



## **Sorting Out Open Access For Chemistry Researchers**

**Interview with  
James Milne, Ph. D.,  
ACS Publications, President**

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**KENNEALLY:** The movement toward open access in scholarly publishing has recently seen so-called transformative agreements emerge as a sustainable path to open for authors, publishers, and institutions. Yet for many researchers looking to become authors in OA journals, questions remains.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series, I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book.

The American Chemical Society, the world's largest scientific society, and one of the world's leading sources of authoritative scientific information, has now launched online an open science resource center for researchers, librarians, and administrators to find information on open science and open access publishing. With more than 150,000 members, ACS has signed numerous transformative agreements with funders and research universities over the last two years.

James Milne is the president for ACS publications. In this role, he leads the strategic planning and over management responsibility for the American Chemical Society's portfolio of over 65 peer reviewed journals, *Chemical & Engineering News*, and numerous other information products and services. James Milne joins me now from his UK office to share how the ACS Open Science Resource Center will speed the transition to an open science future for the extensive community of ACS authors. Welcome back to Beyond the Book, Jim.

**MILNE:** Hi, Chris, and thanks for inviting me on, delighted to be here and to say a few words about ACS and ACS's strategy and plans regarding our open science direction of travel.

**KENNEALLY:** Well, it's particularly interesting to hear about this, Jim, because the focus here for the Open Science Resource Center is on researchers. I guess the



place to start with our discussion is how exactly will the resource center help or encourage researchers to become active participants in this open access movement?

MILNE: It's a great question. Just when you asked that question reminds me of a slide I often present to conferences which has the researcher in the center of a circle with publishers, funders, and institutions surrounding them. And really, the researcher is the center of everything that we should focus upon.

Our goal at ACS, and as a publisher, is to make sure that the researcher can really focus on conducting the research, communicating that research, and then getting back to doing more research. So the Open Science Resource Center is very much there to help facilitate that. And really it's for publishers, funders, institutions to work together in a collaborative way to allow that freedom for the researchers to move forward. So the Open Science Resource Center really helps researchers find out in the simplest way how they can engage with the American Chemical Society under a suite of open access options and open science products so they can really move forward and, in an efficient and efficient way, communicate the research through our great journals, and then get back to doing more research.

KENNEALLY: You mentioned that the researchers are at the center of your world on that slide, at least, and I'm sure a great deal of what you do at ACS. But there are these surrounding communities and stakeholders that you described, and they include, of course, librarians and administrators. May they also benefit from the resource center?

MILNE: Absolutely. One of the things we're trying to do is work in collaboration with the institutes and the libraries' administrators. So when we do secure and make agreements on reading, publish transformative agreements, we can make sure they work efficiently for the research community, and then the librarians and administrators at institutes get the greatest value from that. They can see that really moving forward. And they can see how they're engaging with the research community, as well, to move the needle in terms of open access.

So yes, the resource center is there, not just to showcase where institutes have made these agreements with the ACS, but also to make sure that they are used to the full to make sure that the research at those institutes really hits the ground in terms of open access and the greatest visibility that can be made for those papers from those authors who are part of an institute that is making these arrangements available for them.



So on the resource center, yeah, there's a whole bunch of information for researchers about open access, for research administrators to say how they can engage with open access, what the licensing options are, and what other products and services we have. And this will build on time as well, so at the moment, we've got the first release. It's got a lot of great information there that used to be in multiple venues. We've now pulled it together in one place with a very clear user interface to allow people to access it easily, quickly, and then move on from there.

KENNEALLY: Now open access, open science, it's a really dynamic field that's transforming scholarly publishing, transforming ACS, really, and you have been champions of these transformative agreements, which are also knowns sometimes as read and publish. We have done a lot of coverage at Copyright Clearance Center on transformative agreements, but I wonder if you can explain for listening audience a bit more about how they work, what does it mean, read and publish, and why are these agreements in open access generally so important to ACS and its members?

