Equity in OA
Workshop Report commissioned by

Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA)

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Equity in OA Workshop 3: Report

Background

This third workshop in the Equity in OA series took place on 6 June 2023 primarily with publishers and with librarians, intermediaries, funders, and other stakeholders.

This workshop built on the [first workshop](#) and [second workshop](#) in which participants from a wide array of countries discussed why equity is important, current challenges to global equity, and ways to increase equity in two categories of OA models: those where transactions are per-article, and models where there is no reliance on per-article charges.

Participants in workshop 3 were asked to discuss and refine draft principles for improving equity in models based on per-article transactions. This workshop was focused on the APC model, and the next workshop in the series will focus on other models where APC transactions are not required such as Diamond OA, subsidy models, and collective models.

Publisher participants were reminded not to share any information that was private or in any way commercially sensitive. We also asked publishing participants not to explain what their organizations are doing at present, nor what their organizations might/could contemplate doing in the future.

We began with a Sli.do poll asking participants how excited they are about increasing equity in OA, and the response showed there is a great deal of enthusiasm.

Draft Principles

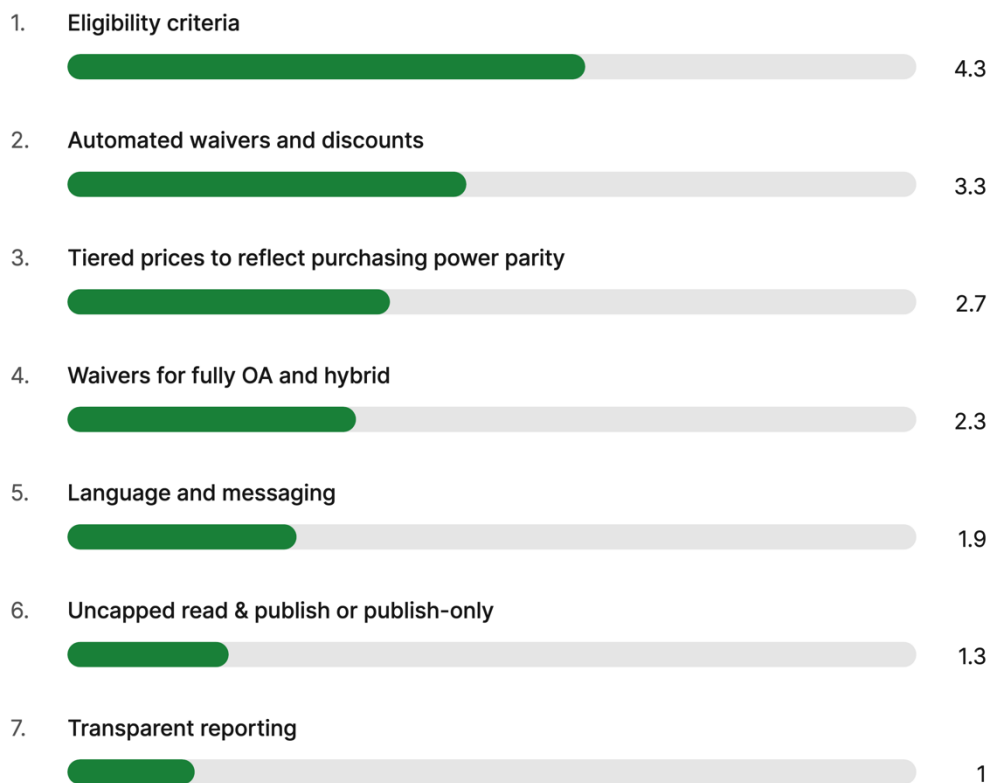Participants had received seven draft principles in advance of the meeting:

1. **Eligibility criteria** for waived/discounted papers may or may not involve geography but are always wide enough to meet unfunded / under-funded author needs regardless of geographies, affiliations and career stages. These need to be communicated clearly in advance and during the submission process.

2. **Automated waivers/discounts for eligible authors** - *at least* for those with primary affiliations (or having the main funder of the research) based in certain countries. Automated should mean that no or minimal author action is required with technology/metadata harnessed to guide workflows and messaging. This should include eligibility under a read and publish or publish-only agreement.

3. **Waiver programs should include all journals in a publisher's portfolio, whether fully OA or hybrid**

4. **Language and messaging**:
   a. Clear and updated pre-submission waiver and discount information including eligible journals and program expiration and terms, with information found at the journal-page level and proactively made visible to authors during submission.
   b. Clear messaging early in the publication workflow (tailored, on submission and based on affiliation/funder information) to surface that charges will be waived/discounted for OA publication following peer review and on the condition of acceptance.

c. Use of shared vocabulary, ideally.

