

“Christmas is over. Research funding should go to research, not to publishers!”

Moving Forwards on Open Access

LERU Statement for the 2016 Dutch EU Presidency

Nowadays, European universities pay publishers significant parts of their university budget. Hundreds of millions of euro's. Money which is not directly spent on research and education, even though it is largely taxpayers' money. As Harvard University already [denounced in 2012](#), many large journal publishers have rendered the situation “fiscally unsustainable and academically restrictive”, with some journals costing as much as \$40,000 per year (and publishers drawing profits of 35% or more). If one of the wealthiest universities in the world can no longer afford it, who can? It is easy to picture the struggle of European universities with tighter budgets. In addition to subscription costs, academic research funding is also largely affected by “Article Processing Charges” (APC), which come at an additional cost of €2000/article, on average, when making individual articles Gold Open Access. Some publishers are in this way even being paid twice for the same content (“double dipping”).

Is this how the EU envisions access to the results of academic research?

Christmas is over, says LERU, and calls upon the European Commission (EC) and the forthcoming Dutch EU Presidency to work with all stakeholders and bodies involved, to bring sensible solutions to the fore. In the era of Open Science, Open Access to publications is one of the cornerstones of the new research paradigm and business models must support this transition. It should be one of the principal objectives of Commissioner Carlos Moedas and the Dutch EU Presidency (January-June 2016) to ensure that this transition happens. Further developing the EU's leadership in research and innovation largely depends on it.

With this statement “**Moving Forwards on Open Access**”, LERU calls upon all universities, research institutes, research funders and researchers to sign this statement and give a clear signal towards the EC and the Dutch EU Presidency.

Need for clarity on Open Access

The League of European Research Universities ([LERU](#)) fully embraces the move of the academy towards Open Access (OA). OA enables new models for the conduct of research and the

dissemination of research outputs. In line with the OA priorities of the upcoming Dutch EU Presidency, LERU is of the opinion that greater clarity for all stakeholders is needed both in the dissemination and archiving of the scholarly record. LERU has accordingly drawn up a series of actions to address these issues between now and the end of June 2016.

Open Access Context

OA is fast becoming the norm in the dissemination of research outputs. Research funders make requirements for OA dissemination as a condition of funding. Moreover, in the recent [consultation on Science 2.0](#) (Open Science) by the European Commission, the area where respondents felt there was greatest need for action was OA to publications and data, where 63% of those responding felt the need for more work and interventions. It is in this context that LERU has prepared this statement to help guide all stakeholders move forwards on Open Access.

Recent progress on Gold Open Access - particularly big deals with Open Access and offsetting schemes to avoid double dipping (payment of subscriptions and Open Access Article Processing Charges) - is based on strong coordination and interaction between key stakeholders: universities and their national associations (e.g. VSNU in the Netherlands); libraries and their national consortia (e.g. KEMÖ in Austria, JISC in the UK); national governments; research funders. Acting together, these four key stakeholders can achieve a great deal.

Interactions and the co-ordination of goals regarding OA have not yet been synchronized between all stakeholders. It is the purpose of this LERU statement to foster such interactions. The statement will go from Rectors to national Rectors' or university associations, and from there to state secretariats, national funders and other relevant bodies.

Gold Open Access

The [Finch Report](#) in the UK expressed a preference for Gold as the future for Open Access publishing. The move to Gold Open Access publishing has also been adopted by some research funders. To note just two national examples: [Research Councils UK](#), and the [NWO](#), the Dutch research council.

LERU is conscious of the burden of the extra costs that are placed on universities and research funders by the payment of both subscriptions and Article Processing Charges (APCs) for Open Access publishing in hybrid journals (journals which contain both subscription and OA content). LERU notes that the costs of Gold APC charges are commonly lower in born OA than hybrid journals and does not understand why this is the case. Clearly there is work which needs to be done to ascertain the reason for this price differential. It is important that the path for transition to an Open Access future is clear and that the allocation of costs is fair and transparent.

Green Open Access

Many European universities and research organisations have developed sophisticated Open Access repositories and related infrastructures. Green is the preferred route to Open Access for many, but challenges remain. These include the areas of IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) and embargo periods, during which materials deposited in a repository cannot be made available in Open Access.

A call for clarity

LERU calls on all stakeholders in the publishing process - researchers, research funders, universities, publishers, libraries and national governments - to convene together in a summit to tackle the issues of Business Models for Open Access publishing and embargo periods for Green OA. LERU recognises the importance of reaching clarity on these issues.

LERU notes that some publishers have adopted new Business Models which enable universities and their libraries to offset APCs against subscription costs. This in effect lessens the danger that universities will pay twice for the same content - once for the subscription and once for an APC.

LERU calls on all stakeholders to discuss such offsetting models and to identify principles by which such offsetting agreements can be reached between universities, procurement bodies, and publishers. The following issues should be included in future discussions and agreements:

- The existing spend of a customer (or a consortium) should be taken as a starting point in negotiations;
- The customer can use the current spending level to “offset” against payment for APCs for journal articles in hybrid journals;
- As part of any agreement, publishers should permit all papers published by university researchers taking up the deal to be made Open Access for no extra charge.

Such an approach would provide a new Business Model for supporting research outputs, allowing ground-breaking European research to have maximum impact in informing future research activity.

In terms of Green Open Access:

- Embargo periods should be as short as possible. There is currently a wide variety of embargo periods (6, 12, 24 months) which is confusing for authors, readers and repository managers; there is a need for fruitful dialogue to achieve agreement between stakeholders;
- Embargo periods for the same journal should be uniform across the globe, not different country by country;
- There is no evidence that permitting researchers to make their findings available, through putting a copy of their work in a repository, has any effect on subscriptions;
- Where research outputs are funded by research funders, embargo periods should be set according to the requirements of the funder; research funders should be encouraged to take a proactive and shared stand on this issue. The interests and needs of researchers and readers themselves are equally important in this complex debate.

LERU Going Forwards

LERU will:

- call upon the research community to sign up to this statement, asking for future procurement activities across Europe to embrace a position which offsets costs for Article Processing Charges (APCs) against subscriptions;
- call upon the research community to sign up to this statement, asking for greater consistency in embargo periods for Green OA;
- submit the support for this statement to Commissioner Carlos Moedas and the Dutch EU Presidency at a suitable moment in the first half of 2016;
- make the statement the subject of a high level summit during the Dutch presidency, organised by DG R&I, European Commission;
- declare support to the Dutch, UK and other universities and their networks in working to change the Scholarly Communications landscape in Europe, with a focus on the issues outlined in this statement.

Leuven, 12 October 2015

