
Open Access Library Survey

An investigation of the role of libraries in open access funding and support within institutions

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Executive Summary

Open access has had a growing influence in the scholarly publishing world over the last several years. Despite the heavy discussions and ongoing debates, the full extent of how this model will impact the current publishing ecosystem is yet to be understood. Publishers Communication Group (PCG) stands at the crossroads of librarians, researchers and publishers, and we receive inquiries from all sides regarding open access publishing and the future roles of these stakeholders. Because of our position in the market, PCG is uniquely qualified to conduct this study to understand how libraries view open access, what role they play in this model, and whether there could be potential for libraries and publishers to streamline dealing with APCs.

What is open access?

Under the open access model, content (e.g. journal articles, books) is freely available to readers. This study refers to “gold open access”, in which article fees charged to the author provide the funding for content to be published without a subscription paywall. Known as article processing charges (APCs), these costs may indeed be directly funded by the author, but may also be covered by sources such as grant funders, employer subsidies or institutional library budgets.

Methodology

PCG created a 16-question survey that was then emailed to an international group of over 3,000 librarians and shared on relevant librarian-oriented listservs for a broader reach. 149 responses from 30 different countries were gathered during July and August 2014.

Key Findings

Open Access Resource Management

The majority (72%) of libraries included in this survey catalog open access resources, though many estimated these to represent just 1-5% of total catalog listings. Librarians determine which open access titles to include in their catalog by considering a variety of factors, including relevancy and faculty recommendations. The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is a popular reference to identify legitimate open access publications. Likewise, librarians avoid titles appearing on Beall’s List of Predatory Open Access Publishers, which aims to identify publishers which are potentially or probably exploiting the open access system.

Funding Open Access Publishing

At present, the responsibility for funding article processing charges (APCs) is more likely to fall on the author or granting organization than the library or institution. 70% of those libraries that are providing funding source this from the existing materials budget. However, it was estimated that this equates to less than 1% of the budget for traditional subscriptions. Only 19% of those institutions involved in APC funding have an established ceiling for APCs, typically ranging from \$2000 to \$3000. The potential for institutions to prepay APCs for specific titles or publishers in order to benefit from economies of scale is still an open question.

Future of Librarian Involvement

The future involvement of librarians with open access publishing is still being established. The majority of respondents felt that the library should actively advocate for open access. However, involvement in funding proved to be a divisive issue. While some believe the fiscal responsibility should lie solely with the author, others felt that the library should play a central role in open access in part by controlling APC funds. It is clear from this study that there is still no clear path forward, but there are many opportunities for innovation on the part of both librarians and publishers.

Profile of Survey Respondents

The majority of survey respondents, 56%, reside in North America. The United Kingdom accounted for about 12% of respondents and the remaining survey-takers were spread mainly around Latin America and Western Europe.

Respondents were asked to provide information about their current role and the size of their institution. About 94% of respondents were librarians, with the remaining 6% being faculty, students, and other library staff. The majority of institutions ranged from 5,000 to 25,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. Further details about the FTE of these institutions are included in Figure 1.

