

Author: François SILLION

Date: June 3, 2016

Reference: 11689

Note n° 11203 is abrogated.

Subject:

**Inria's position on the author-pays model and the management of APC
(Article Processing Charges)**

Nature: Action

To: Members of the management committee, Science delegates, IES delegate

Circulation: Unrestricted

Abstract

This memo describes the difficulties associated with developing the author-pays model in the field of scientific publications and as a result of which, researchers and the institute are wondering about the position to adopt: it clarifies Inria's desire to control costs and risks of abuses.

In the light of the foregoing, the publication in a journal as a paying author must be limited to the principles below:

- Do not pay to publish in a hybrid journal (journal with a subscription);
- Do not pay submission fees, even for an open access journal;
- Only use the Directorate General for Science special budget for paying article processing charges;
- Deposit the final version in open access in HAL;
- Be very vigilant about the nature of the journal and its scientific quality.

Background: changes to the private publishers' model.

Given the current pro open access¹ movement worldwide and the desire of many researchers and research organisations (including Inria) to directly disseminate their productions in publication archives, scientific publishers are proposing alternative economic models which offer free online dissemination of articles on their websites on the publication date². The system where articles are placed on line in exchange for payment from authors is known as the author-pays model, which covers two types of situations:

¹ <http://openaccess.mpg.de/Berlin-Declaration>

² This instance is known as Gold Open Access, a term that embraces both free and paid publications.

- Payment of Article Process Charges (APC) in native Open Access journals: native model;
- Proposal to pay direct online placement charges in journals already available through subscription is known as the hybrid model.

The author-pays model has in fact been explored by Open Access pioneers, such as Harold Varmus, the Nobel Prize for medicine with PLOS (Public Library of Science). Initially, it was perceived as a way of specifically identifying the costs and services associated with a scientific journal. Adopted by numerous private operators and especially the largest publishing houses (such as Springer or Elsevier), it is unfortunately often implemented in a manner that does not primarily seek to promote open access, but rather seems designed to control the open archive dissemination of publications or guarantee protection (or even increase) of their revenues. Since 2013, most new titles with commercial publishers have adopted this model.

Analysis of the situation

An unacceptable business model for a research organisation for two reasons

The logic of the author-pays model was initially described by publishers as the possibility to offer Open Access at a budget equivalent to that of existing subscriptions. However, for a research organisations such as ours, the figures are particularly disturbing: if all Inria's 2014 publications (journal articles and book chapters) had been financed through the author-pays system, at a hypothetical minimum price of €1,000 per article, our **budget would have increased two-fold or more compared to the amount of subscriptions** in the same year (€1.9 million versus €0.83 million).

Furthermore, the very nature of the notion of author-pays leads to a complete **fragmentation of publication costs** since each author, working in isolation, may pay the APC without the Institute having a comprehensive vision of the amounts involved and the possible abuses.

A model with potentially questionable ethics

One of the adverse consequences of the shift to the author-pays model is the emergence of a slew of predator publishers, who offer a rapid publication channel for articles in journals with little or no scientific oversight. Various organisations are trying to identify these publishers and the IES network is ready to provide you with guidance in case of any doubts about a journal in particular. Whatever the case, your decision to publish must be based on your assessment of the scientific quality of the journal.

We have also noticed a significant difference in the amounts of APC requested, which can range from €800 to €7,500 (The Lancet) for instance. These costs do not reflect the actual costs associated with the publication³, but correspond more to the journal's level of popularity. The financial model has gained ground over the scientific model in an ecosystem of fast-growing knowledge.

³ See Assessment of publication costs made within the project
PEER:http://www.peerproject.eu/fileadmin/media/reports/PEER_Economics_Report.pdf

An unnecessary model with regard to our deposit requirement

With respect to the deposit of publications in open access, the author-pays model has no particular interest for an institution such as Inria, which has already introduced an open archive deposit requirement. The placement in open access on the sites of commercial publishers, often combined with restrictive user licenses, neither allows easy identification of our corpus of publications nor recycling of published material for the purpose of data mining.

Protecting the researcher's freedom of publication...

Although Inria considers the author-pays model as an inappropriate answer to the need to improve the current system of scientific publication, there is still no alternative for researchers who wish to publish in specific quality journals, but which require the payment of APC. We do not, therefore, advocate the prohibition of publishing in certain journals, but we recommend controlling as much as possible, the risks associated with this economic model, while encouraging the rapid emergence of other models such as epi-journals, which are based on easier-to-control infrastructures and costs⁴.

Recommendations

Inria's goal is to contain the author-pays model in what we hope is a transition phase towards more sustainable modes of publication from an economic viewpoint and better integrated into our infrastructures for disseminating scientific findings.

One central budget for all APCs

In order to better control the development of the author-pays model inside our community, Inria set up several years ago, a **national budget from which** all APCs, with the exception of budgets for project teams, must be paid.

Rejection of the hybrid publication model

Some commercial publishers⁵ propose, at the time of the publication, a pay option for open access on their site for journals that are available through subscription. We strenuously reject this model (sometimes known as hybrid) which leads to the **double financing of publishers** and bring no added value compared to Inria's deposit requirement.

Monitoring author-pays publications for our community

The IES network has launched an in-depth documentation work on the practices of online journals with the author-pays model. It maintains a resource that can be used to guide researchers who have questions about the opportunity of publishing in a journal based on this model⁶.

Depositing author-paid published articles in HAL

In addition to the normal (and required) deposit of the full text of author manuscripts in the HAL (or arXiv) archive, it is possible to attach the publisher version of the articles for which APCs have been paid. The article must then be deposited with the license under which the document was made available on the publisher's site. In the case of an article published by BioMedCentral, this

⁴ www.episciences.org/.

⁵ For example the Open Choice option with Springer: <http://www.springer.com/gp/open-access/springer-open-choice>

⁶ A page is available on the helpdesk (submit an IES request IES > requests concerning your scientific publications > Author-Pays) and a page concerning the author-pays model is maintained under: <https://intranet.inria.fr/Vie-scientifique/Information-edition-scientifiques/Publier/Publier-dans-une-revue-en-Auteur- Payeur>

deposit is done automatically.

Getting involved in alternative publication models

Inria plainly supports the development of editorial projects using the Episciences platform and is involved in the identification of new editorial models for the publication and certification of scientific findings (tests, software and data) This policy seeks to improve the transparency of scientific evaluation, control over data assessment but also to better identify what, in the process of the publication of research results, falls under public institutions and the private sector.