



A Brief Summary of Open Access Publishing and its Potential Ramifications for Art History

1. Open Access Background and Rationale

Simply put, Open Access (OA) publishing calls for the sharing of research outputs (articles, books, etc) online at no cost to any reader. The idea originated in the mid 1990s, and was intended as a way for those in the life sciences to share discoveries, maximise the impact of their research and speed scientific progress. The UK's move to OA publishing began in earnest in 2012 with the publication of the “Finch Report”, an article by Professor Dame Janet Smith on the benefits of expanding OA to research publications. Since then the UK government has put into place stipulations which provide that research it funds should appear in OA publications.

While the ideal of OA publishing is sharing knowledge for the benefit of researchers and the general public, a financial argument has featured prominently: that government should not have to ‘pay twice’ for research outputs first through block grant funding to universities, which helps to pay for faculty salaries, and second for subscription fees to publishing companies to access the research which the faculty produces.

2. Adoption of OA Principles

The UK government has adopted aspects of OA publishing through its UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) policy and via the Research Excellence Framework (REF) for UK universities. This has been part of a move within Europe to embrace OA practices which is spreading more gradually to the US and to other parts of the world.

In Europe the trend has crystallised in the creation of cOAlition S, an informal grouping of research councils (including UKRI) and major research funders—such as the Wellcome Trust, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Max Planck Society—who have endorsed Plan S. The plan contains a set of principles and technical requirements to achieve OA publishing and knowledge sharing. cOAlition S has no legal authority; the individual research council members are charged with implementing the plan's principles in their respective countries. In May of 2019, cOAlition S published the final version of its ‘Principles and Implementation’ guidance on Plan S’. As a member of cOAlition S, UKRI has stated that it is committed to implementing policies ‘aligned’ with Plan S.

3. The UKRI OA policy and consultation

The extant policy was created in 2013 under the auspices of the UKRI's predecessor, RCUK. UKRI recently published an updated policy on 13 February for the purposes of public consultation. This consultation period was to end on 17 April, but because of the backlog of work that the onset of the Coronavirus has caused at

UK universities, it has extended this deadline to 29 May. The policy is, in large measure, consistent with Plan S principles, but does vary in several important ways. With the consultation, UKRI has now said that Plan S is an 'input' into UKRI policy rather than a directive to comply; thereby stressing its independence from the plan.

The current policy deals only with journal articles. The new policy makes similar requirements for books and monographs to be published in OA. The policy would take effect in January 2022 for articles and in January 2024 for monographs. UKRI will conduct a separate consultation later in the year on the REF for 2028 with the idea that it is mainly in concert with the new UKRI OA policy. The AAH's response to the UKRI consultation will focus on areas that we think are disadvantageous for our field and for others in the humanities.

Acceptable licences under OA

UKRI advocates for the most permissive OA licence: CC BY, a creative commons licence which allows any type of re-use and reformatting, including for commercial purposes, without the permission of the author of an article or the rights holder of an image. Because of feedback from those in the humanities and social sciences, UKRI has acknowledged that a less permissive licence: CC BY ND (which prevents a derivative re-use or re-purposing without the author's consent) may be acceptable. For articles, UKRI has proposed that the granting of an ND licence may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis with the presumption being that the ND licence is allowed, for books the licence will be acceptable without such a review.

Changes in routes to compliance

The proposed policy stipulates that compliance is achieved through these articles being made available via a CC BY licence either through so-called Gold OA where the version of record¹ is immediately available online in a journal or OA publishing platform, or via Green OA, where the author's accepted manuscript² or version of record is available in an institutional or subject repository with no embargo period. The removal of the embargo period is the salient change. If the most permissive licence is required and there is no embargo period, publishing companies will be not be recompensed for their work and investment in producing academic journals and subject associations would not realise the benefit of managing the labour-intensive editorial and peer-review processes.

Presently, UKRI makes OA block grants to universities to help them comply with the present OA policy; these funds are normally used to pay APCs (article processing charges)³ for OA articles. The consultation asks whether these funds should be used only for articles published in fully OA journals or also when they are published in so-called hybrid journals which publish articles both in OA and under traditional licences.

¹ The Version of Record (VoR) is the final, published version of a journal article, book chapter or book after peer review, editorial changes and typesetting/formatting. It may be in print or online.

² The Author's Approved Manuscript (or accepted author manuscript, AAM) is the version of an article which has been accepted for publication and has had all the required peer review changes made, but before formal publication as the VoR.

³ The most common model proposed to replace the subscription fee whereby an author is required to pay an amount to a publishing company to have his/her article published. This can be done through raising grant money, self funding if one is unaffiliated or applying for funds available at universities for this purpose.

Material held by third parties

One of the principle concerns for our discipline is the way in which material held by third parties is treated. For our purposes this refers to copyright holders of images (eg, DACS) and museums and galleries which may not own copyright, but charge for the rights to reproduce images of works in their collections.

In provisions for books, the policy stipulates that if an OA licence cannot be acquired for an image, a 'tombstone page' can be included in its stead. This could include a URL that would link to an image and/or a bibliographic reference to the image as it appears in another publication. We will argue that such a substitute would be insufficient for the following reasons:

UKRI is considering whether an exemption from publishing a book in OA should be granted if there is 'significant re-use' of material held by third parties where OA licences aren't granted. We will encourage the adoption of this exception and will offer some guidance on how this standard can be interpreted, i.e. 'significant re-use' is not measured only by the number of images relative to the number of pages in a book, but should be invoked when a single work of art is central to an argument or, for example, is the only one discussed in a chapter of a book.

Funding models and financial burden on authors

With the move to OA publishing will come the need to fund significantly more APCs than are supported in the current environment. Concurrent with its consultation, UKRI will conduct an economic analysis of its new policy including, among other things, the costs of achieving full and immediate OA and financial implications for all stakeholders including researchers, universities, subject associations and publishers.

We will make the case that the most prominent and practical alternative funding model to subscription fees, that of APCs and BPCs (book processing charges), wrongly moves the financial cost of publishing from the reader to the author, and that publishing in OA on a larger scale will not be financially viable. In the current situation where the majority of articles are published under traditional licences, the grants given to universities do not fully cover all requests for APCs from authors who want to publish in OA. Even if UKRI could substantially increase funding for APCs, the policy will disadvantage more prolific authors and those at smaller institutions or less well-funded institutions who will not have access to the same amount for APCs as would those at wealthier institutions. We will move from a publishing meritocracy to one where those at better-funded institutions will be more likely to be published.