

Best Practices in Open Access Scholarly Publishing

Poster presentation of ongoing work for a White Paper by the OPERAS Working Group on Best Practices

Introduction

Publishing is a composite activity that includes several components, and the adoption of best practices in academic publishing should address all aspects: service provision to authors, publishing agreements, peer-reviewing, editing, usage of open access licenses, dissemination, metrics and digital preservation. On most of these topics, best practices have been developed by different academic and professional networks, gaining enough consensus to be adopted by OPERAS consortium. Our objective is to identify the most accepted practices for each area and plan for specific actions for their implementation by OPERAS partners.

1 | Transition to OA

The term 'Transition to OA' is understood in different contexts: from the perspective of publishers, librarians, funders, researchers, and bibliometrics. From the perspective of established publishers, it means the transition from subscription-based model to a fully or partially OA model. For libraries, it means making the institutions' research output openly available through an Institutional Repository, and increasingly, negotiating with publishers to achieve OA within the framework of existing agreements. For researchers, it means looking for an OA publication channel or depositing their work in institutional or thematic repositories.

Emerging practices: The **FairOA** alliance for journal editors; the **OA2020** initiative for libraries and consortia; **Knowledge Unlatched** for libraries and publishers.

2 | Authors

Authors who want (or need) to publish their article in open access are confronted with a plethora of choices. There is an increasing range of models besides Gold and Green OA, with a variety of open licenses and embargo periods. Prices range from no-fee to a publication fee of over € 5000 per article. Funders may require OA and be willing to pay for publication charges, but the terms and conditions for payment vary with each individual funder. Last but not least, the emergence of predatory or rogue publishers and their journals complicates things even further.

Best Practices: **DOAJ**, a journal accreditation service for pure OA journals; **DOAB** for OA books; **QOAM** (Quality OA Market) is a marketplace for all kinds of journals with OA options to promote transparency and provide quality indicators; **SherpaRomeo** collects publisher policies on copyright and self-archiving; **ThinkCheckSubmit** is a collaborative initiative to help authors select an appropriate journal.

3 | Publishing Agreements

Open access publishing models require a different approach in the relationship between authors and publishers. New factors in the drafting of publishing agreements include the role of institutional subventions and funder involvement, as well as the rights and responsibilities of publishers under this new model. These may include a requirement to deposit content for preservation or access via a repository, guidelines for iterative updates, or language for describing non-textual objects. Through negotiation with the publisher, authors may retain rights to reuse and further develop their work, increase access for research and educational purposes, and secure proper attribution for reuse.

Supporting resources: The **SPARC Author Addendum** modifies the publisher agreement and allows authors to keep key rights to their articles; the **Model Publishing Agreement** is a sample agreement for long-form digital scholarship and open access publications.

4 | Peer review

Peer review is one of the founding pillars of scholarly publishing to ensure the reliability and validity of the research presented. In the transition to OA, peer review is considered to be a key element to create trust in new publishing models. The growth of science and the advent of e-publishing has presented various flaws in the peer review process and in recent years new practices have emerged where the online techniques and standardization of research information has made it possible to open up the review process for scrutiny by making it more public.

Best practices: **COPE** (the Committee of Publication Ethics) produced widely used guidelines for reviewers and editors; **AUP** (the Association of University Presses) has developed Best Practices for Peer Review.

5 | Editing

In general one can say that the Editors' role varies within specific disciplines (STM and SSH disciplines) and type of output (journals and books). Editors have a central role in the publication process, and in highly specialized fields within SSH and when developing monographs, their contribution to the final publication is crucial. That said, the role and responsibility of editors has been accurately investigated mainly in biomedical science journals sector, but the same guidelines for best practices can be effectively adapted for SSH.

Best practices: **COPE** (the Committee of Publication Ethics) developed The code of conduct; **ICMJE** (the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors) has detailed Roles & Responsibilities.

6 | Usage of open access licenses

The most commonly used OA licenses are the Creative Commons set of licenses. The most open of these is the CC BY license allowing for all types of re-use provided there is proper attribution for the copyright holders (in particular the authors of the work). Although CC BY is widely considered to be the default license for OA articles in STM disciplines, there is no consensus within the SSH community, and this is particularly true for long form publications. Most guides insist on transparency: clear explanations, license on every format (xml, html, pdf, epub) and under every format (human, legal, machine readable), and in addition the license on included materials (figures, tables, data) from third parties.

Best Practices: **How Open Is It?** a guide to identify the level of openness in multiple dimensions; the **FAIR principles** are used for sharing open data; the **OAPEN-UK** team produced the Guide to Creative Commons for Humanities and Social Science Monograph Authors.

7 | Dissemination

Dissemination is a wide and crucial area in publishing, and this is true for OA publishing as well. It consists of combination of activities to ensure distribution and discovery of publications. These activities are carried out in a complex interplay within the industry with a wide range of service providers: vendors and distributors (EBSCO, Proquest, Project MUSE, JSTOR), search engines (Google and Google Scholar), indexing and discovery services, metadata systems (CrossRef, ORCID, MARC and ONIX), library service providers (OCLC, ExLibris), various types of institutional and subject repositories and hosting platforms (PubMed Central and Europe PMC), and preprint servers (arXiv).

Selection of OA infrastructure resources: **DOAJ**, **DOAB**, **BASE**, **OpenAIRE**, **PubMed**, **KU online services**, **JSTOR Open**, **OpenEdition**, **OAPEN**.

8 | Metrics

Traditional academic publications metrics gathering and evaluation has been more evolved in journal publishing, and therefore also in STEM subjects. This has focused in particular on Journal Impact Factor. However, journal-based citation rates as a measure for an individual article quality are increasingly considered to be inadequate, and as technology improved, alternative article-level metrics have been developed, based on views/downloads, social media mentions, and other metrics in addition to more comprehensive list of citations.

Emerging practises: In general, transparency is important and this should include how usage metrics are aggregated, how chapter-level metrics are rolled-up into book-level metrics, and the mechanism to count downloads and views. **COUNTER** is a standard for counting views/downloads; **CrossRef Event Tracker** provides DOI event data; the **OPERAS** project **HIRMEOS** is developing a service for OA books.

9 | Digital preservation

As content is increasingly born digital and accessed online by researchers, students, and readers, ensuring preservation of that content is critical. Regardless of the business model behind a publication, the publisher should take responsibility for preserving the scholarly record through participation in trusted preservation initiatives. Digital preservation initiatives exist to ensure continuation of access to content in the event that a publisher is no longer able to provide access.

Best Practices: **CLOCKSS** (Controlled Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) is a preservation initiative run out of Stanford University; **Portico** is part of Ithaka, a non-profit serving the academic community; **The Keepers Registry** acts as a global monitor of where (and if) content is being preserved.