

Open Access in the UK

Briefing on the UK Open Access Case Study

Author: Mafalda Picarra, Jisc

August 2015



Summary

Open Access (OA) policies have been adopted at the national, institutional and funder levels in the UK and various infrastructural support mechanisms are available to facilitate open access. In July 2012, following an independent study on **'Accessibility, sustainability, excellence: how to expand access to research publications'** the UK Government announced its OA policy. The **Government's policy** determines that 'support for publication in open access or hybrid journals, funded by Article Processing Charges (APCs), [i]s the main vehicle for the publication of research'. At the same time that the UK Government announced its OA policy, the UK's major research funder, the Research Councils UK (**RCUK**), revised its OA policy announcing its 'preference for immediate [Gold] Open Access with the maximum opportunity for re-use'. In March 2014, the UK Funding Councils announced their OA policy for the post-2014 Research Evaluation Framework (REF). The policy requires the deposit of peer-reviewed article and conference proceedings in repositories (Green OA) and is applicable from 1 April 2016. By and large, two distinct OA routes are being promoted by the UK Government and RCUK (Gold OA) and the Funding Councils (Green OA). This scenario requires that continued efforts are made to ensure that advice and support are provided to universities, academic libraries and researchers on the distinct OA policies and on policy compliance. The UK research institutions have been adopting OA policies from as early as 2003 and there currently are 85 institutional OA policies. Despite distinct OA policies having been adopted by policymakers, national research funders and research institutions, the UK's movement towards OA has been a result of stakeholders coordinated efforts and is considered to be a case of good practice.

Current Open Access Policy Landscape

a) Brief history

In the 1990s, discussions started in the UK on how to improve access to academic publications. Professor Stevan Harnad

argued in his **'Subversive Proposal'** that researchers should archive their works in electronic format so that they would be available for their peers to read and to 'build on one another's work'. At the time, academic librarians were becoming increasingly concerned about the libraries limited budgets and the growing costs of subscribing to academic journals. As a result, various stakeholders began to explore the feasibility of implementing alternative publishing models. In the early 2000s, the growing support for the implementation of alternative publishing models at home and abroad, placed OA at the centre of the national scholarly communications debate led by senior researchers, research funders, libraries, publishers and policymakers. In 2004, the House of Commons Science and Technology published the report **'Scientific Publications: Free for All?'**. The report considered that in light with the pricing policies practiced by publishers and the constrained academic libraries budgets, the UK Government should take a leading role in setting an agenda that would improve access to scientific publications. It recommended that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) developed repositories, that the Government financed the institution 'of an interlinked network of institutional repositories', and that Research Councils implemented mandates for researchers to deposit research findings in repositories (Green OA).

In 2011, Minister David Willetts held a round table discussion on transparency with academic representatives, research funders, scholarly publishers and libraries. As a result of the discussion, a working group led by Dame Janet Finch was formed to investigate how to expand access to published research findings. In June 2012, the working group published the report **'Accessibility, Sustainability, Excellence: How to Expand Access to Research Publications'**. The report recommended that 'a clear policy direction should be set towards support for publication in open access or hybrid journals, funded by APCs, as the main vehicle for the publication of research, especially when it is publicly funded'. On research data, it recommended that institutional and subject repositories 'develop their roles in preserving and providing access to research data'.

b) National strategies and policies for OA

In July 2012, Minister Willetts officially expressed the UK Government support for the majority of the Finch report recommendations. The UK Government, therefore, officially adopted a policy that favours Gold OA, that promotes publishing in open access or hybrid journals, and that supports the principle that publicly funding should be made available to cover for APCs. Following the first **'Review of Progress in Implementing the Recommendations of the Finch Report'**, Minister Willetts reaffirmed in January 2014 its position on OA restating the UK Government's 'strong preference for Gold and acceptance of Green OA'. Minister Willetts also welcomed the recommendations made in the report on cost and sustainability restating its support for the

allocation of funds for APCs as well as for the provision of assistance to HEIs in the transition to Gold OA, for the development of sustainable funding models, and for research to be conducted on full cost benefit analysis.

