

Plan S Consultation Response from the British Institute of Radiology



The British Institute of Radiology (BIR) is a small self-publishing Learned Society with around 3,000 members from the UK and internationally. Part of our charitable mission is to publish cutting edge research for readers and authors across the world; more than 75% of our published content originates from authors outside the UK. We are the publisher of the world's first radiology journal, dating back to 1896 and our current publishing portfolio consists of two hybrid subscription journals and two recently launched gold open access titles.

Our position

The BIR supports the principles of open science and access to research. We make all our content immediately free to access for those in low- and middle-income economy countries through the Research4Life initiative and provide APC waivers for authors from the same countries. For all readers, every paper is made freely available on our publishing platform after a year's embargo and at that point is also deposited in PubMed Central. We have had a hybrid open access option available for authors in our subscription journals since 2012 and launched two small fully open access journals, *BJR|case reports* and *BJR|Open*, in 2014 and 2018 respectively. All authors in BIR publications retain the copyright of their work.

Whilst some of our practices align with Plan S, we do however have some concerns about the scale and complexity of its implementation, in particular relating to the radiology research landscape, the non-compliance of hybrid journals and the timescale laid out in the plan.

Our concerns

Unlike other STM communities, radiology has been very slow to adopt open access publishing. This is largely due to the paucity of funding in the field. The BIR's hybrid journals, *British Journal of Radiology* and *Dentomaxillofacial Radiology*, have only a very small amount of open access content; in 2018 one published 5.5% open access (23 articles) and the other only 1% (it's first ever paid-for open access article since the journal became hybrid in 2012). More than two thirds of our published papers have no funding associated with them and of those that do, only a scant handful are funded by cOAlition S members. This trend is also seen amongst other journals in this area.

The majority of authors in the radiology field are primarily clinicians doing research work alongside their main role seeing patients or servicing clinical departments. The papers they publish often report valuable incidental findings from their clinical work, projects of particular interest to them or research carried out in their own time. As such, for many, the research they submit for publication has had no funding whatsoever. A move to full and immediate open access would preclude most of these authors from publishing as they would have to cover the APC costs themselves.

Flipping our journals on the current author base would be damaging to the radiology research landscape. It would be impossible for most authors to fund their publications and with the increasing pressures placed on clinicians and their time, there is a concern that their motivation to do research will diminish. This could realistically result in a stagnation in research activities and ultimately damage the advancement of science and healthcare in this field.

Plan S explicitly states that the hybrid model is non-compliant. We believe however that the hybrid model is the most sustainable way to provide immediate open access where only a minor proportion

of authors have funding sufficient to cover the costs of publication. This, combined with the BIR's policy of making all content available to read 12 months after publication, gives a wide reach to the research we publish.

There is also a concern that if hybrid is not compliant then Plan S could result in the opposite of the desired outcome in effectively reducing access to research. If there isn't a suitable fully open access journal for their work authors may opt to publish in the journal of their choice behind a paywall and deposit their work in a potentially less discoverable green-compliant repository.

The time frame set out in Plan S is incredibly short. January 2020 is a mere 10 months away and we are concerned that researchers will not have sufficient time to adjust to the changes set out in the plan, nor will we, as a small organisation, have enough time to adapt our business and processes to accommodate the changes requested.

Conclusions

The BIR has been publishing open access content since 2012, and over the last six years the amount of that content has grown. New journal launches have followed the gold open access route, demonstrating our commitment to open access publishing. However, as illustrated above, our community is not in a position to embrace open access at any greater speed than it is currently. With the funding situation as it is, it would be irresponsible to impose a flip to full open access at such break-neck speed. Our doing so would create the biggest barrier for access to publication.

While supporting access to research, the BIR has concerns about the implementation of Plan S as currently detailed in the implementation guidelines. The points above outline how Plan S could introduce unintended damaging consequences to the research landscape and we would urge cOAlition S to take them into consideration.

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