

ALPSP principles of scholarship-friendly journal publishing practice

The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (www.alpssp.org) is the international trade association for not-for-profit publishers and those who work with them to disseminate scholarly and professional information in journals, books and other media.

This document results from a series of analyses which ALPSP has carried out of the needs of authors and readers, and of the practices of scholarly journal publishers. It is intended as a guide to those practices which may best serve the interests of scholarship, without damaging publishers' ability to continue to provide the value which they add.

Scholarly journal publishers understand that authors are their life-blood, and that satisfying the needs of their authors is paramount; the needs of readers and institutions are also key, and, in fact, authors and readers are often the same people. In satisfying these needs, we believe that publishers add considerable value to scholarly information; however, adding that value costs money, and this has to be paid for at some point in the information chain if publishers are to continue to add that value. (In addition, learned societies in many cases need publishing surpluses in order to support their other community services, such as low membership dues, conferences, travel bursaries, research and other grants and public education.)

The needs of authors

Our own surveys^{1,2} have shown that two needs are of equally great importance to authors: maximum dissemination of their work, and publication in the most prestigious journal possible.

1) Dissemination

1.1 Dissemination by the author

It is in publishers' as well as authors' interest to maximise access to authors' work. There are many good examples of author agreements which enable authors to retain the rights which are particularly important to them:³

1.1.1 Posting of preprints

According to our own survey of 149 publishers, including all the leading players⁴, nearly 50% of publishers have no problem with authors posting a preprint or submission version of their article on one or more of their own, their institution's or a disciplinary website or repository, although some impose certain conditions such as requiring a link to the published version⁵. So far, experience in those

¹ Alma Swan and Sheridan Brown, 'What Authors Want: the ALPSP research study on the motivations and concerns of contributors to learned journals', ALPSP, West Sussex, 1999

² Alma Swan and Sheridan Brown, 'Authors and Electronic Publishing: the ALPSP research study on authors' and readers' views of electronic research communication', ALPSP, West Sussex, 2002

³ See the Zwole Group site at <http://www.surf.nl/copyright> and Project RoMEO at <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ls/disresearch/romeo/> for numerous examples

⁴ John Cox and Laura Cox, 'Scholarly Publishing Practice: the ALPSP report on academic journal publishers' policies and practices in online publishing', ALPSP, West Sussex, 2003

⁵ 27 (1/3) of the 80 publishers in the RoMEO survey permitted this

(relatively few) fields – such as high energy physics⁶ - where such repositories are active suggests that there is little or no damage to subscription or licensing income from the research journals.

1.1.2 Posting of final version

Our survey⁷ shows that over 60% of publishers allow authors to post the final, published version of their article on websites or repositories⁸, some even providing the PDF for this purpose. Although some speculate that increasing use of OAI-compliant metadata will ultimately enable such posting to undermine subscription and licence income, this does not seem to be the case so far.

1.1.3 Re-use for teaching purposes

The vast majority (over 70%) of publishers are happy to allow authors to re-use their material for educational purposes within their own institution; some explicitly allow the institution to retain this right if the author moves elsewhere. Authors are not usually required to seek permission for such use; this saves both author and publisher time.

1.1.1 Re-use in own publications

Over 40% of publishers also have no problem with authors re-using their work in subsequent publications or presentations, provided the source is properly acknowledged; most if not all will grant such permission free of charge on request, and many explicitly state that the author does not need to seek permission in advance.

1.1.5 Retention of copyright

The actual retention of copyright in itself does not appear to be a burning concern for authors and, provided the agreement with the publisher permits both author and publisher to do the things they need to do,⁹ the actual ownership of copyright may not matter. Indeed, there is a case for publishers holding copyright in order to act as speedily and forcefully as possible to defend both their and the author's interest in cases of plagiarism¹⁰.

