

THE OPEN ACCESS PUBLICATION FUND AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TROMSØ

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When the board of the University of Tromsø adopted an Open Access policy for the institution in October 2010, they also decided to look into the possibilities for establishing a publication fund when approving the 2011 internal distribution of funding to faculties and other units. In the December meeting of the board, NOK 300 000 was assigned to a publication fund.

A publication fund - in this context - is a fund that pays the fees an author has to pay in an Open Access (OA) journal, to have an article published. Publishing in Toll Access (TA) journals, i.e. journals that are financed by subscriptions, is normally free for an author, while publishing in OA journals normally requires a payment to the journal. A central publication funds ensures that TA publishing isn't favoured by authors because of the cost difference to the author, and that competition among OA and TA publishers for authors is a fair one where neither form of publishing has an in-built disadvantage.

Deciding on formal and detailed rules and procedures for the fund was left to the Department of Research and Development and the University Library. Through some internal discussions the two departments worked out a common understanding of how this should work, and decided on a short and simple set of rules. The University Library will be the department to receive applications and to decide whether to grant funding or not for a given article.

Among the points discussed, were:

- ❖ The importance of not starting out with a very restrictive set of rules. An important issue in an early stage is to gain experience with what needs researchers actually have, that such a fund could help alleviate. Restrictive rules at the outset would mean less access to this kind of insight. Instead, we will monitor the use of money from the fund closely and impose stricter rules or financial constraints if we see that this will be needed.
- ❖ What kind of costs should be eligible? We decided that all kind of costs associated with technical aspects of the articles, like page charges, colour charges, illustration charges, etc. would not be eligible, as this kind of charges would be equally applicable to OA and TA articles. Any kind of article submission or processing charge connected to OA articles would be eligible.
- ❖ For financial reasons we decided not to support hybrid articles, i.e. OA articles in journals that generally are financed by a subscription model but lets authors pay a fee to make an individual article OA. While there is much scepticism to this model among the OA community, there is probably some demand for this among researchers. Given the size of our fund, and the rather stiff per article charge we usually see for hybrid articles, we could not risk financing them at this stage. We do, however, see this as an issue to be looked further into at a later stage.
- ❖ Should we have any other restrictions as to what kind of journals we would support fees in? The goal for us is to support scientific publishing. In Norway, journals have to be accredited for articles to count towards financing the author's institution. (A major requirement for journals to be accredited is that they perform peer review.) Whether a journal is accredited is easy to find out through an official webpage of the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD); <http://dbh.nsd.uib.no/kanaler/>. We see it as an important sign of commitment to Open Access, that journals are registered with DOAJ; this is also a kind of information that it is easy to check on for authors. Some US publication funds require publishers to be members of OASPA for their journals to be eligible. This, we think, is too strict a requirement, and the information is not easy for an author to find. We have decided that to be eligible, journals have a) to be accredited in the Norwegian financing system and b) registered with DOAJ.

- ❖ If the research the article is based on, has received external financing, we see it as natural that the external sources of financing also finances the publishing of the research findings. One important lesson reported from some of the US funds, is that the fund gives the institution a good chance of teaching researchers how to find financing for APCs in their external funds.
- ❖ We want to minimize the administrative work resulting from the fund; it should help researchers, not expand administration. An important question is what to do with articles with multiple authors where one or more is from another institution? One model is to divide the APC between the institutions involved, based on the institution's number of authors divided by the total number of authors. Anyone conversant with the costs of processing invoices in institutions like universities will know it is costly. A policy based on splitting bills in fractions will add significant administrative costs to the APC, in amounts that could easily become larger than the APC itself. We therefore decided that our fund would either pay the whole bill, or nothing. We decided, after talking with Lund University Library and seeing that this was a strategy that would fit well with publisher's billing strategy, to pay the whole bill if the corresponding author comes from our institution. If the corresponding author came from another institution we will not pay anything, even if that institution has a policy of splitting bills. Our hope is that a "non-splitting" policy also will be adopted by future funds in other institutions, as this will be cost-saving to us all.
- ❖ To qualify as an author from the University of Tromsø you have to be connected to us in such a way that the article in question can be registered as (partially) belonging to the University of Tromsø in the national CRIS Cristin. This means any kind of status as an employee (in any position and in any fraction of a full position) or as a student.
- ❖ A cost-saving perspective also resulted in a decision that the University Library's decisions on granting or not granting funding from the publishing fund are inappellable. The administrative cost of preparing a formal complaint for another body will easily be just as high as that of the APC itself. Instead, all decisions of the library administration on funding or not funding APCs from the fund will be reviewed by a committee at a later stage, to ensure that decisions are loyal to the idea behind the fund. And, of course, rules or not – nothing can stop anyone from complaining about decisions they do not like ...
- ❖ Many publication funds have limits to how much they fund. A cap on how much they fund per article is very common, a cap on how much funding a single author can get in a year is not uncommon. We see no reason that prolific authorship should be a handicap, so there is no cap on how much support a single author can get. In principle, a cap on how much support one can get per article makes sense. This will make expensive journals more expensive to the author than cheaper ones, and will increase the possibility of price competition between journals. At this stage, however, getting authors to publish OA is more important than steering them towards the right journals. A cap or a partial funding of APCs could be imposed if we see that the fund is too small to accommodate all needs.
- ❖ We also require authors who receive support from the fund to self-archive their article in the national CRIS Cristin, so that the full-text can be disseminated also through our institutional repository Munin.

We have published the rules and a one-page application form on the web. The application form embeds links to DOAJ and the registry of accredited journals, so that applicants easily can check out that journals meet our requirements. We accept applications by e-mail, and inform our applicants of our decisions also by e-mail. Our goal is to answer applications within 5 working days from receiving them.

At the time of writing, we have had only one application, which was granted. We have tried to reach our scientists both by e-mail and by information on the web, also through the research administrators on the faculties. Hopefully, scientists in need of this

funding will find the fund and apply. An ideal situation is one in which the fund is fully used at the end of the year, while no application has been turned down and no cap has been introduced due to lack of funds. Such an ideal state is difficult to reach ...



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