

Plan S is a new initiative which mandates that by 2020 published scientific studies are immediately and fully open access. Researchers want their work to be read, and taxpayers should be able to read what they fund. Plan S is good news. But we should be alert to some less obvious consequences. Here are two.

First, the current system uses subscription fees to tax the rich and subsidize the poor. The wealthy pay exorbitant journal subscriptions, but the poor can then publish for free (and sometimes read for free too – depending on the publisher). If publishers can no longer charge subscription fees, will the rich still pay taxes so that researchers from countries (or institutes) with poorly funded scientific programs can readily publish? In any new publishing landscape, we should ensure that those without access to funds to pay for publishing are not unfairly disadvantaged. Minimally, innovative means-tested rules for fee-waivers will need to be factored into the new publishing model.

Second, many academic societies partner with publishers to produce society journals. Societies then use their share of the generally substantial income from subscription fees to host affordable conferences, run workshops, award travel grants, develop policy, and engage in outreach activities. A change from subscription fees to publication charges will almost certainly reduce most academic societies' income. Academic societies will need to plan their future budgets and activities carefully as we transition to the new publishing model. Funding bodies might even consider direct contributions to support society activities.

As we move to a subscription-free publishing model we should keep a watchful eye on our institutions. With an open access publishing system, the enormous costs that institutions pay to access to the scientific literature will gradually decrease. We must ensure that these savings are used appropriately: both to bolster the drive for a fully open access publishing system *and* to ensure fair access to publishing in this system for both the rich and poor.

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