

Library Open Access Funding on the Ground: Workflows for a Successful OA Transition

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Abstract:

Library-funded open access publishing support at Iowa State University has been growing and has required finding scalable solutions to processes, incorporating new tools, and developing effective workflows. This article is based on a NC Serials Conference presentation that provided insights into the Library's approach to managing author participation in open access deals with publishers.

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Article:

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Speaker: Curtis Brundy

Speaker: Matthew Goddard

There is an expectation today that libraries support open access publishing and redirect collections spending from subscriptions that impede access to published research to a more equitable model. Iowa State University is actively engaged in this transformation through a multifaceted approach. They are a signatory of Open Access 2020; they have launched a new digital press; they are supporting open access infrastructure; and they are making open access agreements.

Library management of open access agreements

Brundy explained that the University Library has established 17 OA agreements with publishers under models that include Subscribe to Open and read and publish agreements. In 2019, the first year of these agreements, corresponding authors published 86 articles as open access with library support, and in 2021 that number had grown to 409 articles, a number that was 20% of Iowa State corresponding author output that year. New workflows had to be established to manage that level of activity and expected future growth. A foundational step was

determining which divisions and which positions were involved as the initiative was developed and to make decisions that would establish a scalable process, adjusting who was involved in an ongoing way. The result was moving this responsibility to the Electronic Resources Unit, where they were able to permanently reassign some staff time to do this work. That enabled the Library to utilize employee expertise based on experience working with publishers and publisher platforms, and it took advantage of existing relationships with Collections related to licensing and access. Brundy noted that the transition to the new responsibilities and workflows was relatively seamless.

Workflows to make OA agreement successful

Goddard described typical steps in the workflow of establishing and implementing OA agreements to fund the open access publication of their institutional research. While there is experimentation with models, and there are differences among publishers, workflows can be developed to manage the processes. Negotiating agreements requires the same review process and checklists as for their electronic resources licensing, but there are unique clauses applicable to the OA agreements.

A key step is author identification, and it is the publisher's responsibility. Publishers need to facilitate the submission process for corresponding authors to make their publications open access and provide guidance that makes it easy for authors to select the path to participate. That could mean that the publisher recognizes the author's email domain or an institutional identification number that matches information in the contract with the institution. The library may also verify eligibility, particularly for capped agreements or those based on article processing charges (APCs). Eligibility criteria can be established internally and can be flexible in order to manage limited resources. Agreements should allow for libraries to define their own local narrower criteria apart from the broader definitions of eligibility included in the agreement. Library staff review publisher or third-party dashboards to approve submissions or, in the case of smaller publishers, respond to an email. Agreements with no limits on the number of articles accepted typically do not require mediation by the Library. A routine step in the workflow is paying invoices as received, whether annually or more frequently.

Tools that support workflows

Reporting that provides article-level metadata helps in assessing the value of the deal and offers a means to monitor spending, but there is no standard that all publishers apply. Goddard described several systems and services, including OA Switchboard and Oable, that support standardization and consolidation of various aspects of the open access management process.

Post-publication workflows are additional steps. The Library adds articles to the ISU Digital Repository manually or via direct deposit using the Simple Webservice Offering Repository Deposit (SWORD) protocol. Once article availability is confirmed in reports, the staff verify on the publisher platform that the status of the article is indeed open access.

Differences between agreements

Agreements are not standardized, and the differences have implications for workflows. Variation includes whether they are capped or APC-based versus uncapped with a flat fee;

whether they are integrated with OA Switchboard or Oable versus those that are not integrated; whether there is a “read” component, which would involve a subscription to journals for a given publisher in contrast to other agreements that do not require licensing of content; and whether the journals are fully open access or hybrid.

Note that the authors based this presentation on an article that has been accepted by a journal publisher.