

Money Matters

Fees and Potential Revenues

Most gold OA journals (not quite two-thirds) are funded by societies, universities and colleges, libraries, governmental agencies, grant funding, subsumed and unstated costs, or other means. Some were free during the study period as a way of enticing more authors.

But roughly one-third of OA journals studied for this report *do* charge fees of some sort, paid out of research funding, through institutional agreements (including libraries), or by the authors. Most of those fees are forthrightly stated as article processing fees, and I use the abbreviation *APC* through most of this report to refer to all author-side fees. In some cases, the fee is actually a membership charge or is a submission fee rather than a fee for accepted articles, and a few journals charge for both submission and acceptance.

Just under 200 journals either clearly had APCs but failed to state the amount online or seemed highly likely to have such fees (my default assumption for journals *not* published by societies, academic institutions, government agencies, or libraries) but were silent on the matter. Those journals—all of them graded *C* and accounting for only 4 percent of the gold OA articles published in 2013—are not considered in this chapter, which deals only with the 2,064 fee-charging journals that explicitly state APC levels (which published a total of just under 221,000 articles in 2013).

What's appropriate for an APC? I've discussed that a little already, and my general answer is that it depends on what work is being done, the field in which it's being done, and many other factors. Some journals almost certainly don't charge enough to sustain continued high-quality work; some journals almost certainly charge more than can be justified strictly on the basis of costs. All I can do is show what's out there, not what's "right."

Assumptions

I recorded the APC or other fees as stated on the journal's website—ideally from a separate tab or link, but often as the first or last paragraph in author guidelines or publication notes. When fees were stated in some currency other than US dollars, I used the conversion rate at the point (typically in August–December 2014) that I looked at the journal. When fees were variable, I assumed fees for a full research article, written by a nonmember (if the journal had a society affiliation), from the United States (if the journal charged different fees for different countries), *not* allowing extra for color illustrations, and assuming a ten-page article (except in cases where the journal explicitly said that a different length was most common). Overall numbers—here and in other chapters—assume no waivers and are clearly too high in many cases.

Fee Levels and Ranges

The most expensive journal in *DOAJ* charges \$5,000 per article. Three others charge more than \$4,000, while a dozen more charge \$3,000 to \$3,900 per article.

At the other extreme, in addition to 4,230 journals that don't charge APCs at all, there are 4 journals charging \$8 or \$9, 6 more that charge \$12 to \$19, and 19 more that charge \$20 to \$29 per article.

Those are the extremes. Table 3.1 shows the broader range (including these extremes).

As with most tables in this report, the number of journals is all journals in groups *A–D*, including a few that may not have published articles in 2013, while the number of articles is the count for 2013. The % *J*

Table 3.1. Journals and articles by fee range

APC	Journals	% J	Articles	% A
\$2,000+	241	12%	36,229	16%
\$1,500–1,999	270	13%	22,230	10%
\$1,000–1,500	171	8%	57,229	26%
\$600–999	386	19%	19,653	9%
\$450–599	133	6%	9,048	4%
\$300–449	237	11%	20,378	9%
\$200–299	139	7%	10,322	5%
\$100–199	274	13%	26,526	12%
\$50–99	140	7%	12,517	6%
\$8–49	73	4%	6,656	3%
Total	2,064		220,788	

and % A columns show percentages of all fee-charging journals (and articles) respectively.

Table 3.1 has too many divisions to show for broad areas or subject groups, so I divided APC ranges by quartiles—that is, 25 percent of APC-charging journals in each range. Those ranges are: **Nominal**, \$8 to \$200; **Low**, \$201 to \$600; **Medium**, \$601 to \$1,450; and **High**, \$1,451 or more.

Fee Ranges by Broad Area

Table 3.2 shows the number of fee-charging journals and 2013 articles in each broad area (and for Megajournals and Miscellany) split by APC range as noted above.

Area differences are fairly obvious. Biomed journals tend to have high APCs, HSS journals tend to have low or nominal APCs—and while most STEM journals have nominal or low APCs, those with medium APCs have disproportionately more articles.

In other words: not only are Biomed journals more likely to charge APCs, they're more likely to charge *high* APCs—and those few Humanities and Social Sciences journals that charge fees at all typically charge nominal or low fees.

For this particular measure, it may be enlightening to subdivide the three broad areas into eight subject groups. Table 3.3 does that.

Table 3.2. Fee ranges by area

Area	Nominal	Low	Medium	High
Mega			3	1
Articles			35,662	1,011
Biomed	125	165	239	457
Articles	10,218	9,655	14,029	44,509
STEM	277	272	192	51
Articles	29,580	24,576	21,433	12,030
HSS	130	86	41	4
Articles	7,377	4,564	1,543	1,155
Misc	13	4	3	1
Articles	3,097	233	51	65

Table 3.3. Fee ranges by subject group

Group	Nominal	Low	Medium	High
Biology	19	44	35	94
Articles	1,316	1,865	2,597	12,024
Medicine	106	121	204	363
Articles	8,902	7,790	11,432	32,485
Earth & Life	93	103	76	23
Articles	5,471	9,387	6,403	1,831
Eng. & Tech.	48	56	34	10
Articles	9,573	4,000	1,836	2,252
Math & Comp.	91	67	32	5
Articles	9,177	8,142	6,631	719
Sciences	45	46	50	13
Articles	5,359	3,047	6,563	7,228
Humanities	17	16	6	
Articles	1,582	1,579	300	
Social Sciences	113	70	35	4
Articles	5,795	2,985	1,243	1,155

A couple of noteworthy items here: there are *no* Humanities journals with high APCs and very few with medium APCs, and Medicine has many more high-APC journals than all other subject groups put together. There's more here, but I'll leave further analysis to the reader.