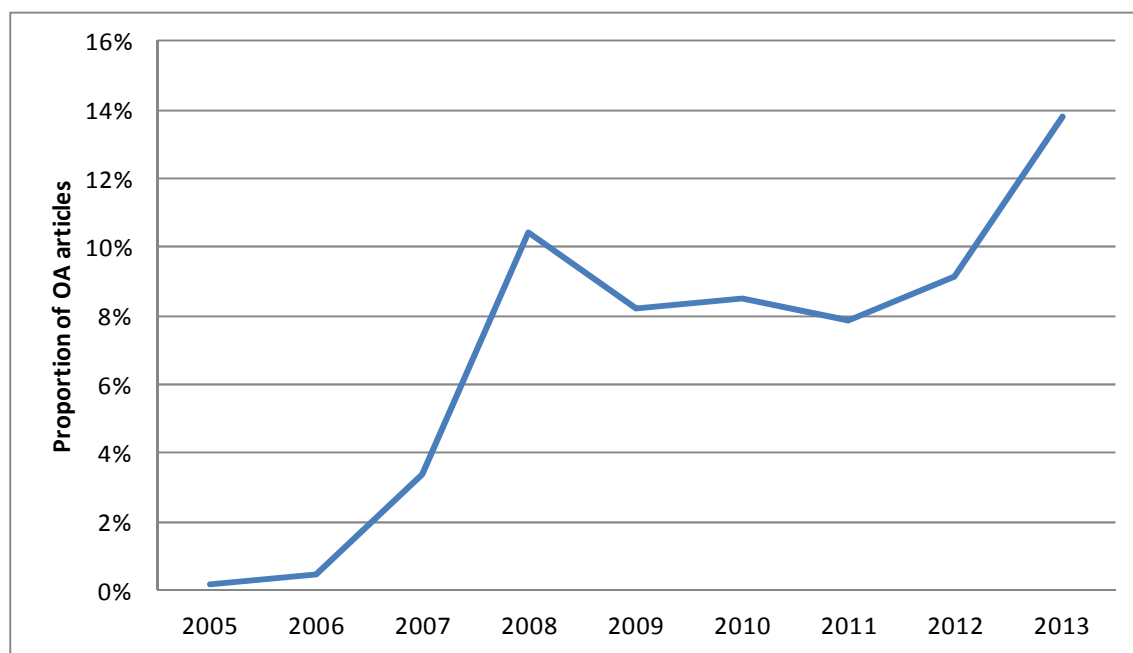


Figure 1 'gold' open access articles as a percentage of total published articles

When the number of open access articles in Royal Society journals is broken down by funder, analysis shows that since the introduction of the RCUK policy in April 2013, there has been a considerable increase in the use of 'gold' open access route where there is some RCUK funding. As shown in Table 1. (These data are subject to the limitations of self reporting of funding information by authors).

Year	Total articles published	Total paid OA articles published	EPSRC	BBSRC	MRC	NERC	ESRC	AHRC	STFC	Total RCUK
2012	2624	312	16	25	33	19	1	0	0	94
2013	2163	399	33	56	50	43	6	0	2	190
2014 (to Aug)	1492	307	28	32	27	36	7	2	2	134

Table 1 Number of articles published in Royal Society journals with Research Council funding

However, the Society are not able to provide data on those articles which are compliant via the 'green' self archiving route as it cannot be established whether an accepted manuscript version has been deposited in a relevant repository. For the same reason the Society are unable to determine which (if any) RCUK articles are not in compliance.

The Society has not experienced any significant problems with payment of APCs from RCUK authors.

Conclusion

The Royal Society supports progress towards a fully open access model of scientific publishing and welcomes the lead taken by the Research Councils to promote immediate open access delivered in a sustainable way. This has not been disruptive as open access was already in Royal Society publishing policy.

Since the introduction of the RCUK Policy on Open Access the Society's journals have seen an increase in RCUK funded research choosing to be published 'gold' open access. However, the Society is not able to monitor those who have published under 'green' open access.

During the transition to open access there may be increased costs to the research system. Therefore it is important that the costs of publishing are carefully managed so that APCs may be minimised and that subscription prices take account of open access income and are set in a transparent way. It is in the interests of the research community that the transition to open access is not unduly prolonged and that the community maintains a stable publishing system which is widely understood and supported by authors.

About the Society

The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, engineering, and medicine. The Society's fundamental purpose, as it has been since its foundation in 1660, is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

For any enquiries please contact Dr Stuart Taylor, Commercial Director, on stuart.taylor@royalsociety.org or on 0207 451 2619.

¹ <https://royalsociety.org/policy/publications/2013/open-access-commons>

² <https://royalsociety.org/policy/publications/2013/open-access-lords-committee>

³ <https://royalsociety.org/policy/publications/2012/response-finch-report/>