

7 February 2019

Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to Plan S.

The Society for the Social History of Medicine is a charitable organisation representing, and supporting, scholars interested in all aspects of the history of medicine, health, and related topics. As one of the Society's founding aims is 'to educate the public in the social history of medicine' we are in sympathy with attempts to make research outputs – whether publicly funded or not – available to the broadest possible audience. This includes a commitment to making this research available in formats that are genuinely accessible and useful, not just through academic articles, but through promoting conferences, and providing training on outreach topics, for example.

As an organisation that derives 90% of its funding from an associated journal – *Social History of Medicine* – we obviously take an interest in any policy proposals which might alter that relationship (including the fact that much of the labour that maintains the journal's efficiency and high standards is provided, largely for free, by Society members). But although *SHM* is a hybrid journal, this does not mean we are tied to hybridity as a model, nor that we oppose efforts to create fully open access publications in the humanities. While we do not hold a definitive answer to global publishing challenges, and certainly do not agree that Plan S would be a workable solution, we also feel that a decided stand by current structures of hybrid publishing makes access to publicly-funded research by scholars in low- and middle-income countries, and by non-academics, challenging. Rather, this response is on behalf of the Society as a complete organisation, and therefore our key concern here is the impact that the proposed Plan S will have on our members, on the broader academic community who publish in our journals and attend our events, and of course on the public audience for our research.

While other professional and learned societies will be offering their feedback on Plan S, and there will be shared concerns and interests, the Society for the Social History of Medicine has a claim to a unique viewpoint, as the nature of our discipline has meant that many of our members have already experienced the challenges that can be faced by tensions between publishers, funders, employers, and open-access requirements. As the Wellcome Trust is both a ground-breaker in terms of OA requirements, and one of the major funders in our field, Society members have sometimes been the first authors to request that their article be published OA, and have been the 'test subjects' for new journal policies; likewise they have also experienced the negative consequences of finding that their institutional repositories, or their preferred journals or book publishers, are not compliant with new funder regulations. As interdisciplinary workers they are also acutely aware that the best outlet for their research is not always the one that is most highly regarded by internal promotion or job short-listing panels. They therefore have an insight into, and acute experience of, the unintended consequences of blanket OA policies that do not take into consideration the differences between scholarly disciplines, and the impact such tensions may have on academic freedom. Our members and academics publishing in our journal are particularly affected as, for a history journal, the number of articles published by funders which have signed up to Plan S is high (as demonstrated by the

research undertaken for the Royal Historical Society's submission to this consultation) and amounts to 21% of submissions accepted for production from 11 February 2016 to the end of 2017.

The Executive Committee of the Social History of Medicine is broadly in support of the principle of open access, but we are deeply concerned that Plan S implementation will determine where funded research can be published; that there is an absence of a clearly articulated funding model for or even recognition of the role of publishers; and that these factors will significantly challenge the viability of learned societies, and will have multiple impacts on individuals' careers and choices of research topic. We are disturbed by the lack of evidence or analysis to support the assumptions upon which Plan S is based, particularly for disciplines outside of STEM. We were therefore keen to find out what our members and the wider history of medicine community thought about the proposed changes, and as a consequence circulated a short survey, the results of which are outlined below.

The survey reveals serious concerns about the potential impact of Plan S on the publishing aspirations of historians of medicine who have been successful in terms of gaining funding, and then could potentially suffer problems in promotion, being selected for jobs, and with their UK REF submissions, because of the limitations of where they can publish. We are very worried about the restriction of academic freedom to choose where to publish. As the Royal Historical Society's submission to the Plan S consultation demonstrates, over 80% of publications in history journals are from authors without funding; therefore, scholars with funding could be unfairly disadvantaged in comparison to the many more academics without funding, who can still choose where they submit publications, when panels are judging candidates on the prestige of the outlets in which they have published. Our survey results indicate that our respondents do not believe that the ideals of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment will be upheld. We are particularly concerned about the impact of this policy for early career scholars in an extraordinarily competitive employment market.

### ***Summary of SSHM Plan S Survey Results***

There were 66 responses, with 3 requesting that their comments were withheld. We asked the respondents to provide their career stage, which indicates that we have a broad range of views of the implications of Plan S. 26 of these respondents are current or recent members, and 37 people completed the survey although they are not our members.

- 6 postgraduates
- 4 independent scholars
- 16 early career researchers
- 17 mid-career researchers
- 14 senior/professorial
- 6 retired
- 0 archive/museum staff

### ***Funding of learned societies through journal royalties***

The results of the survey reinforced the Executive Committee's concern that there is a lack of understanding of Plan S in academia, and a lack of awareness of how learned societies like SSHM are funded, including the beneficial relationship of working with a publisher such as Oxford University Press. We asked people to comment on whether they have received funding from SSHM as members, and 10 had. We offer funding such as bursaries for postgraduates and early career scholars to attend conferences, support for conference organisers, and essay prizes. However, we found that only about a third of respondents had an understanding of where our income comes

from, which enables these funding streams. We asked, 'What percentage of SSHM income do you think comes from royalties paid by OUP from *Social History of Medicine*?'

