



The American Political Science Association (APSA) welcomes all initiatives that spread knowledge and promote the dissemination of ideas. We believe we do best by our discipline by ensuring that political science scholarship strives for the highest levels of quality and integrity in a context that facilitates methodological variety and international research collaboration.

Social science journals in general, particularly those published by not-for-profit professional associations and learned societies, have made great strides in reducing barriers to readership, and charge among the lowest subscription rates of any field. APSA currently supports open research in a variety of ways including offering a Gold OA option in all our journals and having one of the most liberal Green OA policies among hybrid social science journals by allowing authors to deposit their accepted manuscript to institutional repositories and preprint sites upon acceptance, and we encourage authors to share their datasets openly on Dataverse. APSA provides low-cost memberships to scholars from developing countries in addition to the free and discounted access programs outside OECD countries in which our publishing partners have included our journals.

The Plan, as it is currently conceived, neglects the role of scholarly societies and their commitment to the production of knowledge. For many non-profits, subscription revenue represents 25-50% of their annual operating budget. Programs like minority scholarships, research grants, career mentoring and other valuable initiatives would be greatly reduced if a large income stream was eliminated; this outcome would be directly contrary to your stated goal to ensure “young scholars have opportunities to excel and advance their careers.” Member dues and conference fees would increase, which would cause a decline in overall membership and meeting attendance and therefore in scholarly collaboration. The unintended consequences of this well-intentioned effort and its unrealistic one-year timeline would likely be a transfer of wealth from non-profits and researchers to commercial publishers who can now raise their APCs to yet-unspecified levels.

APSA values and defends academic freedom around the world and believes that all authors must continue to have the right to express their ideas and publish their research and results in the format and publication of their choosing. Plan S aims to broaden access at the back end – the ability to read a journal – only to risk an outcome that restricts access at the front end – the ability of many to submit their work to the journal of their choice because of where they work or how they are funded. Political science values openness and shares the fundamental principles of widening accessibility espoused by Plan S. But we seek to achieve these ends in ways that do not challenge the quality of the research currently published in our journals.

Plan S supports the use of Creative Commons (CC-BY) licenses for all scholarly publications. However, it does not accommodate non-commercial restrictions (CC BY-NC) and does not support the CC BY-ND license, which protects the authors from the unauthorized modification of their work. The adoption of CC BY-NC and –ND would mean the research of political scientists could not be pilfered and profited upon by any publisher, thereby enhancing the quality of the scholarship we publish and the spirit of openness that both APSA and cOAlition S espouse.

Moreover, the mandate to use CC-BY would require APSA journals to shift to a reliance on Author Processing Charges (APCs), yet most political science research is not publicly funded. This dependence on APCs would introduce significant inequities into the journal publication process and seriously disadvantage scholars from low resource institutions or low-income countries. Currently, APSA journals review and accept articles without regard to the financial circumstances of the individual author; the APC-based journal model of Plan S, however, introduces a conflict of interest between financial sustainability and editorial standards. As such, Plan S contains potential for undermining the quality of political science scholarship.

Finally, Plan S threatens the current intertwined and complex infrastructure of academic knowledge production: scholarly societies would have markedly lower revenue, reducing their support for research, teaching and professional development; academic publishers would find it increasingly difficult to support their current technological and editorial infrastructure; and many individual faculty and researchers might find their hiring and promotion prospects diminished as their publishing prospects narrow due to the imposition of APCs. APSA has a duty to care for its members, university supporters and publishing partners around the world to protect the broad access to and availability of APSA journals and other journals in the discipline. We sincerely hope that Coalition S will consider our feedback and concerns as it moves forward. We look forward to continued dialogue on these very important issues affecting the publication of academic research.