1.2 Dissemination by the publisher

Maximising access to authors' work is good for the publisher as well as the author, provided it does not undermine the publisher's financial model. Most publishers are finding a variety of ways to make more content available to more people

1.2.1 Marketing

Publishers will ensure that their journals are as widely known as possible throughout the world, including carrying out direct promotion to potential authors, readers and subscribers, and attending and exhibiting at relevant conferences. Publishers also ensure that references are linkable (i.e. correct) and are in fact linked, using a technology such as CrossRef, to the cited material; they also ensure maximum retrievability by establishing bi-directional links with the appropriate abstracting and indexing databases

⁶ See <http://arxiv.org/>

⁷ John Cox and Laura Cox, 'Scholarly Publishing Practice: the ALPSP report on academic journal publishers' policies and practices in online publishing', ALPSP, West Sussex, 2003

⁸ 27 (1/3) of the 80 publishers in the RoMEO survey permitted this

⁹ See, for example, the ALPSP 'Model Grant of Licence' at http://www.alpsp.org/http_grantli.htm

¹⁰ Martin Blume, 'On Who Should Own Copyright in Scientific Papers' (paper given at Zwolle 2 conference, December 2002), <http://www.surf.nl/copyright/zwolle/2002dec/Blume%20OnWhoShouldOwn.pdf>

1.2.2 Licences

The majority of scholarly journals (75% in our recent study¹¹) are now online, and the publishers of many of the remainder expect to put them online in the near future – demand has been slower to build up in the arts and humanities, for a variety of reasons, than in science, technology and medicine. The growth of model licences, often developed in close collaboration between publishers and libraries, has helped publishers to develop their own scholarship-friendly licences.¹²

Publishers' licences for their online journals commonly include a number of valuable rights which were not automatic, or not possible, with print journals:

- Off-site access for remote users
- The creation of course packs and electronic reserves without having to seek further permission
- Inter-library document supply using printed out and, in many cases, electronic copies

Larger publishers can offer 'bundles' of all their titles, thus offering access to previously unsubscribed content for a small additional charge (evidence shows that such content is often more heavily used than expected^{13,14}). Many publishers also offer licences to all the libraries in a consortium for little more than was previously spent on individual subscriptions, thus opening up access for many more people. Smaller publishers can participate in multi-publisher collections, such as the ALPSP Learned Journals Collection¹⁵, BioOne, Project Muse or the American Institute of Physics, to sell more effectively to consortia and other large customers.

1.2.3 Access for less developed countries

There are a number of schemes¹⁶ which help publishers to provide free or very inexpensive access to their journals for users in the least prosperous countries of the world. Nearly 60% of publishers already participate in one or more of these. Online access is not, of course, always the best solution if hardware and/or adequate connections are not available; other schemes provide selected content on CD-ROM, or arrange low-priced local reprints. Provided there are adequate safeguards against 'leakage' into more prosperous markets, these schemes are extremely valuable and do not damage publishers' business models.

1.2.4 Archival access

Publishers have a variety of models for providing access to their online back-files – some include access to some or all years in their current licence fee, some charge a separate fee, and some provide free access to all after a certain period. In our survey¹⁷ 3% of publishers made their backfiles freely available after a year or less and a further 6% after a longer period; the 66 small not-for-profit publishers in the survey stood out in this regard with 8% making backfile access free immediately, 6% after 6 months, 17% after a year, 6% in the next subscription year, and an additional 6% after a longer period. If the timing is carefully chosen (it may differ between disciplines), it appears that this need not undermine sales.

¹¹ John Cox and Laura Cox, 'Scholarly Publishing Practice: the ALPSP report on academic journal publishers' policies and practices in online publishing', ALPSP, West Sussex, 2003

¹² See http://www.alpsp.org/http_licens.htm

¹³ See Tom Sanville, 'A Method out of the Madness: OhioLINK's collaborative response to the serials crisis', *Serials*, Vol 14 No 2 (2001)

¹⁴ See <http://www.apnet.com/www/ideal/pressreleases/ustats.htm>

¹⁵ See <http://www.alpsp-collection.org>

¹⁶ See http://www.alpsp.org/http_dev.htm

¹⁷ John Cox and Laura Cox, 'Scholarly Publishing Practice: the ALPSP report on academic journal publishers' policies and practices in online publishing', ALPSP, West Sussex, 2003

1.2.5 Digital archive

In addition to the electronic files which are a by-product of online publication, a number of publishers are digitising their complete back-runs. Even at the favourable prices which are on offer, this is an expensive operation; it is unlikely that publishers will be able to make the resultant archive freely available unless the costs have been covered in some other way (e.g. by a grant). However, even if the access is not free of charge, the availability of the electronic archive is in itself a considerable benefit to users. Secondary publishers are also digitising their database archives in order to provide comprehensive and consistent subject indexes to the research literature, covering the output of many thousands of journal publishers.

