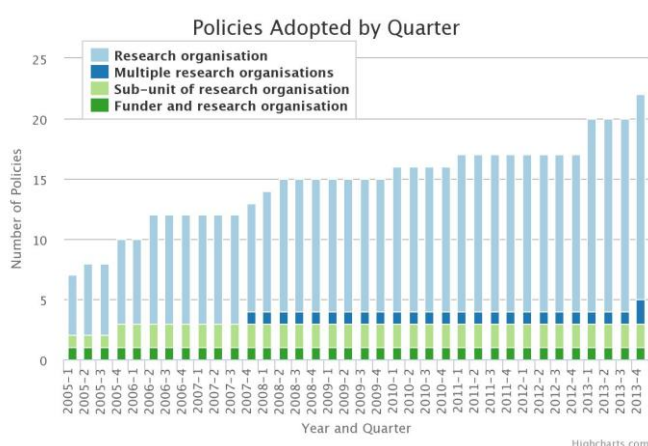# Open Access Policies: Aligning Strategies and Services

Birgit Schmidt

Introduction

Early on in the new millenium, institutions began to invent policies which aimed at maximizing access, dissemination and (re)use of research results via open access. Open access makes research findings available free of charge to readers and is a core element of open science strategies, e.g. those of the European Commission. Since then open access policies have been steadily growing in number, with now a total of over 600, some of them already the second or third iteration (cf. Figure 1)[1-3]

Figure 1. Open access policies world-wide

However, what is the rationale for an institution to care about open access policies and their implementation? On the one hand there are certainly already enough regulations and institutional agendas, on the other, such a policy can be a good instrument to formulate a common goal and to set a framework for actually achieving this goal. Such a policy will need to involve a wide range of stakeholders to be successful: in particular researchers, research managers and administrators, and librarians. To not unduly increase the administrative burden or create confusion alignment with existing funder mandates is advisable. Most prominently, the European Commission's Open Access Mandate[3], and national policies need to be taken into account.

Core questions for setting up and implementing an open access policy are:
- Who is responsible for the implementation, what actions are expected from whom?
- How strong is the policy (e.g. an encouragement or a mandate)?
- How is the progress assessed, and by whom?
- What resources are available to support the implementation of the policy, e.g. human support (research administrators, librarians), infrastructure, a fund to support open access publishing?

On the cost side, human resources for making open access happen have been estimated: on average, the green route accounts for about 48 minutes staff time (author and administrators) while the gold route takes about 2 hours (varying from 40 minutes to over 5 hours) – the latter also due to the fact that processing invoices needs a lot of tracking on the side of institutions and processes on the side of publishers need further streamlining.[4]

Stakeholder viewpoints

Researchers make their choice on what, when, and where to publish, based on their preferences such as outreach and impact, and their experiences with the respective journal or publisher. In these decisions, open access might be factored in but typically only plays a minor role, with less than every second respondent (45%) in a world-wide survey conducted by the EC-funded Study of Open Access Publishing (SOAP) project felt this factor either "important" or "extremely important".[3] Most recently, based on the growing number of funder mandates, researchers and support staff such as research administrators and librarians increasingly need to be aware what options for open access are available.

The Wellcome Trust, a large UK-based science funder, set up an open access policy already in 2006, followed by a data policy in 2007. The open access policy mandates deposit in Europe PubMed Central (formerly UK PubMed Central), a disciplinary repository co-funded by about a dozen research funders. In addition, funded researchers are encouraged to publish their peer-reviewed articles, books and book chapters via gold open access routes, the costs being met by the Wellcome Trust in addition to the funds allocated to the project for research purposes. How do these articles reach the repository? Typically, articles are deposited by journals and publishers, and a small share by researchers themselves. The OA mandate is certainly

one of the most successful ones world-wide, with a compliance rate of c 70%, up from c 55% in March 2012 when a stricter enforcement was introduced. The sanctions introduced by Wellcome include a measure to withold the final 10 per cent of the total project budget that will only be transferred as soon as all papers comply. Robert Kiley, Head of Digital Services Wellcome Library and Wellcome Trust, reported that by mid-March 2015 the final payment on grants has been withheld on 111 occasions (44 times on 2013, 48 times in 2014 and 19 times so far in 2015). This policy has resulted in a spend of about £3.9 million in 2012-13 and just under £4.7 million in 2013-14, on average £1,241 for fully OA articles, and £2,030 for articles in hybrid journals (i.e. article-wise open access in subscription-based journals). However, despite these high payments some journals do not offer what they are paid for, and as a consequence several articles are not yet available in Europe PMC and/or are published under a different license than the mandatory Creative Commons CC-BY license. Overall, only 61% of all articles of the period under review are fully compliant.[5]

When it comes to institutional policies, a recent survey among European University Association (EUA) members (106 responses of 783 members, i.e. 13.5%) found that 9 in 10 universities either have an open access policy in place, are in the process of developing one or are planning its development.[6] Encouraging researchers to deposit their publications in an institutional or shared repository is the main element of their OA policy for over 3/5 of all responding institutions. Eight in ten universities have an institutional or shared repository in place. It is unsurprising that the barriers highlighted by respondents include concerns about copyright and uncertainty about publishers' self-archiving policies.

