



## Guide to a "Plan S" Impact Assessment

*with*

**Malavika Legge, the Biochemical Society and Portland Press**

**&**

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**For podcast release**

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**KENNEALLY:** Welcome, everyone, to a very special program to mark Open Access Week brought to you by Copyright Clearance Center. Copyright Clearance Center is once again very pleased to mark the occasion of Open Access Week. Over the past decade, OA Week has fostered an important global conversation on the transition to open publishing. Throughout OA Week, watch for news and analysis from Copyright Clearance Center on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

My name is Chris Kenneally, and we are very happy to have you join us today. For 2018, the theme for OA Week is Designing Equitable Foundations for Open Knowledge. The questions that this theme raises are especially important at a time when national research funding organizations from across Europe have launched Plan S to put pressure on open access business models.

To explore what Plan S could mean for the future of publication programs at research-supported societies, CCC has asked two leading executives to share with their peers in publishing an informal guide to a Plan S impact assessment. Very happy you can join us, and we do hope you will share this webinar with your colleagues. We welcome your questions and thoughts, and we'll give you contact information at the end of the program.

Very briefly, we want to tell you about the sponsor for today, which is Copyright Clearance Center. CCC builds unique solutions that connect content and rights in contextually relevant ways through software and professional services. CCC helps people navigate vast amounts of data to discover actionable insights, enabling them to innovate and make informed decisions. Together with its subsidiaries RightsDirect and Ixxus, CCC collaborates with customers to advance how data and information is integrated, accessed, and shared while setting the standard for effective copyright solutions that accelerate knowledge and power innovation.

Our brief agenda today will give you a very quick overlook on Plan S. We're going to take a look at that very important new development in open access from the viewpoint of



society publishers. We'll get into the who, what, where, and whys of an impact assessment plan, and we'll leave you with some questions that you should be asking yourself at your publishing house and some links and some suggestions where you can learn more about Plan S.

Very briefly – and there's a great deal more about Plan S, of course, online, and I'm sure anyone listening here is at least familiar with the headlines, but we'll review them quickly. Plan S was announced at the beginning of September. It is brought to publishing by something called the cOAlition S. It's an initiative of 13 European national research funding organizations. It boils down to a very important statement, that after the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020, scientific publications on the results from research funded by public grants provided by national and European research councils and funding bodies must be published in compliant open access journals or on compliant open access platforms. Compliant is obviously the key word in that very important statement. And as publishers listening here would understand, this ambitious goal puts pressure on open access publishing models. It caps article fees in gold OA journals, it ends embargoes in subscription journals, and it withdraws support from so-called hybrid OA journals.

It's not only publishers that are concerned about the impact here. Authors and researchers, too, have raised a number of important questions as they are concerned that under Plan S, they may have limited choice about where they can publish their work, and that could obviously adversely affect their careers.

With all of that as background, I want to introduce and welcome to our program our two very special guests. First, we have on the line from London, Malavika Legge. Malavika, welcome.

LEGGÉ: Thank you, Chris. Hello, everyone.

KENNEALLY: We're very happy you could join us. Malavika Legge is the acting director of publishing at Portland Press, the wholly owned publishing arm of the Biochemical Society. Its headquarters is in the Charles Darwin House in central London, a hub for the biological sciences. Along with strong roots in content development and extensive licensing and commercial experience, Malavika Legge has a special interest in workflows and publishing technologies. She previously held a variety of editorial and strategic roles at Informa, and Malavika has a degree in biochemistry and a master's in bioscience. So a researcher perspective as well as a publisher's.

And then also joining us today is Tasha Mellins-Cohen. Tasha, welcome.

MELLINS-COHEN: Thanks for having me, Chris.



KENNEALLY: We're very happy you can join us here. You're also in the same headquarters. You and Malavika are among those who have offices at the Charles Darwin House.

Tasha Mellins-Cohen is director of publishing for the Microbiology Society. She is an active participant in the scholarly publishing community. Tasha is a member of the COUNTER executive global community of library, publisher, and vendor members who contribute to the development of a code of practice that enables publishers and vendors to report usage of their electronic resources in a consistent way. That's clearly important to this discussion, because it involves all the stakeholders in publishing – the researchers, the libraries, and others. Tasha Mellins-Cohen is also on the UKSG education committee for industry experience. It stretches from publishing operations to project management to policy-setting via technology management and business analysis.