1.2.6 Open Access journals

Making journals completely free to readers everywhere in the world is an appealing idea and one which is in tune with the mission of many learned societies, although it is of course necessary to assure that costs are adequately covered, for example by authors, institutions, or funding agencies; there is a growing number of Open Access journals, many of them experimental¹⁸. Not all publishers will feel able to take this route, but all will be interested to learn from the findings of the pioneers.

2) Prestige

Authors wish to publish in the most prestigious journals in their field; publishers also want their journals to be as highly rated as possible, as this both attracts authors and increases the chances of subscriptions and retention.

2.1 Peer review

Peer review, for all its faults¹⁹, is considered essential by authors and institutions; it should be carried out as speedily, efficiently and fairly as possible²⁰. If some papers in a journal are peer reviewed and others are not, it is helpful if the publisher makes this clear. Peer review not only establishes that a paper is soundly written and based on valid work; the referees also help the journal editor to select papers which are important, interesting, and relevant to the readership of a particular journal, as well as providing valuable professional feedback to the author. The process can result in significant improvements being made before an article is published.

Electronic systems can speed up submission and transmission of manuscripts, although the actual peer review process is still dependent on the scarce resource of referees' time (a few publishers pay for a speedy response). It is good practice²¹ to:

- Ensure that a referee is available before sending a manuscript
- Provide referees with a standard checklist to aid consistency
- Make the process as anonymous as possible (though this is not always easy, particularly in specialist areas) unless author and/or referee have agreed that their names may be disclosed
- Ensure that referees' comments are suitable for passing on to authors
- Provide authors with information about the progress of their papers
- Publicly acknowledge the help of referees, perhaps by publishing a list at the end of each volume

¹⁸ See http://www.alpsp.org/htp_openacc.htm

¹⁹ See Elizabeth Wager & Tom Jefferson, 'Shortcomings of peer review in biomedical journals', *Learned Publishing*, Vol 14 No 4 (2001) and Susan van Rooyen, 'The evaluation of peer-review quality', *Learned Publishing*, Vol 14 No 2, 2001 (<http://www.alpsp.org/volcont.htm>)

²⁰ See David Gordon Wilson, 'A bill of rights for authors?', *Learned Publishing*, Vol 12 No 4, 1999 (<http://www.alpsp.org/volcont.htm>)

²¹ <http://www.pls.org.uk/publisher/principles.htm>

There are numerous variations on the form of peer review, although it is usual to use at least two external reviewers, with the journal editor having a casting vote if necessary. Authors usually, but not always, do not know the names of the referees. In some cases the author's name is concealed from the referees (although references can make it impossible to anonymise a manuscript completely). Some online journals are experimenting with open online commentary either before or after formal publication.

2.2 Citation

The ISI Journal Citation Index, though a crude tool for evaluating the overall quality of whole journals, as opposed to individual articles, is very widely used by funding bodies and indeed libraries. It is therefore important for both authors and publishers that their journals are covered in the Index – something which takes hard work and persistence on the part of the publisher of a new journal; not all are successful, although the number of journals indexed is rising steadily. It is very helpful if publishers can publicise the Impact Factor of each journal and – more important – its ranking within its field. There is early evidence²² that widespread online access increases citations – thus it would seem to follow that Open Access journals might prove in time to be the mostly highly cited of all. Appropriate inclusion of review articles – typically more highly cited than original research papers – can also help to boost a journal's citation ranking.

As better tools develop for measuring usage²³ and linking²⁴, as well as citation, it will be possible to provide richer analyses of the true value of individual articles.