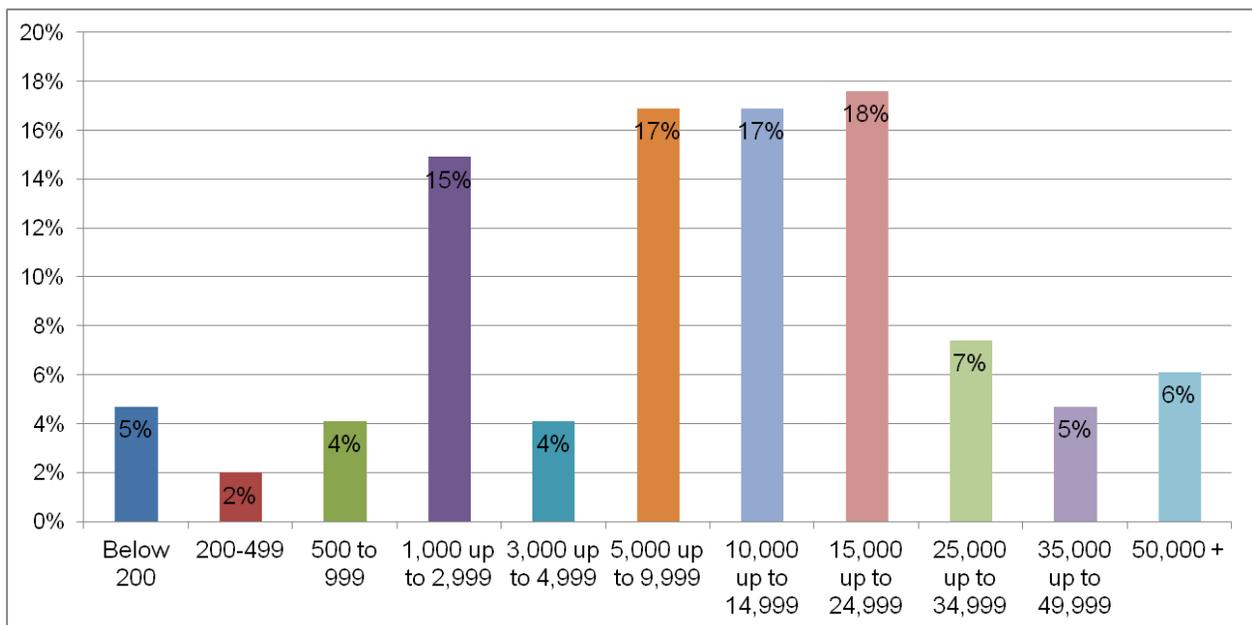


Figure 1: Rate of response by institutional FTE

Management of Open Access Resources

The initial set of questions aimed to gather information about how open access resources are currently managed at the respondent's institution. This included details about whether the library is listing these types of resources in their catalog, how significant these collections are, and how the determination to include particular resources is made.

Cataloging Open Access Resources

Librarian survey-takers were asked whether their library lists open access resources in its catalog. As shown in Figure 2, the majority of respondents (72%) stated that they do catalog open access journals, while 22% do not. The remaining librarians were unaware of their library's current treatment of these resources. The response to this question did not show a significant trend by FTE, with both very large institutions and smaller institutions on average showing similar breakdowns.

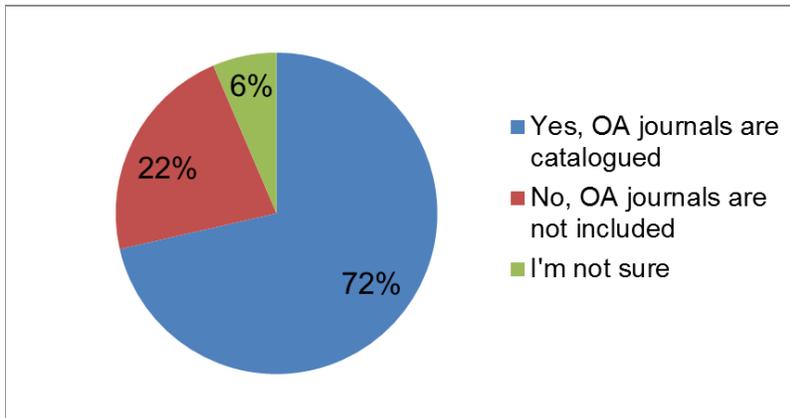


Figure 2: Do you list open access journals in the library's catalog?

Those who do catalog open access journals were then asked to estimate the percentage of their library's catalog that these represent. About 47% of librarians estimated open access journals to represent just 1% to 5% of their catalog. Another 23% of librarians guessed between 6-10%. Further details on these estimates can be seen in Figure 3.

