St Andrews Library Open Access Fund: Business case and criteria

The University of St Andrews has been in receipt of funds for open access for a number of years from external funders, and currently the University Library manages funds from Wellcome Trust (the Charities Open Access Fund) and Research Councils UK.

The University of St Andrews is strongly committed to ensuring the widest possible access to its research. Our Open Access position statement[1] includes "The University believes that the UK should adopt an approach to Open Access that supports and is credible to researchers, is sustainable and makes the best use of resources. Our academics, researchers, staff and students must be free to publish in the venue of their choice." This last point is key, and embodies the University's views on academic freedom. We firmly believe researchers should choose the publication venue that will bring their work to the widest and most appropriate audience and is the driver that led us to propose an additional institutional open access fund.

If an author decides that a fully open access journal is the best venue for their work, we do not want there to be any barriers to publishing. If such a journal charges fees to publish (Article Processing Charges), then this could be a barrier if the author is not in receipt of grant funding. This is common in particular for early career researchers and those in Arts and Humanities, and we wanted to ensure that publishing choices were supported as widely as possible, not just for those supported by RCUK and COAF or funders such as the EU who allow APCs to be claimed from grants. We therefore proposed a model where researchers could apply for funds specifically when they wish to publish in a journal which is only available in open access form and which requires payment of a publishing fee.

We made this case in 2014, and were allocated £25k to the Library budget as the Library Open Access Fund (LOAF). We clearly laid out our criteria, and publicised via Library web pages[2]:

Researchers should claim OA fees from central funds, individual grants or School funds wherever possible. Where no funds are available, the Library will consider supporting open access costs that meet the following criteria:

- the submitting author is a member of University of St Andrews staff
- the journal or publishing venue is completely open access (i.e. 'hybrid' journals are not included)
- the journal meets the usual standards of quality and peer review for scholarly communication
- the author is required to pay a fee in order to publish
- the author confirms there is no other source of funding
- where possible, the resulting publication should be made available under a Creative Commons (CC-BY) licence
- new open access 'business models' will be considered, such as the PeerJ model which requires author membership fees instead of the more common Article Processing Charges (APCs).

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[1] http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/services/researchsupport/openaccess/oapolicy/
[2] http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/services/researchsupport/openaccess/oafunding/options/#d.en.235616

In addition to covering APCs, the intention of this fund was to promote and encourage new and innovative open access models. We were able to protect the allocation and increase it to £30k in 2015/16 and at that stage allocate a specific account code to more easily track spend. This means we have also been able to support exciting new projects including Knowledge Unlatched[3] and Open Library for Humanities (OLH) Library Partnership[4].

A new development is to consider how we can manage 'off-setting' arrangements through this account. Where we can clearly identify OA costs and help relieve pressure on subscription budgets, then LOAF can be used to contribute to publisher charges. Equally, where refunds are provided by publishers on the basis of prior spend, the funds can be directed into LOAF to be used to support future open access claims. In this way we hope to encourage and support a transition to open access that is sustainable and achievable.

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[3] http://www.knowledgeunlatched.org/
[4] https://about.openlibhums.org/2014/04/07/library-partnership-subsidies-lps/