So two very qualified people to talk today about Plan S and its impact or the potential for an impact from the viewpoint of society publishers. Malavika and Tasha – I'll go to Malavika first, if I may – when it comes to the transition in open research, speaking about your society, but also societies in general, Malavika, would you assert that societies are rather well along in this transition to open research and that they are fairly supportive of it?

LEGGE: Thanks, Chris. I think certainly supportive, very much so, and I think even excited about the movement, it's fair to say. At Portland Press, which is wholly owned by the Biochemical Society, we are committed to open access. I think 49% of all our outputs are now open access, and that's a measured move that we've been making towards transitioning. We also flipped a journal from a subscription model to fully open access, gold open access, in 2012.

So we're definitely excited about the movement, about the benefits that open access brings, and not just open access, but also open access as a facilitator for open science. The Biochemical Society has a position statement on open science. So we're excited by this space. We are looking at transitioning. And I think the key message in the context of Plan S is we want to make that transition sustainable, i.e., that we can continue on our mission to return sustainable revenues to our parent society.

KENNEALLY: Tasha Mellins-Cohen, I would imagine that that's very much the case for you at the Microbiology Society. An important point is that the publishing programs for societies return important revenues, and that supports the societies' programs with the research community.

MELLINS-COHEN: Absolutely. Obviously, we are very keen on open science and open research. In fact, we have a very liberal green open access policy whereby authors are



permitted to deposit their accepted manuscript immediately on publication. So there's no embargo for our green OA. And obviously, we do have a very active gold OA program, to the point that we have just launched a new title which is gold open access. It's specifically aimed at replication studies, methodologies, data papers, the sorts of things that would often get missed because they're not seen by traditional publishers as being sufficiently exciting to publish.

But our society – we're not wholly owned. We are a part of the society, not a separate wholly owned subsidiary. The Microbiology Society, if you look at our accounts at Companies House, you'll see that 75-80% of all revenue is derived from publishing. Now, that supports our grants programs for early-career and mid-career microbiologists. It supports our policy work. We've just had a very influential policy document about the microbiome and the importance of the microbiome for not just human health but agriculture – absolutely everything to do with the world that we live in can be touched by the microbiome. And that policy work is underpinned by our publishing revenues. Similarly, lots of our events program is subsidized by publishing and all of the professional development activities that we do.

Now, we are completely aware that societies – (inaudible) at ALPSP a couple of years ago. Societies don't have a God-given right to exist. But if we're going to pull the plug on all of these activities, which Plan S might well threaten to do, we might want to have a bit more of a conversation about it before we just pull that plug.

KENNEALLY: I think it's an important point, and that's probably why we're trying to bring this perspective to our audience, particularly at OA Week. That's why with Plan S, some of the concerns that publishers have, all kinds of publishers – and it is to this moment, and we're speaking today for Open Access Week at the end of October – it's lacking in details, and those details really matter, in particular regarding so-called hybrid OA, which is called out for special opprobrium and will be no longer compliant come January 2020.

For Malavika, those details – the lack of details – that's critical, and a particular area I know you're concerned about is this notion that our astronaut there is helping us illustrate, which is that there are no borders in research, whether it's the research that you undertake at the Biochemical Society or the research that Tasha was just describing for the Microbiology Society. That involves researchers from around the world, not only the Plan S countries.

LEGGE: Exactly right. I think the point about details – what are transformative agreements that might be permissible under Plan S? I think we really need to see how transformative agreements is defined and what that means and what would make the cut and what wouldn't.



Then what is the practical detail around payment workflows? That remains to be explored, particularly where you've got international collaborations, and you've got part-funded work, and you've got authors, or researchers, I should say, who are focusing on their science and don't need to be distracted by administrative burden around bills and part payments and things like this. So I think those details really do matter.

MELLINS-COHEN: The second part to that is that we are very lucky, Malavika and I, in that we operate in a reasonably well-funded biomedical sciences field. What about humanities scholars? What about social sciences and arts and all the rest of those fields, which we know do not have the same kind of funding, certainly don't have the same kind of acceptance of open access that our fields enjoy? We know that the cOAlition's thought about having a different ruling for social sciences, arts, and humanities and decided against it. Now, that's very worrying to me that you're having this very broad-brush approach with no flexibility to allow for differences in fields and publisher types.