5. **Tiered prices to reflect purchasing power parity** between countries and between different types of institutions /researchers within those countries.

6. **Introduction (or increased use) of uncapped read & publish or uncapped publish-only deals** to remove <u>all</u> financial barriers to publication for authors at affiliated institutions.

7. **Transparent reporting** around how much content a journal is publishing on a waived/discounted basis and how these waivers/discounts are being funded/supported by the publisher.

Participants were asked to score the principles from 1 to 5 based on which held the most potential for increasing equity and if any important principles were missing. Eligibility criteria, automated waivers and discounts, and tiered prices to reflect purchasing power parity scored highest at the start of the workshop.
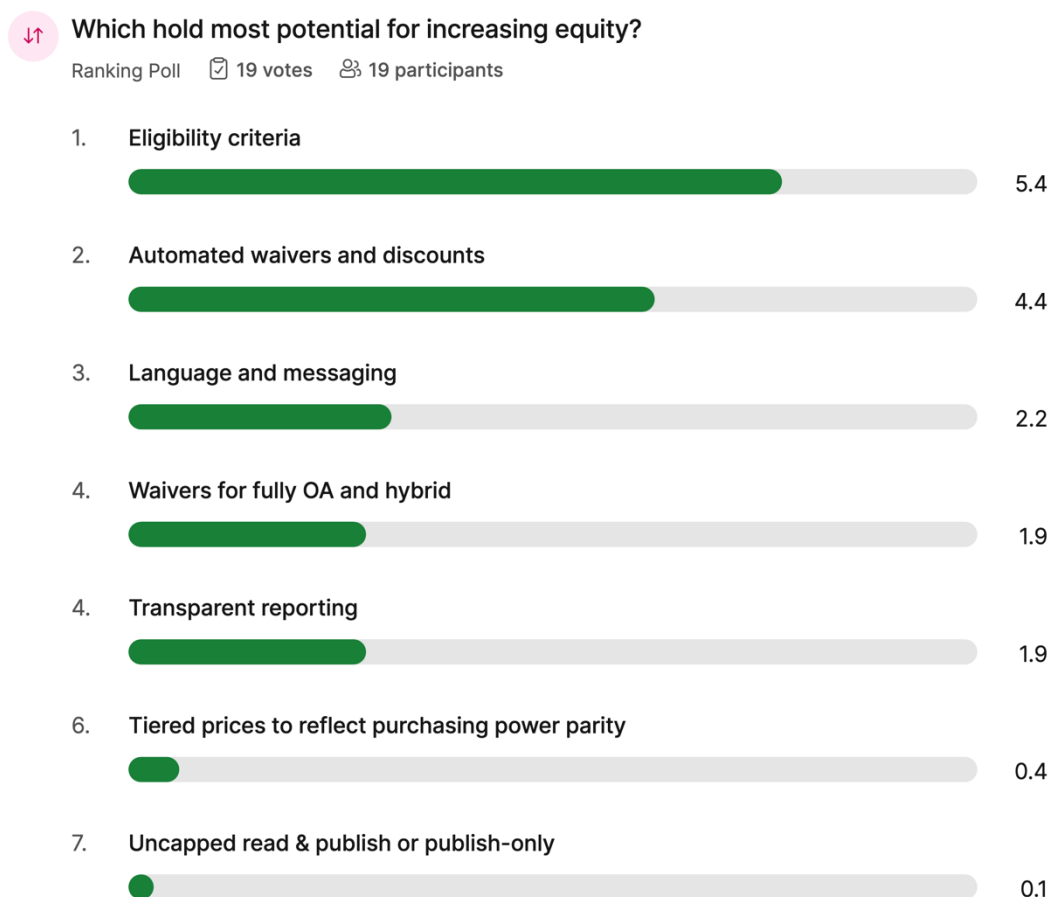
⇅ Which hold most potential for increasing equity?
Ranking Poll   ☑ 23 votes   👥 23 participants

1. **Eligibility criteria**

    4.3

2. **Automated waivers and discounts**

    3.3

3. **Tiered prices to reflect purchasing power parity**

    2.7

4. **Waivers for fully OA and hybrid**

    2.3

5. **Language and messaging**

    1.9

6. **Uncapped read & publish or publish-only**

    1.3

7. **Transparent reporting**

    1

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When asked the same question after discussion of the principles, eligibility criteria remained at the top of the list followed by automated waivers and discounts and then by clearer language and messaging around waiver and discounts.