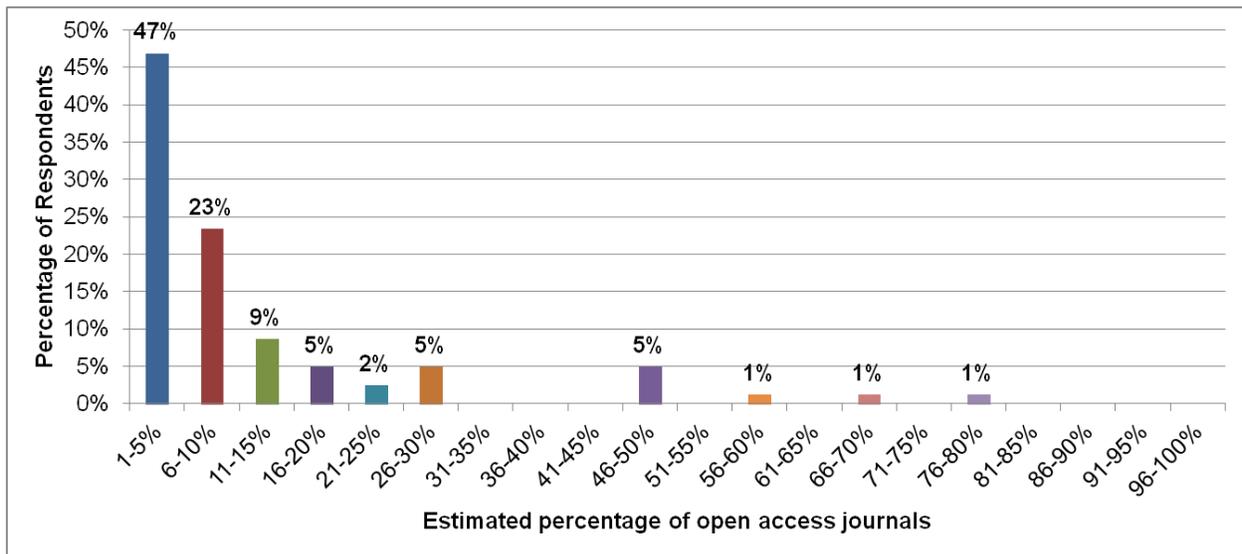


Figure 3: Approximately what percentage of your library's catalog are open access journals?

Determining Inclusion in Catalog

The librarians were then asked how they determine which open access journals to include in their catalog. 63% stated that they have selection criteria to make this determination, as shown in Figure 4.

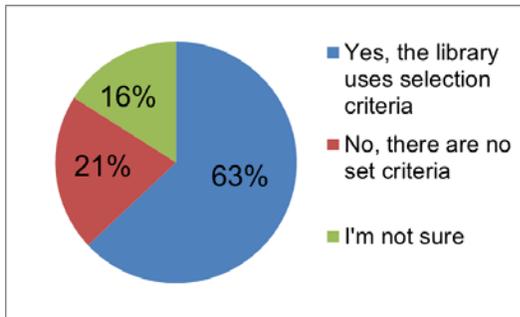


Figure 4: Does the library use selection criteria to add open access journals to its collection?

28% stated that a journal listing in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) is a criterion used by their library. The DOAJ is an online directory that seeks to increase the visibility of quality-controlled open access journals by providing a comprehensive listing of such resources for easy discoverability. In recent months, the organization has sought to revamp their selection criteria to tamp down potentially predatory open access journals that do not meet academic and ethical standards.

In addition to this first criterion, relevancy to the curriculum and faculty request are also considerations for listing open access journals in the library catalog (selected by 24% and 22% of respondents, respectively.) A researcher or faculty member of the institution publishing an article in the title under consideration was influential for 13% of survey takers as well. Further details on these and other factors can be seen in Figure 5.

