Press release archive

NPG position statement on open access publishing and subscription business models.

6 January 2011

David Hoole, Director, Intellectual Property Policy and Licensing

Summary:

Nature Publishing Group (NPG) seeks to generate its income from a diverse range of sources according to where it offers greatest value to our customers – institutions, readers, advertisers, sponsors, employers, marketers and authors.

We continue to experiment with different business models in different circumstances. One size does not fit all.

Top tier journals, such as the Nature research journals, with high circulations and high costs per manuscript published, are best served by the subscription business model, where costs are spread amongst the high number of readers.

Journals with lower costs (and lower paid circulations) are well suited to open access business models, with affordable article processing charges (APCs). NPG is expanding its activities in these areas with new open access journal launches and hybrid open access business models. For example, 80% of our academic journals offer an open access option or are fully open access.

NPG has a liberal self-archiving policy for all authors of original research papers. We encourage self-archiving of the authors' accepted version, with a release date of 6 months post-publication. This is compatible with all major funder access policies and mandates.

Through its free manuscript deposition service, NPG helps authors archive in PubMed Central and UK PubMed Central.

NPG operates under exclusive license to publish agreements with its research authors. Authors retain copyright of their original research papers.

Statement

"FIRST, to place before the general public the grand results of Scientific Work and Scientific Discovery ; and to urge the claims of Science to a more general recognition in Education and in Daily Life ; And, SECONDLY, to aid Scientific men themselves, by giving early information of all advances made in any branch of Natural knowledge throughout the world, and by affording them an opportunity of discussing the various Scientific questions which arise from time to time."

This is *Nature*'s original mission statement, published in 1869. This mission has proved constant for over one hundred and forty years, and informs Nature Publishing Group's (NPG) strategy to this day. The words not only help determine NPG's strategy, but also echo aspects of the ongoing debates about access to the scientific literature. For this reason, open access publishing models have been at the heart of our business development and strategic thinking throughout the last decade. We have embraced the open access debate as a natural consequence of new technologies, and we have strived to fulfil the new opportunities that technology and experimental business models have provided.

One major principle has dominated our thinking: one size does not fit all. Scholarly communication has always, will always, and should always be served by a mix of models. It is this variety that provides a context for evolution and real progress. We recognise that different models work well in different circumstances.

High impact, highly selective 'top-tier journals' have high circulations, even larger numbers of readers, and relatively few authors. They accept roughly 10% of submitted manuscripts. In such circumstances, it seems fairer to spread the costs across the large number of readers, rather than the much smaller number of authors. For example, we have maintained subscription business models across the Nature research journals. Open access publication would require the imposition of a very high article processing charge (APC), and/or the introduction of submission fees. Both of these options currently remain unattractive due to the potential negative impact on submissions. As these journals have high circulations and widespread uptake of site license access, the vast majority of NPG content is accessible by the vast majority of scientists, on average at highly competitive rates.

We have, to date, found author self-archiving compatible with subscription business models, and so we have been actively encouraging self-archiving since 2005. NPG's **policy** of encouraging the archiving of the authors' accepted version, with a release date of 6 months post-publication has ensured that our journals are compatible with all the major funder access policies and mandates, as described on the SHERPA/RoMEO web site. In 2008, we introduced a free **manuscript deposition service**, to help authors archive their manuscripts at the click of a button. In this way, NPG, along with other publishers, have contributed enormously to repositories such as PubMedCentral (PMC) and UK PMC. NPG has **specified** liberal terms and conditions for the reuse of such archived material, for example ensuring it sits in the open access subset of UKPMC. NPG is also participating in the PEER project, co-funded by the European Union, and we look forward to learning more about the potential longer term impact of self-archiving and institutional repositories.

NPG first experimented with the open-access business model for journals with the launch of *Molecular Systems Biology* in April 2005. This is now a well established journal, with an impact factor of 12.125 (2009 JCR). Since then, **80% of our academic journals** have adopted the 'hybrid' open access business model (offering authors an open access option while also publishing subscription content) or are fully open access. In 2010 alone we introduced five more fully open access titles. The APCs are in-line with current industry norms, as the acceptance rates are higher than on Nature journals.

For several years, NPG has been considering how to offer a Nature-branded open access option. As described above, this is particularly challenging due to the low acceptance rates and the resulting high cost-per-manuscript published. ***Nature Communications*** overcomes these challenges. It has a higher acceptance rate than other Nature titles, and accepts some manuscripts previously rejected by the Nature research journals (subject to independent editorial review). Along with digital-only publication, this reduces the costs per manuscript published, and so an APC of $5000 is viable. Nature Communications was born-hybrid, and currently 40% of its content is open access, much higher than most other hybrid open access journals at this time.

Subscription prices can be controversial, and pricing subscriptions to hybrid journals can be particularly complex. NPG prices subscriptions and site licences in four major currencies to avoid unexpected exchange rate fluctuations, and over the past two years has introduced site license price increases well under the 7% cap **promised** in 2008 (3.5% and 4.5% respectively). We keep prices as low as possible by maximising a diverse range of other income streams, including advertising, sponsorship, and commercial reprints. For this reason, we offer Creative Commons non-commercial licences for open access articles, and prohibit commercial reuse of open access content without permission. NPG can then minimise charges to authors by maximising future commercial opportunities, and using these income streams to help support open access journals.

In 2010 we **announced** that for 2012 site license pricing for hybrid open access journals will be determined by the percentage change in the amount of subscription access articles (2010 versus 2009 content). This means the subscription price will be based on only the amount of subscribed content, independent of the open access content. This provides a more straightforward calculation from which to price journals, especially for journals that are growing, or new hybrid titles that don't have a base level of content.

NPG has also developed strategically significant open educational resources. The education market is aligned to the academic market, but with significant differences, particularly the need for free or very affordable high quality resources in the classroom. *Scitable* is an open and free science library and personal learning tool, aimed primarily at undergraduate teachers and students. Scitable currently concentrates on genetics and cell biology, which include the topics of evolution, gene expression, and the rich complexity of cellular processes shared by living organisms. *Scitable* also offers resources for the budding scientist, with advice about effective science communication and career paths.

NPG journals are hosted on nature.com, NPG's integrated journal publishing platform, facilitating search, linking, and integration with our social media services. All our journals benefit from nature.com's high ranking in search engines, increasing discoverability through search, and maximising exposure and impact. Nature.com itself is increasingly an open platform, with open search, OAI-PMH, and content APIs in development. *Nature Network* incorporates **Workbench**, an Open Social platform for widgets open to external developers. As NPG's open access content increases, coupled with open standards, APIs, new widgets and apps, we expect to see a blooming of services and opportunities that is beyond anyone's current expectations.

In 2011, NPG will expand its open access publishing programme with the launch of *Scientific Reports*. This will be born-digital, fully open access (with Creative Commons non-commercial licences), with an acceptance rate significantly higher than *Nature Communications*. *Scientific Reports* will enjoy all the benefits of the nature.com platform, while offering authors the choice of a highly-affordable open access publishing option.

*** UPDATE: Calculation years amended from 2011 vs 2010. NPG apologises for this error (26 January 2011)**

About us **Privacy policy** **Naturejobs**
Contact us **Use of cookies** **Nature Asia**
Accessibility statement **Legal notice** **Nature Education**
Help **Terms** **RSS web feeds**

Search: go

SPRINGER NATURE

© 2019 Nature is part of Springer Nature. All Rights Reserved.

partner of AGORA, HINARI, OARE, INASP, ORCID, CrossRef, COUNTER and COPE