- 6 nil
- 12 up to 20%
- 16 up to 40%
- 9 up to 60%
- 8 up to 80%
- 12 up to 100%

On average, over the last two years, 90% of our income has come from our journal *Social History of Medicine*, published by Oxford University Press.

### **Open Access**

We are sympathetic to the open access goals of Plan S, as long as the funding costs of publishing and the efforts of academic editors are fully acknowledged and provided. The Executive Committee are concerned that we reach a wider audience with our publications, and that academics can gain access to more publications too. Our survey revealed that 20 respondents believed they could gain access to journal articles which are not currently available to them if Plan S is implemented. However, 33 did not believe this was the case.

### **Impact of Plan S on funding, publication and career plans**

The respondents were clearly concerned about the impact of Plan S on their funding and publication plans. 22 people are considering applying for funding for research during the next five years, and thought that Plan S would affect their choice of funder. A further 16 are planning to apply for funding during the next five years but do not think it will affect the choice of funder. In terms of the impact on publishing, 22 believed that they would have access to funds if payment is required for open access, but 22 thought they would need to publish open access but there would be no access to funds. We think that Plan S and particularly Wellcome Trust plans, need to be much clearer regarding the funding model for open access publishing. 17 of these respondents considered that their funding for open access would come from the Wellcome Trust, indicating that they are not aware yet of the Trust's announcement that they will no longer fund APC fees for 'hybrid' journals for articles submitted after 1 January 2020.

We asked respondents to state whether they have published in *SHM*: 22 have. Further to this we asked which three journals our respondents would particularly aspire to publish within. Listed below are the journals which were chosen by more than one person. The list of journals, with the number of respondents choosing them, shows that for funded researchers these publication plans would not be possible within the requirements of Plan S, as all of the journals listed by multiple respondents are 'hybrid':

<i>Social History of Medicine</i>	21
<i>Medical History</i>	13
<i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i>	08
<i>Past and Present</i>	08
<i>British Journal of the History of Science</i>	05
<i>Cultural and Social History</i>	04
<i>Twentieth Century British History</i>	04
<i>History of Science</i>	03
<i>History Workshop Journal</i>	03
<i>Isis</i>	03

<i>Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences</i>	03
<i>Ambix</i>	02
<i>Historical Journal</i>	02
<i>Notes and Records of the Royal Society</i>	02
<i>Social Studies of Science</i>	02

Only 5 of our respondents thought that there are suitable journals which fulfil the Plan S requirements. 24 chose yes but the options are limited, 24 no and 10 picked don't know.

We asked our respondents if they believed that 'the content and quality of research articles is judged independently of where they are published?' 43 replied no, and only 7 replied yes.

The qualitative responses in answer to this question illustrate the serious concerns about how Plan S could damage the careers of scholars who have been successful in gaining research funding.

Some respondents commented on the value and variance of peer review in journals and publications as a marker of quality:

*No - This is a laudable goal, but in practice the periodical itself is viewed as an important marker of quality.*

*Wish it were true, but bias exists towards open access journals as well as subscription-based ones. Also, the quality of quality assurance processes varies regardless of publication model (open access or not).*

*No - maybe this is regrettable - but some peer review processes are more credible than others*

*Journals have a reputation and where an article is placed is incredibly important – part of our own reputation building in terms of our careers and also important for engaging in debates. Sometimes we want to respond to an article, so it makes sense to respond in the same journal that the original article was published.*

With regarding to interviews, promotions and CVs, our members commented:

*I sit on lots of interview panels. It really does make a difference whether applicants have published in high profile journals or not.*

*No. Journal reputation matters for quality expectations, even if it doesn't correlate perfectly. As an ECR, I am especially concerned that hiring panels will continue keeping journal reputation in mind when making decisions, especially in mainstream history where the impact of Plan S may be less immediate.*

*We are consistently told that it really matters where you publish, so evidently this judgement must be important to the academic community.*

*Databases of journals encourage you to look for articles by keyword rather than by journal so I do my research this way and judge articles by their content. In terms of CV, everyone is impressed if you've managed to get an article published in History of Science or BJHS. So I think journals matter for CV points but not for quality of research necessarily.*

*Where something is published certainly effects credibility, but my evidence is impressionistic*

In relation to the UK's Research Excellence Framework exercise to judge research, respondents commented:

*Although officially denied, I have a strong suspicion that assessors such as those in the REF give a higher ranking to articles that appear in certain journals, rather than based on the quality of an article.*

*As a former RAE panellist, I feel that although we made every effort to rate each submission independently, a prestige journal publication did give prima facie evidence of quality. The sciences of course, rely entirely on this.*

*The REF suggests that it should be, but we all know the reality is that people are inclined to judge the worth of an article, in part, based on the perceived rigorousness and competitiveness of the journal in which it is published.*

In summary, we do not believe that Plan S, as it stands, is a viable solution to the problems in accessing publicly-funded academic publications.

We are very happy to discuss further,

Yours sincerely,

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*Chair, Society for the Social  
History of Medicine*

Dr Vanessa Heggie  
*Book Reviews Editor, Social  
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Dr Dora Vargha  
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On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Society for the Social History of Medicine and the editors of *Social History of Medicine*