2.3 Editing

Although the benefits may be invisible to readers, authors appreciate the value of editing carried out by publishers' in-house or freelance staff; it improves the clarity and comprehensibility of their work. In the case of non-native speakers, it may be absolutely essential.

The needs of readers

Readers' needs²⁵ are not very different from those of authors:

3) Electronic access

Readers are very clear that they want access to information electronically (though the enthusiasm varies in different disciplines). They want that access to be free at the point of use, probably paid for by the library. They are keen to have access to back-files as well as current material. They value the flexibility of electronic journals, allowing them to access content at any time, at their desktop or even at home.

They also value very highly the ability to navigate seamlessly from references to cited material through linking, and to supporting materials where they are available online; it is therefore important that publishers verify and link the references in their publications²⁶ and prepare their content in a way to enable integration with other online resources where possible.

²² Steve Lawrence, 'Free Online Availability Substantially Increases a Paper's Impact', *Nature* web debates, <http://www.nature.com/nature/debates/e-access/Articles/lawrence.html>

²³ See <http://www.projectcounter.org/>

²⁴ See <http://www.crossref.org/>

²⁵ Alma Swan and Sheridan Brown, 'Authors and Electronic Publishing: the ALPSP research study on authors' and readers' views of electronic research communication', ALPSP, West Sussex, 2002

²⁶ See <http://www.crossref.org/>

Browsing favourite journals and searching bibliographic databases of journals rank equally highly as a means of finding articles of interest; it is thus extremely important that publishers ensure that their content is included in all the major abstracting and indexing databases which are used by their customers.

4) Peer review

Readers also rate the importance of peer review very highly indeed; it follows that they need to know that articles have in fact been peer reviewed. In an environment where the sheer quantity of information is growing inexorably, peer review (in its broadest sense) provides an increasingly valuable filtering function for the busy reader; a journal title offers a meaningful 'envelope' for the content most worth reading.

5) Additional features

Readers appreciate additional features such as review articles, comment and analysis. They seem relatively less interested in electronic 'bells and whistles'.

6) New journals

From time to time, new research areas develop for which a dedicated journal may be of value, rather than continuing to add to the extent of an existing more general journal. Publishers' expert staff (often subject specialists in their own right) carefully research the needs of authors, readers and libraries for new journals; they are well aware of the resistance to additional calls on library funds. However, if the need is clear they will invest considerable sums in creating and launching the new title; it is likely to make losses for the first few years of its life, and some never become viable – this is a risk which publishers accept.

The needs of institutions

ALPSP encourages publishers to adopt licensing and pricing models which as far as possible meet the known requirements of customers, and promotes discussion and collaboration with librarians to achieve this.

7) Licensing

7.1 Access

The types of licensing arrangement outlined above enable institutions to provide access to more content for more people for relatively little additional outlay; the average price paid per journal has thus decreased²⁷.

7.2 Licensing terms

7.2.1 Posting of authors' preprints and/or published versions

As mentioned above, a growing number of publishers' author agreements allow authors to deposit their articles in pre- or post-publication form in personal or institutional repositories. At present, this appears to present no threat to publishers' cost recovery.

7.2.2 Use in authors' institution

Many agreements allow authors to use their own work for educational purposes within their own institution; some extend this permission to other faculty within the institution, possibly even after the author has moved elsewhere.

7.2.3 Course packs and e-reserve

Many licences allow free use of material for course packs and e-reserve collections; provided institutions abide by the conditions of the licence and do not distribute the material outside the licensed population, it should not be necessary to seek permission for each such use.

²⁷ See <http://www.arl.org/stats/arlstat/graphs/2002/2002t2.html>

7.2.4 Inter-library document supply

In a number of countries of the world, educational and other non-profit libraries are legally entitled to supply copies of documents to users of other such libraries for non-commercial purposes. It is increasingly rare for licences for electronic journals to forbid such use, and indeed some extend it, explicitly making it possible to send copies electronically. Publishers have had concerns that electronic versions could proliferate, thus denying them legitimate sales, but so far there is little evidence of this.