Which hold most potential for increasing equity?
Ranking Poll · 19 votes · 19 participants

1. Eligibility criteria — 5.4
2. Automated waivers and discounts — 4.4
3. Language and messaging — 2.2
4. Waivers for fully OA and hybrid — 1.9
4. Transparent reporting — 1.9
6. Tiered prices to reflect purchasing power parity — 0.4
7. Uncapped read & publish or publish-only — 0.1

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On the question of whether anything was missing from the draft principles, respondents identified some topics, such as coordinated funding for OA and moving to a whole new system without any APCs, that will be covered by the fourth workshop in this series.

Discussion of the Draft Principles

1. **Eligibility criteria for waived/discounted papers may or may not involve geography but are always wide enough to meet unfunded/under-funded author needs regardless of geographies, affiliations, and career stages. These need to be communicated clearly in advance and during the submission process.**

Most participants agreed that clear guidelines are important in fostering equity, and that communication is required more generally then captured by the current wording. For example, libraries also play a role in educating local authors. Publishers may have opportunity to clearly

communicate at other stages of the author journey. Aim to keep the principle high-level rather than prescriptive about how it should be achieved.

The development of a shared/common vocabulary was seen as an important way to improve clarity, particularly as eligibility criteria vary from publisher to publisher. This could also help underpin annual reporting. OASPA, perhaps in collaboration with other stakeholders such as librarians, could be helpful in defining clear, understandable terminology that different publishers could use. It was noted that Research 4 Life has developed some terminology that could be built upon: https://www.research4life.org/apc-waivers/.

Requirements for establishing eligibility should not be onerous. The dignity of authors is important, and it is unfair and onerous to require them to obtain letters of support or to demonstrate a lack of funding.

Maintaining author dignity and minimizing burden on them would be helpful principles for OASPA to embrace.

2. **Automated waivers/discounts for eligible authors - *at least* for those with primary affiliations (or having the main funder of the research) based in certain countries. Automated should mean that no or minimal author action is required with technology/metadata harnessed to guide workflows and messaging. This should include eligibility under a read and publish or publish-only agreement.**

The principle should perhaps be re-written to minimize burden because, whether this is achieved via automation or manual work at the publisher end, the goal is to minimize burden on authors and maintain author dignity.

Automation was generally viewed as desirable. A concern was expressed that authors sometimes change authorship positions on a paper in order to take advantage of waiver policies or discounts tied to institutional affiliation. The OA Switchboard and various intermediaries can already provide implementation support. It is unrealistic to imagine that everything will be automated as there will always be edge cases and automation costs may be challenging or expensive for smaller publishers. There may also need to be human checkpoints at stages of the process, for example by funders or librarians when providing central APC funding or to ensure the appropriate contributor is identified as the first author.

For automation to work, good metadata is essential. This includes metadata about the authors and their geography, institutional affiliations, and relevant funding sources. This metadata needs to travel consistently across platforms, services, and stages in the author journey.

3. **Waiver programs should include all journals in a publisher's portfolio, whether fully OA or hybrid**

This proved contentious. Many funder and library participants at this, and earlier, workshops strongly support this idea. Many publisher participants felt such a principle would be inappropriate. Publishers must be free to choose their business and publishing models and must be free to set their transition models and the pace of transition. There was a concern that this proposed principle, if

adopted, might foster tensions and have the unintended consequence of slowing down the transition to open access.

A librarian felt that the practice of 'perpetual transition' (that is, continuing to refer to hybrid models as a 'transition' without stating what the intended end point of the transition is, or without making changes that demonstrate an actual transition to full open access) had the potential to foster mistrust between librarians and publishers. The need was expressed for publishers to be clear and transparent when they view hybrid as the desired end-state (as opposed to a transition model.

4. **Language and messaging**:
   a) **Clear and updated pre-submission waiver and discount information including eligible journals and program expiration and terms, with information found at the journal-page level and proactively made visible to authors during submission.**
   b) **Clear messaging early in the publication workflow (tailored, on submission, and based on affiliation/funder information) to surface that charges will be waived/discounted for OA publication following peer review and on the condition of acceptance.**
   c) **Use of shared vocabulary, ideally.**

Participants said that while these points are helpful, they are not really principles. Rather they are implementation guidance for principles related to clarity and automation.

5. **Tiered prices to reflect purchasing power parity between countries and between different types of institutions/researchers within those countries.**

There were strong objections from some publisher participants to this proposed principle because it relates to pricing and business models. For funders and librarians, it was identified as "one of the most important issues" to increase equity.