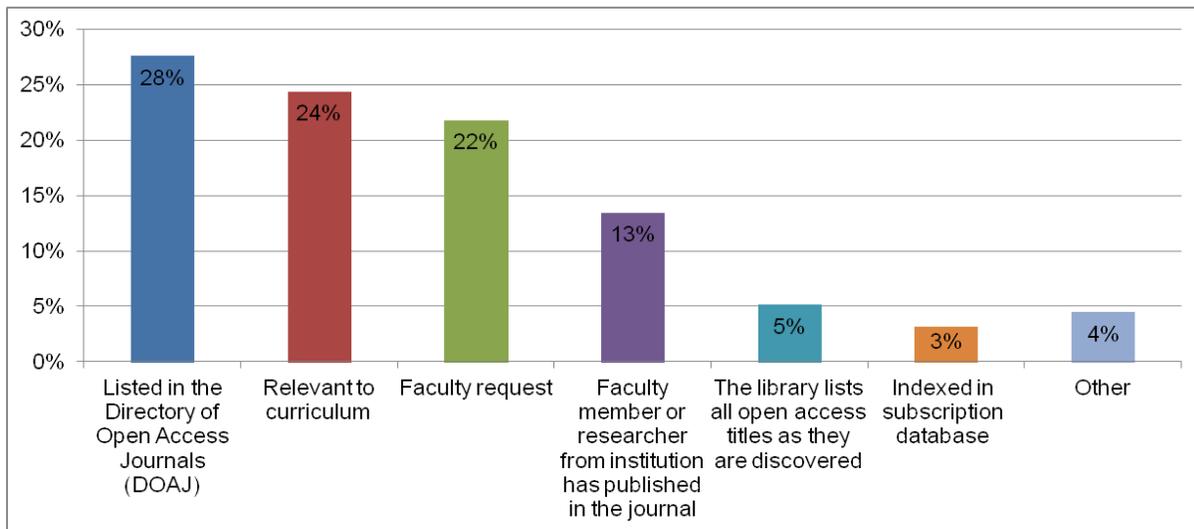


Figure 5: What criteria does the library use to determine which open access journal titles to include in the catalog?

Funding Open Access Publishing

The second series of questions asked librarians to detail how article processing charges (APCs) are currently covered by authors seeking to publish in open access journals and to explain the level of involvement of their institution in helping to fund this endeavor.

Funding Sources

Open access publishing requires payment on behalf of the author which enables content to be published with unrestricted access. At present, it appears that the source of this funding is predominantly sourced from the authors directly, as suggested by 47% of survey respondents. 38% said that the APCs were covered by outside grant funding. The institution administration, the library or the relevant academic departments were each also selected by a quarter of respondents as potential sources of funding, as shown in Figure 6.

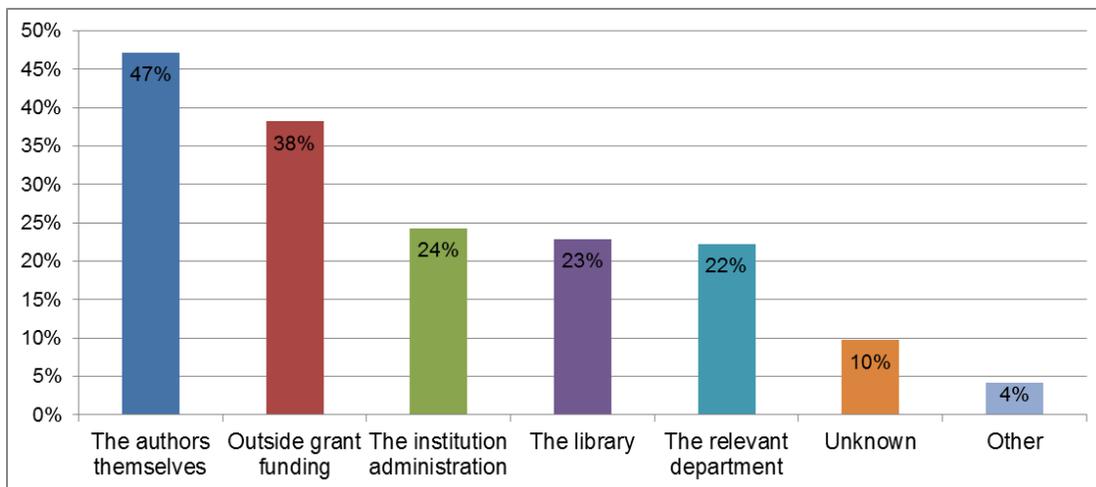


Figure 6: Who currently provides the funding for open access article processing charges (APC) at your institution? (Respondents asked to select all that apply)

Library Funding

For those that stated the library plays a role in funding open access publications for the researchers in their institution, questions were then asked to determine the source of these funds and the extent of the activity.

The majority of survey-takers (70%) stated that the funding from the library is coming out of the existing materials budget. 24% of respondents have funding from a new source that does not impact the materials budget. Details can be seen in Figure 7.

