

IFLA Response to Plan S

IFLA - the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions - is the global voice of the library field, representing all library types. It has over 1300 members in around 140 countries around the world. It has a commitment to promoting equitable access to information as a necessary condition for inclusive, sustainable development, and to high quality library services as a means of delivering this.

Recognising that access to information is a human right and acknowledging our role in ensuring equitable and sustainable access to knowledge, we, the library community, stand united and ready to work with other stakeholders towards a system of scholarly publishing that is more accessible, efficient, fair, and transparent.

We applaud the fact that through cOAlition S, research funders have taken a stand in favour of the societal benefit that access to knowledge represents. We believe that PlanS presents several opportunities for libraries and the communities that we support:

Transparency of Publication Costs

The rising cost of scholarly communications has been an increasing burden for libraries for decades. The drive to ensure access to scholarly resources for our users and the insistence of publishers on the use of non-disclosure clauses (in particular in 'big deals') has limited the agency of individual libraries, and the library community as a whole, in determining the best use of our resources, which frequently come from public funds. It is only the rising reported profit margins of publishers that provide us with a global view of the inverse and unsustainable pressure that library budgets are under.

By insisting on transparency and monitoring of publication costs and licensing terms Plan S is pressing the reset button on this situation. Full transparency will enable better information sharing between libraries and informed action towards a global transition to open access. It will also help libraries meet emerging needs and, combined with the development of new metrics and OA content discovery tools across repositories, will help avoid any impression of the transition to OA merely representing a shift of burdens from libraries to researchers.

Quality Open Access Journals & Platforms

It is a fact that the majority of open access journals do not charge APCs and are free to publish in. These journals are usually local and community driven and may therefore need more support to become Plan S compliant. By clearly signaling an intent to invest in supporting a diversity of models PlanS offers the opportunity to reinvigorate the scholarly communications system and make it more equitable and diverse. There is a danger that the launch of new APC-based journals by large publishers will not lead to a reinvigoration of the system but rather will increase costs and reinforce the concentration of resources.

Instead, in the spirit of the Jussieu Call for bibliodiversity, investment in free to publish and read business models, and infrastructure and support for local and community driven publishing activity should be prioritised in parallel with and not subsequent to transformative agreements. This is necessary to avoid simply entrenching existing structures and players, and to provide opportunity for innovation. Libraries are already supporting such models; becoming publishers in their own right and supporting local journals and all research outputs to increase their visibility and adopt the standards, such as long term archiving, mandated by Plan S.

Repositories

Repositories play an essential role in providing sustainable access to research outputs, particularly journal articles, data, and increasingly, monographs. Direct deposit of publication by publishers in a compliant repository (managed by research institutions and libraries) should be a mandatory condition in Plan S. Many libraries support repository infrastructure. We support the creation of institutional and disciplinary repositories where they do not yet exist, and would encourage cOAlition S to acknowledge the need for investment in existing repositories to ensure that they meet future researcher and access requirements.

Standards are certainly important and we understand, for better accessibility for machines, non-PDF based formats will become more important. However, the proposed JATS format requirement is not widely adopted by existing repository systems. We therefore recommend that Plan S relax requirements in this regard to allow a variety of machine-readable formats such as EPUB or other XML based ones.

Waiver Policy

We welcome that Plan S mandates waiver policies for authors from low income countries and we further recommend that journals and platforms make their waiver policy visible on their website.

Consideration should also be given to the design of such policies in order to ensure that poorer institutions in wealthier countries are not disadvantaged for example. The experience of obtaining a waiver should be made as simple and clear as possible for researchers. Waiver policies could also be monitored in order to better understand their impact.

Copyright Retention

We strongly support copyright retention as a means of guaranteeing researchers' ability to share their work with others.

Mirror Journals

We are relieved that mirror journals will not be eligible and urge cOAlition S to keep a watching eye out for other means of circumventing the spirit of Plan S.

Long-Term Preservation

We welcome the focus on ensuring long-term preservation and promoting permanent links and quality metadata. It will be important to reflect on the cost to repositories of obtaining DOIs, and make efforts to ensure that these are affordable and so do not represent an excessive barrier to entry.

IFLA Advisory Committee on Copyright and other Legal Matters

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www.ifla.org/clm