

Outcome report of the 2nd ESAC Offsetting Workshop in Vienna, 9-10 March 2017

Background

The second ESAC offsetting workshop was held on March 9-10 2017 in Vienna, hosted by the Austrian Science Foundation (FWF). After discussing and establishing some basic shared principles, conditions and guidelines at the first Munich workshop in 2016, this follow-up workshop dealt with the practical side of offset agreements and the handling of workflows and services. The workshop's theme therefore was **"Putting pay-as-you-publish into practice: Towards an automated APC handling"**. It was conceived as an opportunity for exchange and discussions between institutions participating in an offset agreement and publishers and was directed at the practitioners involved in the every-day processes.

The following institutions and publishers and vendors participated on invitation:

- University of Vienna
- Austrian Academic Library Consortium (KEMÖ)
- FWF Austrian Science Fund
- National Institute of Informatics of Japan (NII)
- CRISTin/ CERES Norway
- JISC
- TU Delft
- Radboud University Nijmegen
- FECYT Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology
- National Library of Sweden/ BIBSAM Consortium
- California Digital Library
- Bielefeld University
- Max Planck Digital Library
- IOP Publishing
- Springer
- Taylor & Francis
- Royal Society of Chemistry
- Copyright Clearance Center (CCC)

The workshop was arranged around three focus topics:

- Author & article identification & verification
- Funding acknowledgement & metadata
- Invoicing and reporting

After some brief kick-off presentations on each of these topics, delegates discussed in groups, summed up their results and presented them in a panel.

Outcomes

Focus topic “Author & article identification & verification”

Discussed questions:

- How is the identification and verification process organized at your institution/ at your publishing company?
- Which challenges do occur during the process on both sides?
- Which information do institutions need in order to easily verify and confirm author eligibility?
- Which information would publishers need from the authors or institutions in order to make the whole workflow more efficient?

The question was raised as to which degree the identification process of eligible authors under an agreement can or should be automated. Publishers seem to currently struggle with the establishment of automated systems, especially in cases where they depend on external suppliers of editorial systems (such as Aries and Scholar One). Implementing new features for handling the offset agreements partly leads to significant investments. While manual author identification combined with a smooth communication service at the moment works well for some institutions, such procedures are not scalable in view of the future and a full OA transition. It has been agreed, that efforts should be taken to automate the processing of at least around 80% of the publications and to provide good communication services to deal with individual cases. At the moment, publishers and institutions support the implementation of a three-parameters-approach to identify eligible authors: IP address, affiliation statement by authors at submission, readout of institutional email suffixes. One vendor that participated, CCC, is currently working on automated APC payment and reporting services and presented the group with demos of their current and future offerings

The submission process in general often feels overly burdensome to authors. As the publishers stated, many are working on streamlining and improving their submission process either working with their internal teams or their third-party vendors or both. Publishers reported on their efforts to timely alert authors on the agreements in place. Providing the required information to authors on the one hand and keeping the submission process as simple and short as possible on the other hand is a great challenge. Too much information seems to irritate authors and make them opt-out of the open access publishing route.

A set of information items was discussed which institutions need in order to smoothly verify and approve the eligibility of authors. A growing importance of standardized identifiers such as ORCID and Ringgold can be observed. Publishers were discussing to mandatorily ask authors for their ORCID on submission. However, the data quality of these identifiers is not yet as reliable as needed.

The changing of authors' affiliations during the publication process as well as authors stating several affiliations causes severe problems for some institutions. While in the UK payment is made by the research funders through block grants administered by institutions, others, such as the Max Planck Society, can only pay for articles where a corresponding author has stated a Max Planck affiliation, since payment has to be in conformity with the underlying contract in which this has been agreed upon. For institutions to confirm eligibility, it is therefore necessary that publishers can capture all stated affiliations of each author and provide them to institutions. Publishers must therefore consider how to set up their submission forms (whether they want to allow for free text or offer predefined drop down lists when asking for author's affiliation). They might also strive for ways to automatically extract the affiliation statements from the manuscripts as such. To this regard, it might also be helpful if publishers would implement notification processes to learn about affiliation changes during the publishing and reviewing process so that they can timely communicate with the authors about the payment. In the future, vendors or third parties might play an important role in automation and validation of various data elements required by all parties.