c) Institutional OA policies

The School of Electronics and Computer Science of the University of Southampton was the first to adopt a self-archiving mandate in 2003. According to the most recent information available in **ROARMAP**, a total of 85 UK research institutions have now adopted OA policies. To a large extent, these policies favour Green OA over Gold OA. They mostly request or recommend the deposit of research outputs in institutional repositories but the majority also permit publication in open access or hybrid journals. Nonetheless, not all of these universities have funds available to cover for APCs. On research data, a total of 34 research institutions have adopted **open research data policies**.

d) Funders OA policies

The Wellcome Trust was the first UK research funder to issue a position statement on OA in 2003. The **Wellcome Trust** implemented its first OA policy in 2005 and revised it in 2012. Its OA policy requires authors to publish in OA and to self-archive the author manuscript in Europe PubMed Central. Its **research data policy** requires researchers to maximise access to data with as little restrictions as possible and that at a minimum access to data is provided to researchers on request.

RCUK issued a position statement on access to research findings in 2005 and in the following year six Research Councils issued OA mandates requiring that peer-reviewed publications be deposited in OA repositories. In 2012, **RCUK's OA policy** was revised. The policy now determines that research outputs resultant from RCUK's funded research must be published in open access or hybrid journals (Gold OA). RCUK's policy also required that research papers must 'include a statement on how underlying research materials such as data [...] can be accessed'.

The **Funding Councils OA policy** was issued in 2014 (revised in 2015) and determines that research findings accepted for publication after 1 April 2016 must be deposited in an institutional or subject repository at any point between acceptance and up to 3 months after the publication date. From 1 April 2017, research findings must be deposited within three months of acceptance. The policy accepts that research findings are published in open access or hybrid journals and embargo periods must be a maximum of 12 (STEM) / 24 (SSH) months.

Other research funders such as **Arthritis Research UK**, **British Heart Foundation** and **Cancer Research UK** also have OA policies. A comprehensive list of all UK funders OA policies is available in **SHERPA/JULIET**.

e) Infrastructural support for OA

The UK has an advanced and integrated repository infrastructure that has resulted in over 15 years of research, development, and investment led by Jisc. Jisc supported the start-up and enhancement of **institutional repositories** through a series of programmes from 2002 to 2011.

By looking at the publishing lifecycle, at the stage when researchers plan to **submit and publish a peer-reviewed article** they have services at their disposal that provide information on publishers copyright and self-archiving policies (**SHERPA/RoMEO**), on research funders' OA policies (**SHERPA/JULIET**), and tools to verify if journals comply with research funders OA policies (**SHERPA/FACT**). When the **article is accepted by the journal**, **Jisc's Publications Router** will soon be able to provide an automatic notification and to deposit the article in the author's institutional repository. In the cases where researchers choose the Gold OA route and are required to **pay an APC**, **Jisc Collections** negotiations service is available to offset arrangements and save costs to HEIs. In order to provide more information to HEIs, the **Total Costs of Ownership APC** project has been collecting data on expenditure in journal subscriptions and expenditure on APCs payments. When the **article is published**, **CORE** raises the visibility, reach and impact of the published article on the internet and makes the article available in library discovery services. On **monitoring and reporting compliance** with funder policies, **Jisc Monitor** collates data to allow librarians and research managers to monitor publication outputs and compliance with OA policies. Finally, on the **download of articles**, **IRUS-UK** provides information on usage reports for articles authored in a given institution and which can be used as a benchmark on usage for all the participating institutions.

Challenges and ongoing developments

The road to open access has raised numerous challenges to universities, libraries, publishers, funders and not-for-profit organisations. The most commonly identified challenges include: determining the feasibility of financial models; ensuring compliance with distinct funders OA policies; applying appropriate licensing models; establishing mechanisms to manage APCs grants and mass payments of APCs

efficiently; developing institutional funds to cover for APCs; setting processes to avoid double payment for articles subscriptions and APCs for the same journal; managing research data effectively and sharing the software needed to use the data. Notwithstanding, multiple stakeholders are working towards finding ways to address these challenges.