

BA event on open-access publishing

Introduction:

Two perspectives (see biography):

1. Academic manager within HSS disciplines within UK HEI
2. Editor of society-owned (but commercially published) HSS journal

BUT: not speaking on behalf of UoS or of PhilSoc.

No challenge to general case for OA; acceptance of broad issues which mean it's not straightforward.

Clear sense that Finch proposals are best suited to publishing 'ecology' as found in science disciplines (picked up in recent open letter circulated by president of Royal Historical Society).

Try to concentrate on issues specific to HSS, but not always possible.

Some issues already picked up in Finch report, so no claim for novelty!

Finch report: lots about transition (at least in early sections); but still need to identify nature of ‘ecology’ to which we are transitioning to:

Pure OA? Hybrid journals? Mixed economy of entirely OA and entirely subscription journals? Just broader licensing? More flexible use/re-use?

Who’ll get to decide? Impact of policy changes: eg REF 2020 output submissibility criteria, RCUK funding application eligibility criteria? Disincentive away from non-OA (= monographs, edited volumes, publishing outside UK) for UK researchers in HE?

1. Academic manager

Managing resources; aligning expenditure to strategic priorities; funding APCs.

Positive messages re budgeting for APCs within research grants (Wellcome; RCUK).

Different situation for HSS researchers; many not working with direct grant funding (which possibly explains why OA has been relatively slow to take off in HSS); dilute QR further to fund APCs?; already stretched in much of sector as consequence of greater concentration/selectivity of research funding, and

nowhere near covers fEC of staff time spent on research.

Therefore tough decisions.

Consequences for UK-based HSS researchers' publishing plans? Goal of securing publication of research results in highest-status outlets to aid career progression / readership / impact / future funding.

Concern that HSS publishing plans should be curtailed by (a) restrictions on how much they can publish or (b) restrictions on where they can publish.

- (a) How much: RAE/REF regime, four publications; why fund someone to publish more than four? BUT: if change = from reader pays to author pays, and if (in reader pays) readers aren't constrained on how much they read, then (in author pays) authors shouldn't necessarily be constrained on how much they publish. Idea of institutional subscription (for authoring rather than reading) to specific journals. Unduly restrictive? Better still, something akin to Pilot Site Licensing Initiative from 1990s (Finch not very optimistic).
- (b) Where: pressure to publish in journals with low APCs; nervousness re universities' greater influence over channels chosen to

publish/disseminate; challenge to academic freedom?

Issues therefore essentially financial; reality would depend on certain issues being resolved:

Shift from subscription to APC; institutional subscription expenditure should fall as APC expenditure rises; zero-sum game? Depends on nature of institution; less research-intensive HEIs likely to benefit.

What happens to subscription level of journal which becomes hybrid? Does it drop in line with proportion of articles published under OA with APCs? If not, then we have 'double dipping' (potential for charging twice, both through APC and subscription).

But if senior managers in universities are in any case looking for cuts, falls in journal subscriptions might not necessarily free up funding to cover APCs.

2. Journal editor

Editor of *TPhS* since 2001; *TPhS* = title owned by PhilSoc, but published by WB; cf. titles (*JL*, *JFLS*) which are associated with society but owned by

publisher (both = CUP); cf. titles owned and published by Society.

Societies which own their title have more control over how journal is run, and can ultimately take their journal to whichever publisher offers 'best' deal ('best' = best aligned to strategic priorities and values) (which is why society journal editors are regularly contacted by publishers).

Finch: learned societies = more significant role in research ecology in UK than elsewhere, not just communicating results of research, but also taking research beyond academy, nurturing early-career researchers, promoting collegiality.

PhilSoc = registered charity.

Relies on income from *TPhS* to fund charitable/scholarly activities: publishing scholarly monographs (more significant in HSS than eg STEM) concentrating on titles unlikely to interest commercial/university press (and has in the past been known to point proposals in direction of commercial/university press where market has been deemed strong enough); awards to students to cover conference attendance, fieldwork, PGT tuition fees; essay prizes; travel/accommodation for speakers at regular meetings and special thematic events, inc.

interdisciplinary; ‘enrichment’ activities with secondary school sector to promote study in relevant disciplines (including in partnership with other charitable organisations); promotion of UK research base internationally; more recently, joint events with BA.

Public record: PhilSoc income = approx. £60k annually; approx. 75% = from charitable activities (inc. royalties from individual institutional *TPhS* subscriptions, as well as various ‘big deals’ and PPV). Income covers cost of other charitable activities with approx. 10% to spare; further approx. 14% of PhilSoc income = from member subscriptions; marketing efforts recently reinforced (with WB); membership risen 62% over last decade, doubtless achieved in part by ‘free’ hard-copy and online access of *TPhS* included in membership package.

OA therefore represents threat to both income streams, and therefore to programme of charitable/scholarly activities.

Issues specific to HSS:

- (a) Significance of journal article as mode of publishing:

In much (but not all) of HSS, monographs (inc. edited volumes) = regarded as most important research communication channel; ?correlates to significance of

book review publishing in HSS journals (albeit not *TPhS*), for which no APC would be payable, thereby increasing APC for research articles; further challenge = special thematic issues of journals with invited contributors: do they pay APCs?

(b) article lengths:

HSS articles are longer.

First WB OA journal: *Brain & Behaviour*. Vol. 2.5: 13 articles over 136pp = 10.5pp per article. APC = £1625 (10% or 20% discounts available).

TPhS: vol. 110.1/2: 12 articles over 310pp = 26pp per article.

Cf. Finch observation: HSS = one-third of journals but only 16% of articles.

Impact on APC needed to be charged (although doubtless not a linear relationship between article length and genuine cost of publishing).

(c) article 'half life':

typically longer in HSS than 6/12/24-month periods envisaged as acceptable embargo periods in Finch; in top-ten downloaded articles in *TPhS* in 2011 were one article from 2004 and one from 1999.

Significant numbers of librarians indicate that they would cancel some (42%) or all (23%) HSS journal subscriptions if embargoes were reduced to six months: further threat to income.

- (d) Significance of independent scholars, and early-career scholars are article authors:

Nature of HSS research = often such that researchers don't need institutional infrastructure to support work; similarly, and also to enhance their future employability, HSS graduate students are encouraged to start their publishing careers before securing an institutional affiliation likely to be willing to cover APCs (cf. *TPhS* Robins Prize). = problem re where APCs will be funded from.

Few HSS learned societies have established fully OA journals.