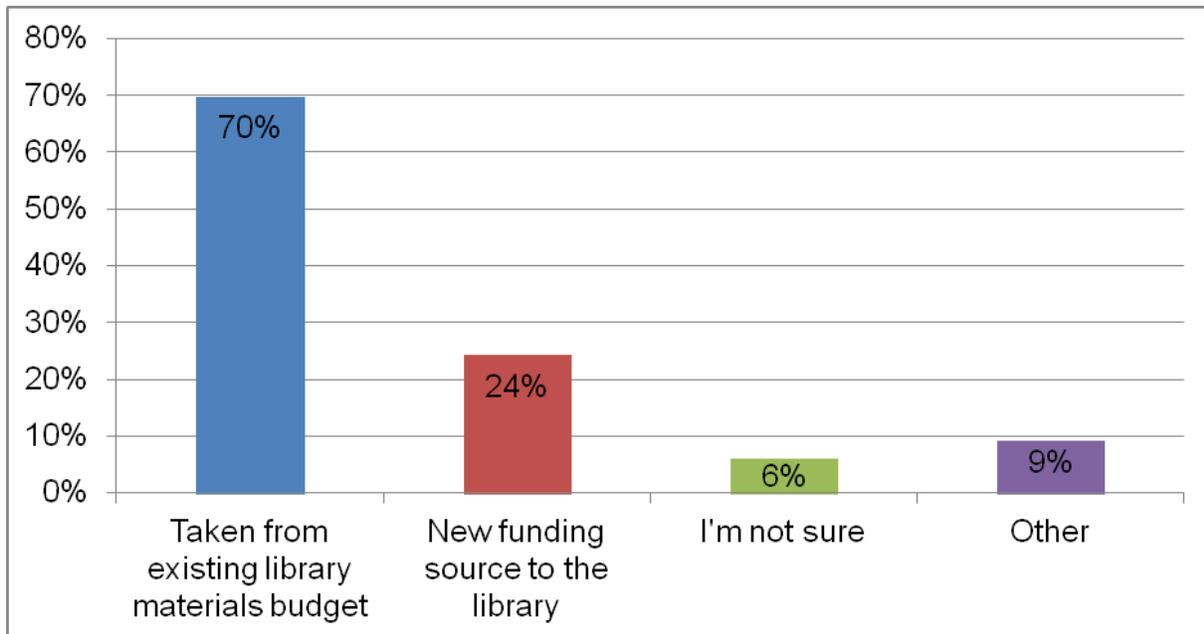


Figure 7: From where do the library's funds for APC's come?

Despite this trend of funding sourced from the existing materials budget, it seems that the impact is minimal at present. When asked how the budget for APCs compared to the budget for traditional subscriptions, the majority of respondents estimated the APC budget is presently 1% or less of their traditional collections budget.

Institutional funding

For all respondents who answered that their institution played a role in funding open access, whether through the library, administration or faculty, the next questions uncovered whether there are criteria in place to determine which publications will be covered. As shown in Figure 8, this does not yet exist for many institutions, with 39% stating that they have no selection criteria and 28% unsure whether their institution has this in place.

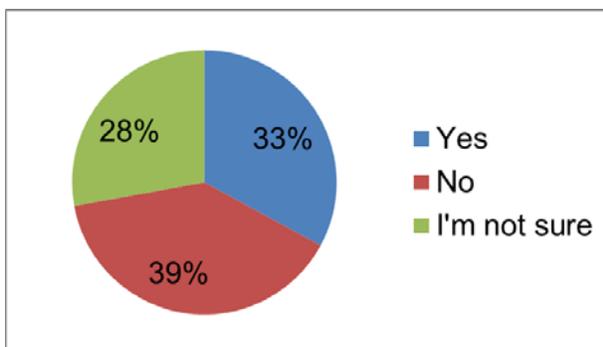


Figure 8: Does your institution have selection criteria to determine which open access APCs the OA budget will cover?

Selection Criteria

The 33% of respondents who stated that they do have selection criteria in place to decide which open access publications will be funded by the institution were then asked for further details on which factors they consider. As shown in Figure 9, there is not an overwhelming trend for criteria used in this process. 35% of respondents reference the DOAJ as a reference point. 27% simply base funding on faculty request. 50% of respondents wrote in a response for factors they consider. The most common of these included:

- *Journal must be fully open access and the institution will not cover APC charges in hybrid publications*
- *Journal does not appear on Beall’s List of Predatory Open Access Publishers, a list produced by librarian Jeffrey Beall that identifies “potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access publishers”*
- *Peer reviewed articles where publication fees are not covered by grants or other funding sources*
- *Must be a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA)*