One strategy to secure high deposit rates in repositories is to combine the upload of author manuscripts with research reporting – which can be very successful, as the full text rate of over 80% at University of Liège demonstrates. However, a smaller share of 37% is available in open access. To fill this gap the „immediate deposit / optional access" principle encourages researchers to deposit their articles immediately at the time of publication, and if an access embargo applies the author can be contacted via a „request-a-copy-button" (who in turn pressed a button to grant access). Another success story is certainly the OA policy of CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research. CERN is committed to open access and collect preprints of most of its research output. In addition, the agreements of the SCOAP3 initiative have converted journals in the field high-energy physics articles to open access, at no costs for any author worldwide. With a status at present at about 90-95% in 2015, and supplemented by central funds and agreements the aim is to reach 100% OA by the end of

2016.[7] At the University of Göttingen, the goal is less ambitious: since 2005 an encouraging OA policy has been in place which is based on support and infrastructure provided by the university library. The Electronic Publishing department combines advocacy activities on the institutional, national and international level, provides access to publishing services (repositories, a university press), manages a publication fund and agreements with publishers and provides information and consulting services. Most recently, the launch of the research data policy (as of August 2014) has been helpful to also add open access to the agenda of large collaborative projects which are asked to develop a strategy for research data and OA to publications. In addition, collaboration between the research office and the library is instrumental for supporting the implementation of the OA mandate of European Commission.

Publication funds are emerging in several countries, often based on co-funding by major research funders, e.g. via block grants of the research councils in the UK, the German Research Foundation (DFG) or the Norwegian Research Council. These funds come with rules set by the main sponsor – which may include price caps and in some cases the exclusion of hybrid journals (e.g. Germany, Norway). Aggregating data across 23 German institutions, it turns out that a median amount of about 1,200 EUR has been paid per article for an overall 3,064 articles in 2014. Some of these institutions have already set up additional agreements with faculties and topped-up the publication fund to cover a larger amount of articles, allow fees beyond the price cap and/or exceptions of other kind. A question still to be solved is the sustainability of the publication funds as the co-funding of the DFG is limited to a 5-year funding period.

Ideally, these stakeholders are not just the core target of the open access policy but the main advocates for securing its success, as only then the benefits of open science will be fully realized.

National Strategies and Alignment
National policies typically set common rules while also promoting a specific joint strategy for open access. In the UK, since the publication of the Finch Report, the goal is clearly to push for the gold OA route. Since 2014 the Netherlands are also taking further measures to establish the gold route as the major instrument to realize open access. Other countries, such as Ireland and Portugal rely more on the green OA route – not least for economic reasons – with a mature established repository and research information infrastructure in place. The EC's Communications of July 2012 asked EU Member States to further develop and align their open access policies. Results of PASTEUR4OA show that all Nordic countries have already aligned their OA policies with that of the EC, 75% of the countries within South

Western Europe, 43% within the North Western Europe and 33% within the Eastern European region.[8]

Findings of PASTEUR4OA verify that there is a significant correlation between deposit rates in repositories with clauses in open access policies, i.e. those that express a mandatory nature: „must deposit" or „cannot waive deposit". In addition, there is a significant correlation between deposit rates and research evaluation, however, these full-text deposits are not necessarily openly available.[2]

Conclusions

Although open access policies are already widely established and have proven to be effective there remains work to be done: through improved advocacy and support as well as via removing obstacles in the scholarly communication and publishing system. Publishers are offering a wide range of open access publishing options today, but remain very cautious about immediate green open access deposits in repositories. Elsevier's recent change of its sharing policy, was denounced by the library and research infrastructure community demanding Elsevier to revise it.

After ten years' experience of open access policies, one can conclude that such policies need constant monitoring and rethinking of strategies, in particular for involving crucial stakeholders. Links between policies, e.g. for publications and data, and principles for good research conduct can play out well if policies are aligned and offer benefits not just another burden to the researcher. When research groups start to engage with the policy and translate it to their own situation as well how to make the best use of available support and resources this is a crucial step towards regaining control of scholarly communication in the spirit of open science.

References

1. European Commission, Policy: Open Science (Open Access), available at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/index.cfm?pg=policy&lib=science [Accessed 6 June 2015].
2. Alma Swan et al. Working Together to Promote Open Access Policy Alignment in Europe – Synthesis Report, PASTEUR4OA, March 2015, available at: http://www.pasteur4oa.eu/deliverables [Accessed 6 June 2015].
3. ROARMAP, http://roarmap.eprints.org/ [Accessed 6 June 2015].
4. Research Consulting: Counting the Costs. Report on behalf of London Higher and SPARC Europe, London, November 2014, p. 11–12, available at: http://www.researchconsulting.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Research-Consulting-Counting-the-Costs-of-OA-Final.pdf [Accessed 6 June 2015].
5. Wellcome Trust: The Reckoning: An Analysis of Wellcome Trust Open Access Spend 2013-14, 3 March 2015, available at: http://blog.wellcome.ac.uk/2015/03/03/the-reckoning-an-analysis-of-wellcome-trust-open-access-spend-2013-14/ [Accessed 6 June 2015].
6. Phil Davis. SOAP Survey Requires Clean Interpretation of Data. Scholarly Kitchen Blog, 2 February 2011, available at: http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2011/02/02/soap-open-access-survey/ [Accessed 6 June 2015]
7. CERN. Open Access Policy for CERN Physics Publications, 16 October 2014. Available at: https://cds.cern.ch/record/1955574/files/CERN-OPEN-2014-049.pdf [Accessed 6 June 2015].
8. PASTEUR4OA, Briefing paper for experts' meeting, November 2014, available at: http://www.pasteur4oa.eu/deliverables [Accessed 6 June 2015].

Cover Picture:
'Salt Pans'
Watercolour
By Bertha Darmanin

Bertha was born in 1954 and works within the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Malta. She studied art privately with local artists and attended various courses set up by foreign artists. She participated in a number of collective exhibitions and her works may be found in both local and foreign locations. Her preferred medium is watercolour.