MILNE: It's a simple question and there are quite few layers behind that in terms of how to respond. The first thing to say is that the traditional world of science publishing, going back, let's see, 15, 20 years, was very subscription based. So you publish for free, and the subscriber, usually the institute, subscribe to the research journals, and then their reader can just access it from their desktop. So the read and publish agreements basically are blending together both the subscription side and the open access side of the scholarly publishing ecosystem. Typically the library or the institute will pay for their traditional subscription amount. By subscribing in that way, we also then allow to gain credits towards open access for their publishing faculty. That way we're really engaging with the community and helping as a stimulus to get them involved in open access, and move the needle in terms of the number of articles being published open access, largely because up to now some funders are providing clear funding towards the article publication charges for open access. But many haven't quite got to that point, so this is a way of migrating from where we were to where we want to be in terms of supporting APC payment in a transitional path, hence transformative agreements.

KENNEALLY: So we can see how the business relationship between ACS and its customers has changed, but it's about more than the business relationship, it sounds to me, because you're involving researchers. And this is effectively changing the relationship that the society has with its institutional clients around the world.

MILNE: Yes. On this there are many institutes supporting open access. But in different parts of the globe they're moving at different paces. So it's well-known that



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Europe is really at the forefront of open access, and advocating open access for researchers, whereas in other areas there's more of a wait-and-see approach. So for instance, in America, there are a number of institutes where we're securing read and publish agreements, whereas others are actually not so interested at this stage, though that may change over time. So far, we've got over 350 institutes aligned with read and publish agreements from the US, many in Europe, but also in the Middle East and also now in Asia.

So we're really seeing this as a direction of travel in many ways in terms of that relationship with institutes to help them take the faculty into an open access environment and also see the benefits from that, which can include greater readership. There are some studies that say it's a greater citation behavior, as well. So it's really trying to work at the pace of the different global areas and help them where they're struggling to find a way to get their researchers engaged with open access. So this is very much part of a collaborative approach with institutes and with faculty going forward.

KENNEALLY: And the kind of information the researchers will find in this Open Science Resource Center answers the questions like the questions I've been asking you, James Milne, but also answers that are a little more detailed. In fact, as I understand, step by step instructions on actually how to publish open access.

MILNE: That's correct, yeah. So first of all, the first question any researcher might ask is, can I publish open access? Do I need to find funding myself, or is it already available? So the Open Science Resource Center allows them to find that information very quickly. As they're publishing with ACS, we have a very clear alignment and CCC is involved in this as well, so that as you're moving through to the final publication, we can align the credits that an institute may have with the author publishing that paper. So it makes it a very slick process and takes a lot of bureaucracy out of the process. That really helps in terms of engaging with the community. So those step by step instructions are there to help make it an easier task for authors, and also to show why publishing in ACS journals allows those authors to publish open access where they might not normally do so.

But also I have to say that for those authors who do not wish to publish open access, or actually have no need to publish open access, of course all our established journals – over 60 established journals – welcome their submissions as before. There is no fee to publish in those journals, and they can still publish and gain all the benefits of the incredible readership that those journals have.



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KENNEALLY: Right. So there isn't a catch here. A researcher doesn't have to be covered under a read and publish agreement. As you say, they can still publish in any ACS journal. But at the same time they'll still find, as well, some valuable information about open access publishing in the resource center.

MILNE: And beyond open access, of course, there's open science, as well. So for instance we've just launched SciMeetings, which is a open science product to make our conference material available in an openly accessible way. ACS was really the pioneer, but we've brought on board for other societies to launch ChemRxiv, which is the preprint server for chemistry which is going great guns. And we've also – moving with ACS, the Research Data Center, and there's information on that within the resource center. So it's beyond open access, it goes into open science. But actually open access certainly is flavor of not just the month – the year, maybe even the decade. So this is where a lot of the focus is, and there's a lot of information there that tries to break down some of the complexities and uncertainties that the researcher community might have had to make sure that it's in a single place, easy to read, easy to digest, and then also to make sure it can be applied as they publish with ACS in our journals.

KENNEALLY: And you've already mentioned, Jim, the reasons that researchers publish in OA journals, principally because they want to share their work with their colleagues and ensure that it has as great an impact as possible in the scientific community, but also to share it further than that with the greater public. How does all this work with what ACS is doing, the direction you are headed as a publisher?