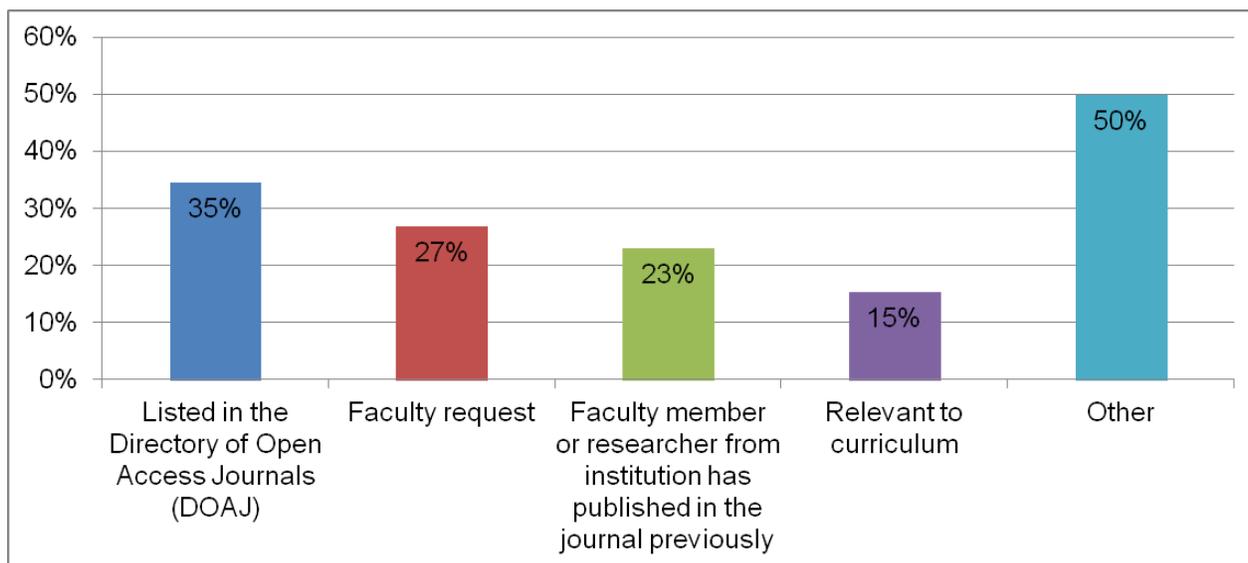


Figure 9: What criteria does the institution use to determine which open access APCs will be covered by the institutional budget?

Maximum Funding

All respondents whose institution plays a role in funding were asked about the maximum fee that would be paid for an APC to support a researcher. While about 80% of respondents were unsure or stated that there is no established maximum, 19% stated that there is a maximum fee in place.

Nearly all of the respondents whose institutions have an established ceiling for APC funding stated that the maximum price falls in the range of \$2000 to \$3000. One librarian stated that their institution offers \$1500 per article with a maximum of \$3000 per author per fiscal year.

Prepaying for Articles

Finally, respondents were asked about the likelihood of the institution considering prepayment for a bundle of articles to acquire discounted pricing on APCs. This would allow the authors to avoid concerns over covering APCs and provide economies of scale for the institution. In many cases, this option is not yet available and simply a consideration of possible future options.

About 23% of respondents stated that their institution is very or somewhat likely to consider the prepaid option. However, 33% felt that they were somewhat or very unlikely to opt for this. Perhaps most notably, 43% of respondents were currently unsure or neutral about the prediction of their institution's interest in such a deal.

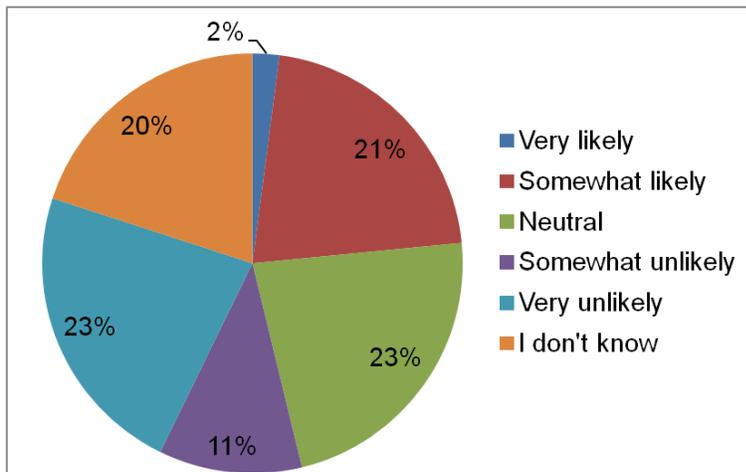


Figure 10: How likely would your institution be to consider prepaying for a bundle of articles should the publisher offer discounts on APCs?