KENNEALLY: All of these questions and the alarm that has come with them – and I appreciate the candor you both are offering as far as the potential for impacting your societies – all of that is what leads to this discussion we're having today about the need for an impact assessment plan. There's panic, but there's also a need to keep calm and to make a plan. I wonder, Tasha, whether you can tell us just about how you're going about that at the Microbiology Society. You're thinking through these important points and trying to estimate the potential that Plan S could have for real structural change to the business.

MELLINS-COHEN: Sure. I'm just going to start by saying we do see this as risk, but we also see it as an opportunity. There's an opportunity for us to look to transformative business models, transformative editorial models, and also potentially to really force a change in the way that research metrics are looked at to really finally make the break with the impact factor, which we would love. We (inaudible) – we're very keen that the work that is published is judged on its own merit.

So the way that we've done this, we've been looking across our huge database and our author base in all of our journals. We're mapping every affiliation metric that we have, every piece of XML that includes affiliation details. We're mapping those back to what we're calling parent organizations. For example, we I think had 65 different affiliations that mapped back to the University of Hong Kong. We are then creating a global map of where our authors are, where our subscribers are, and we are looking at what Plan S could do.

Now, something that came through very clearly when we started doing this mapping exercise was that even those authors within Plan S countries – which account for between



18% and 22%, depending on the journal, so we're really not talking a very large proportion of our author base here – even those authors within Plan S countries, not all of those have Plan S funding. So you can't simply say 20% of our author base is going to go away because they've got Plan S funding. You've got to be more nuanced than that. But I would say that the geographic mapping is a really good starting point to understand the potential scale of the impact on your authors and your subscribers.

**KENNEALLY:** I was just going to turn to Malavika for just a quick second to see if that sounds familiar to you, because I understand you've undergone a very similar exercise to try to estimate this potential. Really, it's about helping you make some decisions, because we are speaking today – it's October 2018. January 2020 is not that far away, and there really isn't a lot of time to get ready for this.

**LEGGE:** Yeah, so we have taken a very similar approach, and actually, there is a route to just doing a very, very quick proxy analysis. As Tasha was just speaking about, you can't necessarily say every author from a Plan S country, but as a very quick measure, you could look at corresponding authors publishing in the journals in a particular time period and get a very quick reading of what the possible scale of impact is. That can be your sort of first cut before the more detailed sort of analysis that Tasha was explaining.

But that does start to give you straightaway some indicator, and you might find that some journals are – well, basically that different journals are affected in different ways. So there may be some journals with an audience – or I should say with researchers publishing in it that aren't affected, and there might be other journals that are more exposed. Taking a quick reading can really help to focus the mind on where the effort or where the risk is falling.

**KENNEALLY:** Absolutely. What comes through for both of you is the complexity here. There is no single response. It's a multiplicity of responses. And the first question that you raised, which was how many authors come from Plan S countries, even that's not a very simple question. But then what follows are other questions, and this is the meat of our program here.

I want you both to help me out by sharing with your colleagues the kind of questions you're asking at your own societies. Perhaps we'll turn to Tasha briefly for question number two there. You've already raised the concern about the revenue piece on this, and that exposure for the publishing business is very critical. Expand on that a bit more.

**MELLINS-COHEN:** Yeah, so obviously, as I said, we're providing 75-odd percent of society total revenue, and at the moment, more than 90% of publishing revenue does come from subscriptions. Now, something that has been made very clear by cOAlition S is that



they're not expecting us to have our new model in place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2020. We need to provide a document stating how we will get to a pure open access world. So we're not saying that in 2020, all of our subscription revenue will have disappeared. We're saying we would like some more clarity about what cOAlition S would expect and accept as valid under their plan and how long a transformative agreement can last.

So we have looked at a series of different options. Now, we divided those into business model options and editorial options. The editorial options included things like doubling the size of our portfolio by providing open access B versions of all of our journals. That obviously has huge overhead implications as well as you've got to think about whether your authors who are open access-funded would move to a B version of the journal given that it takes several years to get indexed properly, to get all the metrics you might want, and so on and so forth.