MILNE: We're a publisher, but we're also a society. So our mission is to (inaudible) the broader chemistry enterprise, and its practitioners, for the benefit of earth and its people. We basically say it's had (sp?) to be advanced science in the best way. So publications and scientific communication is an integral part of that, and providing information solutions is one of our primary goals in terms of our mission and vision. So this really helps move the needle in that regard. It helps us engage with researchers, but also helps them out at a time when funding isn't available, generally speaking, for open access publishing. So this is a way to maximize accessibility for the journals and basically make sure that the readership is as positive as possible, so that aligns back to our mission.

But it also helps us in the places where researchers are now being mandated, or about to be mandated to only publish open access, such as cOAlition S and Plan S, which is a group of some of the countries in Europe. So as of 2021, the implementation of Plan S starts, and that's when during a transition period of four years, the publications from those countries will have to be published in an open



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access way. And ACS is engaging with to make sure that they can publish in our existing journals in an easy manner, but also we've launched – and just announced the launch of 10 new open access journals, JACS Gold, and now an additional nine ACS gold titles so that where those funders, cOAlition S funders, will be mandating that you can only publish in pure open access journals. We provide that solution for researchers, come 2025, when that mandate kicks in. And it's all about researcher choice, making sure that they can publish in the prestigious journals that ACS is renowned for, while also benefiting from that great exposure and that simplified way of submitting, getting their papers really high quality peer review with a focus on excellence, get the excellent author services that we're renowned for, and get the paper out there and disseminated as widely as possible.

**KENNEALLY:** Getting ready for 2025 is certainly an admirable ambition, James Milne, but most of us, this year, 2020, we're just trying get through 2020. What kind of a year is ACS having in the midst in the midst of the global pandemic?

**MILNE:** It's a very strange year, I have to say. So I was made president, or confirmed as president, I think, middle of January, and of course COVID-19 was front and center, even then. And at the Chinese lunar new year, 25<sup>th</sup> of January, that's when really it started to escalate globally. So very strange year.

We've had a great transition from our staff and from our editors, moving to remote working. So our Chinese team, of course, didn't return to the office after the lunar new year, at least until the all clear was given some months ago. But in Europe and in America, our staff moved fantastically well and very smoothly as part of our contingency plans. So they switched over within 24 hours, and they've really managed to keep the pace of work and the dynamic changes that we're bringing forward. They've managed to keep that momentum going throughout the year. So I really thank our staff for that.

You asked what kind of year we've been having. It's actually quite interesting. We've been monitoring on a dashboard submissions by country and watching how submissions initially, when labs closed, first in China, latterly in Western Europe and in America, as well – we've watched how, as labs closed, there was a spike in number of submissions for about two months. Then we saw a slight decline in China, so we saw below average submissions, and then it's been recovering since then. The US has three months very high submissions, and we've seen a slight decline. Whereas in Europe, we're still seeing massive increase in output, which shows that although there's been challenges around the globe, the research community has managed to keep the momentum going themselves. And even without the labs open, they've been able to look at their results, analyze those





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results, and write up their work, such that we are seeing a higher throughput of content and submissions that are worthy of publication than we anticipated. So the workload has actually gone up rather than down in this environment, which did surprise us.

So while that's happening, of course, we're trying to move the materials through peer review, production, all the services we provide, maintaining the high speed and quality standards that we're renowned for. We've managed to do that partly through careful management with vendors and with in-house staff. But we've managed to keep our focus on excellence on the quality of the published content, the support we provide our authors, and then, of course, the influence our journals deliver as a result.

So it's been a very strange year, but so far we've seen it as a very busy year for journals, which is a very positive thing, and we're watching ahead, looking ahead to see what happens in the months ahead, and will there be any other changes, of course, coming.

KENNEALLY: Good luck with all of that work, we have enjoyed speaking with you today. James Milne is the president for ACS Publications, and he's been telling us about the American Chemical Society's Open Science Resource Center. Thanks, again, James Milne.

MILNE: Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure and I hope you found it interesting, and it's exciting times for everyone. Look forward to the future.

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