



**Plan S... The Story So Far**  
**Program preview for STM Week 2018**  
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**KENNEALLY:** When the STM Association, the global voice of scholarly publishing, convenes its 2018 STM Week program in London, the focus of attention will come down to a single letter “S.”

Welcome. I’m Christopher Kenneally for Copyright Clearance Center.

In London, on Tuesday morning, December 4, my colleague Chuck Hemenway moderates a panel discussion for STM Week’s session on Tools and Standards that will ask what lies ahead in the dynamic Open Access publishing environment.

Announced in September, Plan S has everyone in scholarly publishing talking. An initiative of national research funding organizations from across Europe, as well as private funders like Wellcome and the Gates Foundation, Plan S puts pressure on open access publishing business models by capping article fees, ending embargoes, and withdrawing support for hybrid OA journals.

Throughout the fall, CCC has produced programs examining the implications Plan S presents for the future of scholarly publishing. As editors and executives were packing bags for Frankfurt Book Fair in early October, publishing analyst Rob Johnson recalled how the world of scholarly research adopted the principles of Open Access – and why the change that resulted may not have come fast enough for some.

**JOHNSON:** In terms of the seeds of Plan S, if we look back over the last five or six years, 2012 was quite a significant year, particularly with the Finch Report in the UK, which was essentially a consensus between the different stakeholders – so universities, funders, publishers – on how to make the transition to open access. And over subsequent years, also in 2013, we’ve seen some of those principles implemented, with the UK Research Councils particularly deciding to support hybrid open access, the US taking a somewhat different approach, favoring public access through the sort of famous memo from the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the EU supporting open access through its Horizon 2020 program.

But I think in the few years after that, if you look at what happened in 2015-2016, we’ve started to see some more radical ideas and initiatives emerge. Max Planck issued a whitepaper arguing for a flip or a transition of the system from subscriptions to open access. The Gates Foundation launched what, until Plan S, was perhaps the most radical open access policy, requiring



immediate OA in all cases. And in 2016, the EU set a goal of achieving immediate open access by 2020.

Now I think the reason we've ended up with Plan S is when you talk about – when you hear the policymakers talk about what's happened in the intervening years, the general sense is things haven't happened fast enough. So although there was a consensus five to six years ago, policymakers are saying we're not making the transition to OA as quickly as we want.

**KENNEALLY:** While the pace of change can be debated, many scholarly and scientific publishers support “open” as a business model. What “open” means, however, is not agreed, as Springer Nature's Tim Britton, noted for special pop-up program on Plan S that CCC presented at Frankfurt Book Fair.

**BRITTON:** It is more complicated than just saying everything must be open access. There is a mixed model out there. I think that's for three different reasons, and it isn't just about publishers putting up a paywall to stop people getting at content. It's actually that in different parts of the world, different funders behave differently.

In Europe, I think it's sometimes really easy to forget, particularly in Germany, northern Europe, this is kind of a high point of gold OA. If we were having this conversation in Washington or indeed Shanghai, opinions would be different. There are different approaches to funding and not everybody is demanding the same approach. And as a global publisher, we've got a range of stakeholders that we have to support and serve, of whom northern European funders are a hugely important one, but one.

The other point I'd make is that when it comes to selectivity, it's actually really hard to make the open access model work. I mean, for us, Nature is a really obvious example, but there's others – you know, Cell, Science. When you are rejecting an enormously large amount of articles, the APC model is really, really hard to sustain. You would get very, very high levels of APC. Now, in principle, we haven't got a problem with that. I suspect the funders would have a problem with that.

Last but not least, different disciplines have different levels of access to open access funding, and I'm sure that somebody will come in to talk about humanities and so on. There are parts of the scientific community that have very easy access to funding, and there are other parts that have less easy access to funding, which means that we have all of the stakeholders to serve, and therefore we have a mixed way of doing that so the relevant community, the relevant geography, the relevant funders can take the right decisions.

Now, none of that is to take away from the importance of making our research as open and as freely available as possible, and there are lots of other ways of doing that. It's about seamless access. It's about allowing people access to document of record – for example, our shared opportunity does that. There are lots of ways of making the information freely available. Open access is a massively important part of that. We are engaging very actively with the people at Plan S to help influence it and develop it. But I don't think it is as simple as just saying there is only one way to do it.



**KENNEALLY:** At scientific societies, publishing income underpins important policy work. Tasha Mellins-Cohen from the UK's Microbiology Society told a CCC webinar about her concerns that where Plan S impacts the bottom line, her members will suffer the consequences.

**MELLINS-COHEN:** 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.

**KENNEALLY:** Not only are publishers affected by Plan S ambitions, but authors as well. Authors and researchers are concerned that under Plan S, they may have limited choice about where they can publish their work, which could adversely affect their careers. Rob Johnson also suggested that Plan S may lead to creation of a two-tier system in scholarly publishing.

**JOHNSON:** As things stand, 85% of journals globally would not meet the requirements of Plan S, in that they are not fully open access journals – so subscription journals are out, and hybrid journals are out.

And for researchers, many are saying, well, that's an infringement of their academic freedom, their right to publish, and their right to choose where to publish. Now, many others have taken the view, well, authors have the right to be heard. They don't necessarily have the right to choose where they publish. So this is very much live debate.

But also, there's the concern about a two-tier publishing system, so we end up with some authors who are funded who can afford to publish in these open access venues and pay an article processing charge, others who don't. Now, we should say Plan S doesn't require or necessarily recommend article publication charges as the business model. But in many cases, that is the model that will be used to achieve compliance, so this risk of a two-tier publishing system is a very live concern.

**KENNEALLY:** North America, the United Kingdom and Europe have traditionally dominated scholarly publishing and scientific research. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, Asia and other regions are on the rise. Malavika Legge is acting director of Portland Press, the wholly owned



publishing arm of the UK's Biochemical Society. She told a decidedly international audience at Frankfurt Book Fair that Plan S could constrain the global exchange of information and discovery.

LEGGÉ: Science doesn't have borders. Science is about international collaboration these days. It's getting more multicultural, more interdisciplinary. You've got people collaborating across the globe. So, when you have a group of funders in a ring-fenced number of countries saying, oh, where we are funding things, we want these rules to play out, what happens? What happens when a Chinese author is collaborating with somebody based in Europe, is collaborating with somebody based in the US, and the work is only part funded by one of these funders? Whose rules are going to play out?

I think that sort of detail is important especially from the author perspective, because in a gold APC model at least, the authors have at least an initial headache around who's going to pick – you know, is there a bill to be paid, and why, and who should pay it, and where should it go? This sort of administrative burden matters, because ideally none of us want to burden a researcher's life with the hassle of any of this.

KENNEALLY: What lies ahead for OA and how should publishers respond? What kinds of partnerships for publishers with other industry stakeholders are likely to yield a "win-win-win" scenario for researchers, funders, institutions and the public?

The dynamic Open Access environment presents many challenges to longstanding practices in scholarly research publishing, particularly from funders, whether public or private. At STM Week on December 4, CCC's Chuck Hemenway will explore the state of publisher commitment and investment in OA infrastructure and workflow, as well as consider how adoption of partnerships, tools, and standards could address any impasses, perceived or real. For more, follow CCC on Twitter @copyclear.

For Copyright Clearance Center, I'm Christopher Kenneally. Thanks for listening.