On the business model side, obviously there's things like the World Society of Chemistry's read and publish model. The question that you have to ask is if you're very small – and with only six titles, four of them subscription, I would say we're very small – how many librarians are going to want to talk to you about a bespoke read and publish model? So there is an issue of scale that you need to consider when you're thinking about Plan S.

**KENNEALLY:** If you can hold that thought for a second, Tasha, I want to give Malavika a chance to give us a perspective from the Biochemical Society and Portland Press there. I think Tasha raises a really important point. The questions here aren't only about the business side of things, but as well the editorial side.

**LEGGE:** Absolutely. I think Tasha and I are coming from very similar places. For the Biochemical Society, or rather the money that Portland Press is returning back to the Biochemical Society, we are still quite reliant on subscription revenues, but we are in a happy place where we're minimizing that kind of exposure with a dedicated focus thus far on our gold open access program. But I think the timing and the point Tasha made about those transformative agreements, how long can they be and things like that, it's really important, because that would help us model out a sustainable transition from the perspectives of whether we need to transition workflows and things that are sitting just outside of the traditional gold APC model. I think that's where it starts to become interesting, because that leads on to question number three on the slide. Would there be alternative business models that you want to talk about?

Tasha's mentioned the sister OA journal kind of approach. There's also do you want to leverage the existing relationships with librarians' existing workflows that currently exist around subscriptions, but change the conversation to talking about funding open access? Something that is potentially quite exciting and positive about that kind of a model is you



take away the individual APC payment and you start having a conversation about institutions and consortia being able to fund the journal being open access and able for everybody to access the content and read. I think the risk that one has to consider with that is one of institutions saying, well, not me. I'll wait for somebody else to stump up that money. It would be great to hear from the funding bodies how they plan to sort of influence that so that we can continue to operate and provide on the editorial front the rigorous peer review, being the independent validator of research communications.

Coming back to a point Tasha made earlier about societies don't have a God-given right to exist, I suppose you could take that argument further and say journals don't necessarily have a God-given right to exist. But the conversation to explore there is, I feel, isn't there benefit in having an independent party, a party that is not the party deciding what research is funded – so a party that's independent to the funder and independent, obviously, to the researcher carrying out a piece of research, i.e., the publisher – coming in and having a very robust validation process for that work, whatever the output might look like? Because I think journals and research outputs to how they look is changing. But the validity of having an independent process to check the work, I think that still remains relevant. Sorry, that was a bit of a rambled response, but I think that that's a key point that needs to be thought about.

**KENNEALLY:** Right. And I want to go back to Tasha Mellins-Cohen, because, Tasha, at one point there, you made an important point for everyone listening, which is that Plan S isn't only just a concern, but it's an opportunity. I know you've done some really detailed work on exploring where the options lie, where the opportunities lie, for the Microbiology Society. Share with us some of the thinking you're doing and how you go about that.

I wonder – a question just to add to that is where do you go for data in all this? Because your knowledge of the business is important, but you need some data to ground any decisions you make as well.

**MELLINS-COHEN:** Absolutely. We looked through nine different options around how we could respond to Plan S, ranging from do nothing to complete flip to APC-driven OA through things like institutional membership models, subscribe to open along the lines of the Knowledge Unlatched model and so on.

We've actually had our workshop with the team and the chair of our publishing committee this week. We'll be taking a lot more detail back to the full publishing committee in a couple weeks' time. So I'm not at liberty to discuss the final four that we're going to be investigating in more detail. I would be happy to do that with anybody who wants to contact me offline.





But what we've done – I'm very lucky. My master's degree was in bioinformatics, so I'm not great, but I'm a reasonable programmer, and I have taken a whole lot of the affiliation data and a whole lot of other data around funding, around APCs, around institutions who have open access mandates, so on and so forth, and I also looked at deposited green copies of articles that we've published, and I have crunched all of that data through a nifty little script that I wrote to give us an exposure level journal by journal to open access risk and potential.

