

Response to Plan S information from Wiley
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on behalf of Executive Committee, UKLA

This note is a response both to Wiley's request for responses to the Plan S proposals and to Wiley's proposed "Success Plan" for the United Kingdom Literacy Association's journal *Literacy*. We address the larger question of Plan S first and then the more specific aspects of Wiley's proposal for *Literacy*, as the latter is a more specific detailing of the points in the first section. We combine these two responses into one document because the specific details shed light on some of the overarching conundrums facing academic journal editors and publishers.

Response to Plan S

Funding agencies are directing a move to make publicly and privately funded research available to readers for free, a laudable move that aims to remove barriers to interested readers worldwide. Academic publishing does involve certain costs and services, however, and so a suitable funding formula is necessary to enable continued excellence in the quality and archiving of publications. The Plan S proposal removes "fee for reading" and institutes "fee for publishing". This solution, while seeming to open access to readers, will radically change academic publishing by effectively erecting barriers to many potential authors. Such a complete change in business model has serious repercussions for all research journals but particularly so for journals sponsored by scholarly and professional associations.

In discussions regarding "Plan S" the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) Executive Committee, Publications Committee, and journal editors and editorial board members have raised concerns regarding the new funding model for our and other professional and scholarly associations. We briefly outline these concerns in the hope of encouraging publishing models that will be equitable for researchers and readers in very diverse, complex circumstances.

The UKLA publishes two highly regarded peer-reviewed journals for literacy researchers and educators: *Journal of Research in Reading* and *Literacy*. These journals are packaged to Association members as benefits of UKLA membership, and there has been a long tradition of appreciation of the print copies of these journals. As the journals have grown in stature in the field of literacy research, they have attracted a more international readership and authorship. The Plan S funding model removes the journal subscriptions as a benefit of membership; the UKLA will, therefore, feel a significant negative impact on our ability to attract and retain members.

The journals provide important revenue for the association in the transfer of funds from the publisher. Wiley's interpretation of Plan S puts this revenue into jeopardy. The changes that Wiley has proposed to the UKLA for a "success plan" will make the journals readily available for readers but will change the relationship of the journals to the parent association and will undercut the viability of both the journals and the UKLA. It must be pointed out that the

enormous bulk of the work of the journals is accomplished by the volunteer labour of our members: the editors receive yearly nominal honoraria that show appreciation but do not at all compensate for the many hundreds of hours of work involved in editing a quality refereed journal. The editorial boards and the bulk of peer reviews are the volunteer labour of UKLA members. We cannot begin to count the hours of free labour thus provided to our publisher. Thus, from the UKLA perspective, our journals already represent an impressively efficient operation for our publisher; further efficiencies must be considered in this light.

To pay the reasonable costs of publishing scholarly journals, a proposed “article processing fee” (APC) will be charged to authors. Requiring researchers to fund their own publications merely shifts the financial burden from readers to writers, and will continue to disadvantage those in developing nations or more poorly funded institutions. Researchers who are doing good work, but who do not have access to the thousands of dollars' worth of funding required to publish a single paper, will find it increasingly difficult to publish their findings. This in turn will reduce their impact and their chances of future funding. At the same time, researchers who are doing good work but who have access to better funding, either through outside grants or through university money, will find it easier to publish, and thus increase their reputation and likelihood of further funding. Thus, inequities will persist and harden as the “rich get richer and the poor get poorer”.

In response to the obvious reality that this fee places an insurmountable barrier before researchers from underdeveloped and poorer countries, Wiley, and presumably other large publishers, have agreed to waive for researchers from certain designated countries. The underlying assumption seems to be that researchers in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Europe have the money to pay an APC. This assumption, on the part of the funders and publishers, is false in terms of the systemic realities of universities, too. Funding for the social sciences and humanities always lags significantly behind funding for the natural sciences, medicine and engineering; thus many high-calibre literacy researchers at strong research institutions would find themselves unable to publish.

This shift to an “author pays” model jeopardises the fundamental role of the journals deeply. In addition to making publication potentially prohibitively expensive, the new model also puts pressure on us regarding the quality of the journals. We have been advised by our publisher to publish substantially more papers, to solicit editorial board members from particular geographical regions, and to publish more from particular regions. Again, we remember that the labour of editing and reviewing is voluntary. Our journals are high caliber because our editors maintain a tight control over who is considered qualified to review; our reviewers provide thorough and insightful feedback with a strong knowledge of the readership of the journal. Simply adding reviewers willy-nilly will weaken our reputation in a very short time. If we overburden the excellent reviewers we have, and if they consider that they are being asked to step in to ensure the publisher’s substantial profit, they will withdraw their services. These services are not negotiable.

We appreciate the support and services provided by Wiley in publishing our journals. We have had a healthy, very positive working relationship and are proud of the journals we publish with them. We support the efforts that publishers must make to find a viable way to meet the aims of Plan S. We believe that the future of scholarly research publishing must provide open participation as well as open access so that researchers can participate in scholarly communications without barriers caused by funding.

Response to Proposed “Success Plan” for *Literacy*

Following the “Strategy Day” meeting of Wiley and UKLA editors in November 2018, Wiley presented a proposed “Success Plan” and asked for response. The following notes are in response after consultation with the incoming and out-going Editors of *Literacy*, as well as the current Editors of *Journal of Research in Reading*, and the Executive Committee of the UKLA. We include these notes here because they show some of the dilemmas that arise in attempting to make our journals completely Open Access.

We are concerned that a number of suggestions made by Wiley are not ones that we find appropriate. We understand that Wiley are encouraging us to publish more to compensate for lost income (both for Wiley and for UKLA in our revenue from the publications). We see these efforts as potentially undermining the quality of our journals. For example, the targets in this document are not targets that the Editors or UKLA would agree to. Specifically:

Targets and inconsistencies: A number of targets were identified that UKLA does not subscribe to and that we see as potentially harmful to the quality and viability of the journal.

- We do not agree to target specific geographical areas. If strong articles come in from any region, we are pleased to publish them. We aim with all papers to provide strong, constructive reviews to help authors bring their work to the standard we uphold.
- We will not agree to increase number of articles published by 11% each year for next three years. This target only works if the journal receives a similar number of extra, excellent submissions each year (or if production constraints mean that excellent articles are having to be rejected). Otherwise a journal would end up publishing less competitive papers and degrading rather than enhancing the quality.
- The goal of increasing the number of published articles from outside UK/North America from current 30% to >50%, by 2023 will not be agreed. This is a very poor metric to use when also talking about quality. We publish high quality papers regardless of the country of origin. Moreover, if such a goal were to exist in the context of requiring researchers to pay for their own publications, it would be quite contradictory. We do aim to diversify authorship in global terms, but not simply by accepting more, but by encouraging more good submissions from elsewhere. It does take time for a country/area to increase its quality of research and writing; it doesn't necessarily happen in short 3-5 year spans. We are aware of the danger that a journal could end up publishing less good articles from less typical places, and rejecting better ones from the UK/North America, for the sake of quotas.

Data-sharing policy: It may not be possible for Literacy or JRR to have a data-sharing policy, as such issues may depend upon the varying ethics approval regimes in differing jurisdictions (slide 11).