Submission Fees in Open Access Journals

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Project objectives & sponsors

• Objective: to examine how submission fees might contribute to a move towards Open Access

• Project sponsor: Knowledge Exchange (JISC, SURF, DFG, DEFF)
Methodology

• literature survey

• initial interviews (mostly journal editors and publishers)

• develop/refine possible models

• semi-structured interviews (publishers, librarians, research funders, research institutions, and individual researchers)

• some 40 interviews in total
## Submission fee models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wellcome Trust</td>
<td>submission fee + larger article processing charge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Leslie”</td>
<td>as WT, plus payments to referees (meeting standards), refunds for accepted articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bepress</td>
<td>submission fee payment “in kind” by refereeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission fee only</td>
<td>i.e. no article processing charge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some journals using submission fees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>OA?</th>
<th>SubFee</th>
<th>IF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Am Physiol Soc journals ×14</td>
<td>Am Physiol Society</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer Research</td>
<td>AACR</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASEB Journal</td>
<td>FASEB</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hereditas</td>
<td>Wiley</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas in Ecology &amp; Evolution</td>
<td>Queens U</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Bone Mineral Research</td>
<td>Wiley</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Clinical Investigation</td>
<td>ASCI</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Immunology</td>
<td>Am Assoc Immunol</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50 / 0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Investigative Dermatology</td>
<td>NPG</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Economic Review</td>
<td>AER</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>200 / 100</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE J Theoretical Economics</td>
<td>bepress</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>75/350/175</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Finance</td>
<td>Wiley/AFA</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>140 / 70</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Political Economy</td>
<td>Chicago UP</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>125 / 75</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advantages cited / I

• deters frivolous, premature, unrealistic or "long-shot" submissions
• reduces total load on all reviewers and editors
• improves journal quality
• greater fairness (i.e. all authors contribute to reviewing costs)
• better allocation of scarce resources
• better scalability with growth of research output
Advantages cited /2

- a viable economic model for OA journals with very high rejection rates
- article processing charge can be set independently of the rejection rate
- article processing charge can be set as low as possible
Disadvantages cited

• it might deter authors

• lack of clarity on whether funders would allow the charges to be reimbursed

• possible impacts on authors without research funds or from poorer economies etc.

• need for systems to collect and administer the payments and their reimbursement
A “better” business model?

- high rejection rate journals
- increase OA journal revenues
- reduce risk
- impact on submissions
- strategic fit
Modelling: some examples

- different kinds of OA journal
- APCs
- submission fees
- rejection without peer review
- rejection rates
- deterrence effect on authors (fixed + variable)
- transaction costs
Example: Journal A

- Prestigious, high rejection-rate OA journal
  - APC = $2500
- 4000 submissions, 390 accepted (~10%)

With submission fees (constant revenue):
- APC = $1150, SF = $150 (all submissions charged)
- APC = $1550, SF = $150 (peer-reviewed submissions charged)
Example: Journal B

- Good quality second-tier journal
- APC = $2000
- 1000 submissions, 280 accepted (28%)

With submission fees
- APC = $1550, SF = $150 (all submissions charged)
- APC = $1650, SF = $150 (peer-reviewed submissions charged)
Example: Journal C

- Journal closer to average for STM journals
  - APC = $1500
- 300 submissions, 140 accepted (46%)
- With submission fees
  - APC = $1400, SF = $100 (all submissions charged)
  - APC = $1450, SF = $100 (peer-reviewed submissions charged)
Support for submission fees

- mixed views
- lack of buy-in from publishers
- risks outweighed benefits for OA publishers
- alternative approaches preferred
Conclusions

• more journals already using than many publishers realise

• real business advantages (in principle?)

• provided journal rejection rate is >=70%

• authors may be more willing than publishers assume

• but advantages may not be sufficient to outweigh risks?
Practical issues for adoption

• how to make palatable to authors
• easiest to introduce in fields where already familiar
• payment collection mechanisms
• testing author acceptance
Further information

• Report will be published by Knowledge Exchange shortly – watch for press release!

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