So this is the thing. It's potential as well as risk. While Plan S only accounts for, say, 20% of our authorship for the majority of our journals, we have authors publishing with us who have access to open access funds but maybe don't realize it. We have institutions subscribing who have got authors who should be publishing open access but don't necessarily realize it and aren't necessarily taking advantage of the APC discounts that we offer through their institutional subscriptions, which is our current mechanism for offsetting. Subscribers get big fat discounts on APCs. So all of this kind of information is coming out, and we're now seeing a huge new market for, for example, an institutional membership model, which would allow us to go way beyond the existing subscriber base and actually reach out to all of our affiliated institutions one way and another. Sorry, that's not much detail.

**KENNEALLY:** I think what we're trying to do in this very short half hour is to raise questions that people can continue to pursue once they go away from our program today, and we'll give contact information as you offered, Tasha, to sort of continue the conversation.

I do want to sort of go back to one small point with Malavika which is around the data that's necessary. Tasha was talking about how she is working with her data, but for many societies, they are working with partners and platforms, so they may have to reach out to those partners and request some of this data to help them make these assessments.

**LEGGE:** Sure. And I think on that point, Chris, what I would say is if there are societies who do not have an independent publishing arm and are working with, I don't know, an Elsevier or a Sage or Wiley, Taylor & Francis, it's probably worth thinking about what questions you want to ask of your publisher. The kinds of questions would be around how much is the exposure? Can you give us a breakdown of corresponding authors from countries, at the very least? That's simple. That should be very easily possible. Ask your publishers to prepare these reports for you so that you can at least start to measure and get some information around what the problem or the challenge looks like.

Because certainly the publishers, I would imagine – well, I know the publishers will be thinking about how they want to respond from the point of view of their businesses. But from the society perspective, I think your asking the questions about how it affects your



titles and your income is a question well worth asking so that you can gauge exposure and then have a conversation with the publisher about what steps they are taking that are specific to your titles in their programs. That's certainly something that I wanted to add to the conversation.

MELLINS-COHEN: Absolutely agree on that front. I would say if you're having trouble getting information about authorship from your publisher, you can always grab the data out of the Crossref database or out of other things like Dimensions. They have those records already.

KENNEALLY: Thank you for that great way of raising questions. That's all we're trying to do in this very short webinar for OA Week. We appreciate the concerns you have raised, but also the point that's been made about the opportunities in all of this. We encourage everyone listening to do their own research, their own thinking, their own planning for Plan S. You're probably seeing some of the responses to Plan S that have been coming through. Not surprisingly, some of the publisher associations, like the STM Association, have raised questions and concerns. STM has made the point that it is vital that researchers have freedom to publish in the publication of their choice. The International Publishers Association has called for perhaps more speed and less haste. They have endorsed, as our panelists today have, this notion of the transition to open research and open science, but want to do so in a way that thinks through some of the important questions that Malavika Legge and Tasha Mellins-Cohen have raised. At the same time, open access advocates such as OASPA have welcomed this what they call ambitious vision put forth.

So look online. Learn more is a good suggestion. A resource for information about Plan S is Copyright Clearance Center. We have a number of videos and podcasts that are helping our publishers learn about Plan S, to get smart about Plan S. And as Tasha mentioned, we want to encourage anyone listening today first to contact any of us on the program today. Malavika Legge is there at Portland Press, Tasha Mellins-Cohen at the Microbiology Society, and myself, Chris Kenneally, at Copyright Clearance Center. If you have any questions or want to continue the conversation, don't hesitate to send us an email.

Really, throughout Open Access Week this week, October 22<sup>nd</sup> through the 28<sup>th</sup>, do follow Twitter, LinkedIn, and the other resources you go to on social media. I'm sure your colleagues are communicating their concerns, raising questions, and perhaps even touting some of the ideas that they have come up with just as Tasha Mellins-Cohen and Malavika Legge have done for us today.

I want to thank very much our panelists. Tasha Mellins-Cohen, she is the director of publishing for the Microbiology Society. Tasha, thank you for joining us today.



MELLINS-COHEN: Thank you for having me, and you're very welcome.

KENNEALLY: And I also want to thank Malavika Legge, acting director of publishing at Portland Press, the publishing arm at the Biochemical Society. Thank you, Malavika.

LEGGÉ: Thank you so much, Chris. Pleasure.

KENNEALLY: I want to thank as well Casey Bassett, my colleague here at Copyright Clearance Center, for managing the webinar program for us. For all of you joining us today, appreciate your time. We hope you will share this presentation with your colleagues and have a great Open Access Week. Take care.

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