Some publishers pointed out that without supporting research, relevant data, and a model, it would be very difficult for any publisher to implement this principle even if they wanted to do so. cOAlition S has also commissioned [some research on this topic](#).

Although such a scheme could be helpful for researchers in developing and transition countries, it would not help unfunded researchers in any country.

It was noted that Research 4 Life uses a mixed economic/development indicator model for calculating eligibility for free and discounted access, but this is being reviewed. Over time efforts to make its model fairer have resulted in it become very complex and less transparent. Any model should be based on clear objectives and should be as transparent as possible.

6. **Introduction (or increased use) of uncapped read & publish or uncapped publish-only deals to remove <u>all</u> financial barriers to publication for authors at affiliated institutions.**

Again, there was strong push back from some publishers as this is a commercial decision. Not all customers are willing to pay for uncapped agreements, particularly with large publishers, because of the cost implications. Some librarians are reluctant to enter these agreements with large publishers because they can be very expensive and are difficult to cancel.

7. **Transparent reporting around how much content a journal is publishing on a waived/discounted basis and how these waivers/discounts are being funded/supported by the publisher.**

The response to this proposed principle was mixed. There was some support if reporting was at portfolio level rather than title by title or article by article, was not too onerous, and was voluntary rather than required. There were concerns about the detail of how it could be done and how useful it would be without standard vocabulary or standards about the way in which things are counted. Author dignity is important as individual authors might feel uncomfortable if they were identified as having received a waiver because their article was flagged in some way.

Funder and library participants indicated they would welcome clarity about how waivers and discounts are being funded. These sums should not simply be passed on to other customers, and certainly not without both discussion and transparency.

Should the OASPA Code of Conduct evolve to incorporate the principles?

Caution was expressed. Care would need to be taken to:

- Revise the principles based on today's discussion.
- Additional equity-building principles would be needed to ensure the principles are broad enough for any OA model.
- Clarify whether the principles signal intent and encourage change, or whether they are requirements to achieve.
- Consider the correct vehicle (e.g., membership criteria, code of conduct, new Guidelines for APC waivers and discounts, etc.).

Is support required to implement?

Yvonne Campfens from the OA Switchboard shared a very short presentation on how the initiative is developing to support the implementation of automated waiver and discount requests from institutions to/from publishers and reporting to the institution about publication with a waiver or discount.

NISO is also developing some standards in this space, and it might be helpful to reference these in due course.

Participants
The following people participated in this workshop. Please note that this does not mean they agree with all the points made in the workshop.

Kaveh Bazargan (River Valley Technologies)

Miranda Bennett (California Digital Library)

Curtis Brundy (Iowa State University)

Yvonne Campfens (OA Switchboard)

Jamie Carmichael (CCC)

Lauren Collister (University of Pittsburgh)

Audra Cox (American Physiological Society)

Lorraine Estelle (Information Power)

Emily Farrell (Taylor & Francis)

Matthew Giampoala (American Geophysical Union)

Sara Girard (AIP)

Nathaniel Gore (PeerJ)

Kazuhiro Hayashi (National Institute of Science and Technology Policy, Japan)

Steven Heffner (IEEE)

Rhodri Jackson (Oxford University Press)

Anna Jester (eJournal Press, Wiley Partner Solutions)

Molebatsi Kaelo (University of Botswana)

Daniel Keirs (IOPP)

Malavika Legge (OASPA)

Nick Lindsay (MIT Press)

Bill O'Brien (Aptara)

Nora Papp-Le Roy (cOAlition S)

Kimberly Parker (WHO)

Daniel Shanahan (PLOS)

Kathryn Sharples (Wiley)

Adrian Stanley (JMIR)

Elaine Stott (Canadian Science Publishing)

Glenn Truran (SANLIC)

Alicia Wise (Information Power)

About OASPA (https://oaspa.org/)

Representing a diverse community of organisations engaged in open scholarship, OASPA works to encourage and enable open access as the predominant model of communication for scholarly outputs. We are committed to our mission of developing and disseminating solutions that advance open access and ensuring a diverse, vibrant, and healthy open access community.

About Information Power (https://www.informationpower.co.uk/)

Information Power Ltd is a woman-owned microbusiness based in the UK. We have provided consultancy services in the research information space since 2006. We bring together bespoke teams of consultants with diverse, yet complementary, backgrounds and skills to provide support that spans the spectrum of challenges facing research funders, libraries, and publishers. Together we specialise in engagement on sensitive issues including business strategies and open access policy and practice.