The Librarian's Perspective

At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to write openly about their thoughts on the library's role in encouraging and supporting an open access mandate on campus. While a handful of respondents felt that the library did not need to influence the process in anyway, the vast majority felt that librarians should have an impact. Whether this role is simply to provide information, support an institutional mandate, or fund publications, how librarians view their future involvement is still very much up for debate. The following comments demonstrate the main themes presented in the feedback and varied opinions on the level of library impact:

Education and Advocacy

- *"The library's role is in providing information and training to academic staff and briefing research meetings"*
- *"The library should help researchers collect and promote their publications within institutional repositories, as well as help researchers understand the impact of their research across various channels (traditional + altmetrics)."*
- *"It obviously involves us, and we should be educating people to the current situation so that they have a better grasp for why alternatives are necessary. Beyond that, since we are part of the scholarly communication chain, it is partially our responsibility to inform people about what the results and details of the proposed or actual mandates are."*
- *"In general, libraries can serve education and advocacy efforts. Librarians can instruct faculty on advantages of publishing in OA journals, depository requirements for federally funded research, new research on cost-effective publishing, and legitimate OA publications as opposed to "predatory" journals, and new scholarly metrics that have arisen contemporaneously."*

Funding

- *"Library should be part of the conversation but would need a large increase in funds to be able to support it."*
- *"Libraries should help with the costs but it has to be sustainable and right now there is too much variation."*
- *"The library should encourage OA journals that are of the appropriate quality for the subject covered. The libraries should not be expected to pay fees unless this is funded by the university since these fees are in addition to acquiring materials, not replacing them."*
- *"The library could not offer financial support, but should work to educate the faculty and the university on the importance of freely available research."*
- *"In my institution the library handles all open access payments and also monitors compliance to the MRC open access mandate. We also deposit manuscripts if they are made OA via the green route."*

Leadership

- *[The library should play] a very prominent role if there was funding to do it and interest from top administration at the university. We have experience working with a wide range of publishers and probably have the most knowledge about the open access movement.*
- *"The library should lead and drive the initiative."*
- *"The library should play the lead role in open access. This is a new field for libraries and their position at universities."*



About PCG

Publishers Communication Group (PCG), a division of Publishing Technology plc, is an internationally recognized sales and marketing consulting firm providing a range of services designed to support and drive your sales strategy. From quantum physics to art history, PCG has advocated for scholarly publications and digital content around the world for over 20 years. Our marketing, sales and research professionals have executed successful campaigns, forged relationships with key decision-makers and scrutinized the ever-changing academic marketplace on behalf of over 100 industry clients.

Established in 1990 and headquartered in Boston (USA) with offices in Oxford (UK), São Paulo (Brazil), New Delhi (India) and Beijing (China), PCG's global presence continues to grow to better serve the needs of scholarly publishers. Founded as an independent entity, PCG was acquired by digital publishing pioneer Ingenta in 2001, which preceded the merger of Ingenta and VISTA International in 2007. The resulting LSE-listed Publishing Technology group is today the largest supplier of software and services to the publishing industry.

Drawing on the infrastructure of a world-leading provider, PCG manages strategic sales and marketing operations for publishers ranging from ASM, CABI and BioOne to Elsevier and Bloomsbury, and conducts individual and repeat projects for dozens of other publishers around the world.

Experience

Now in its third decade, PCG has helped publishers launch sales and marketing efforts in new regions, shore up existing business, conduct market research and analysis, and negotiate lucrative consortia deals. Our established network of faculty, library selectors, consortia leaders and end-users, paired with our seasoned, multilingual sales teams makes us an ideal partner for a publisher of any size.

Connections

Our team members have held positions at academic libraries, subscription agents and publishers including Ovid, LexisNexis, EBSCO, the MIT Press, ABC-CLIO, Cengage, NEJM, JBJS, Sage and Taylor & Francis. Our extensive global network includes tens of thousands of library selectors from academic, corporate, medical libraries and consortia worldwide.

Credibility

Our clients include commercial publishers, non-profit associations and electronic services providers. Publishers trust that we will promote their content to the right people and in the most impartial manner possible by providing measurable results and explicit data to help justify marketing expenditure.

For more information visit <http://www.pcgplus.com/>