7.2.5 Other licensing issues

Institutions are also concerned about the definition of who is entitled to access (understandably, they would like this to be as wide as possible; in some states, they are obliged to provide public access). They want to be sure that they will continue to have access to what they have paid for, even if they should cease to subscribe in future. They want to be clear about the limits of their liability for any misdemeanours by their users. Some may be unable to sign a licence which is governed by a law other than their own.

7.2.6 Usage statistics

Publishers no longer need to fear that usage statistics are a weapon which will be used against them by libraries eager to cancel journals; rather, they are an invaluable source of information to publisher and customer alike. There is therefore no reason not to include provision of usage statistics as one of the licence terms. Participation in the COUNTER²⁸ project is even more helpful, as it ensures that usage statistics from different sources are all comparable.

On all these issues, publishers can avoid time-consuming discussion by basing their licences on one of the existing models such as the PA/JISC model licence²⁹ or the LibLicense one³⁰.

8) Pricing

Publishers recognise that library funding has not (and perhaps never could have) kept pace with research output, leading to increasing pressure on acquisition budgets. Many publishers (not only not-for-profits) price their journals extremely reasonably and aim to make fairly modest profits or surpluses³¹.

Year-on-year increases are driven by a number of factors:

- Underlying cost increases – although publishers are seeking economies in all aspects of publication (including automation, and placing work offshore), some costs, such as paper, have been rising ahead of inflation; staff costs can contribute significantly (and staff with a high degree of IT expertise are particularly expensive)
- Increase in the number of articles published – the output of research is still growing, though not as steeply as in the recent past
- Decrease in the number of customers overall – a steady decline has been seen over many years
- Currency fluctuations

A number of publishers have made an explicit commitment to keep their annual percentage increases within single figures, irrespective of what happens to their costs.

Pricing and charging for electronic journal licences is still evolving; publishers welcome the collaboration of libraries and library organisations in developing and

²⁸ See <http://www.project-counter.org>

²⁹ See <http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/services/elib/papers/pa/licence/Pajisc21.html>

³⁰ See <http://www.library.yale.edu/%7EEllicense/standlicagree.html>

³¹ See http://www.alpsp.org/http_econ.htm

experimenting with new models³². Models based on previous print expenditure, while a rational starting-point, are not sustainable in the longer term and better models, based on population numbers or usage, seem likely to take their place. Any new pricing models, however, are bound to have losers who end up paying more (e.g. very large institutions or very heavy users) as well as winners.

9) Preservation

The long-term preservation of electronic content is of great concern to libraries; they are often understandably unwilling to abandon print subscriptions without realistic assurances that the content they are buying will continue to be available, not only for their own patrons but for future generations. However, long-term preservation involves considerably more than just depositing PDF copies in national library or other archives; the material will need to be protected both against deterioration, and against future technological change – XML is now considered by many to be the most future-proof format. Depending on the publisher's publication processes, this may entail additional cost to produce files in the right format; it will also entail potentially huge ongoing costs for archives, and it is by no means clear as yet who will pay for this.

Publishers are actively engaged in the exploration of permanent deposit of electronic publications, often in association with their national libraries, and encourage the careful development of appropriate legislation.³³ Many are also involved in research, jointly with libraries, on the best preservation formats.³⁴ This is an important issue and one on which publishers are spending a good deal of time and money; collaboration both with each other and with libraries is essential.³⁵

Conclusion

It is in publishers' interest to satisfy the needs of their authors, readers and institutional customers to the best of their ability; this entails paying close attention to what these communities are saying, and collaborating with them to develop new approaches as need arises. Scholarship-friendly publishers maximise access to and use of content; they also maximise its quality and, thus, prestige. It goes without saying that – by one business model or another – publishers need to make enough money to cover their costs and stay in business; but they recognise that institutions' funds are increasingly inadequate to purchase all the information required by users, and they welcome collaboration with their customers to find new approaches which might solve this dilemma.

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³² See <http://www.palsgroup.org.uk> and click on 'Charging mechanisms'

³³ See http://www.alpsp.org/http_arc.htm

³⁴ See http://www.alpsp.org/http_arc.htm

³⁵ See <http://www.dpconline.org/>