Although corresponding authorship more and more evolves to become a convention for identifying the paying institution, discussions came up whether this could remain a common practice in all scientific publishing disciplines. Institutional policies saying that APCs are covered for substantial contributions of affiliated authors to a paper only might not be compatible with corresponding authorship. However, a reason for sticking to this practice can be the fact that databases such as the Web of Science index the corresponding authorship (reprint address) per article, which allows database searches to evaluate shares of corresponding authors of institutions or countries for predicting publication shares and costs.

Further discussions focused on the question whether there is a need for a more precise definition of corresponding authorship in the context of APC payments, which would reflect not only the scientific role of the author but would also bindingly declare that the underlying research has been done at the institution that covers the APC.

On the whole, it became apparent that ever more complex funding situations (institutional funding vs. grant funding vs. research funders providing additional budgets) endanger the establishment of efficient and consistent procedures which will of course especially affect the authors.

Focus topic "Funding acknowledgement & metadata"

Discussed questions:

- How should the paying institution be declared in an article and in the article's metadata?
- To what purpose will article metadata be processed at institutions (CRIS, evaluation purposes...)?
- Which challenges do publishers face regarding metadata collection and processing (e.g. editorial systems, delivery to CrossRef)?

Discussions centered around the necessary distinction of the concepts behind the term “funder”. A funding acknowledgement in the context of APC workflows should state the institution that covered the open access article fee and has to be separated from the funder of research. This information is a necessary proof to be made by the publisher that no double payment has been received. It has been discussed whether there is a need for introducing new metadata fields for declaring the APC funding institution and whether this can be imposed to CrossRef.

There is a need for standardizing the text of this statement which must be placed in the final article (PDF and HTML). Springer already provides funding acknowledgements although the process seems to depend on manual editing.

In terms of metadata, delegates agreed upon the need for a standardized list of metadata items to be captured by the publishers. The most urgent requirement imposed on the publishers was to deliver open access license information to CrossRef in order to ensure the visibility and reuse of open access content in otherwise subscription journals.

Focus topic “Invoicing and reporting”

Discussed questions:

- Which specific requirements do institutions have in order to process APC invoices?
- Which challenges do occur during the invoicing process on both sides?
- What would be basic requirements for reporting data?

Although most of the current offset agreements operate with lump sums payed upfront, an article-based invoicing process should be implemented already now. Participants discussed workflows of confirming the eligible publication at the moment of invoicing, however most of the agreements require an approval step before the invoice is issued.

A key requirement for some institutions when receiving invoices is to check that the paying affiliation is stated in the paper. At the time of invoicing, the delivery of a DOI and a link to the published document by the publishers is therefore required.

Split payments between several institutions add complexity to the process and should therefore be avoided. However, there might be a need to deal with the invoicing of capped APC levels.

Some institutions need to see purchase order numbers on an invoice in order to allocate budgets to the payment.

In any case an author involvement during the invoicing process should be avoided.

The participants collected a list of information items to be included in an invoice. Institutions would like to work up to date working dashboard systems providing publication status information and which should also provide regular machine readable reports on the agreements’ publishing performance.

Invoice and reporting data should be delivered in a machine readable form.

Summary

In summary, discussions showed that the following action fields are key for publishers to improve APC processes:

Automation: work with your internal teams, partners, and stakeholders to automate as much of the APC payment process as possible. Make manual interventions the exception not the rule.

Metadata. metadata about the author(s), the funder(s), the institution, the manuscript, the journal, and the pricing and discounts offered are crucial for automation and for a standardized invoicing and reporting workflow. Work with all parties involved to leverage web services as well as emerging and existing standards.

Commit to pragmatic steps: Perfection isn't achievable out the door.

Be Flexible. There are at least four-five major stakeholders in the open access ecosystem – authors, institutions, funders, publishers, and vendors. The costs of paying and managing APCs are high across the board. Very few parties have systems or processes they can change overnight.

Munich, 17th March 2017, Kai Geschuhn