

OPEN ACCESS IN THE UK: SUMMARY OF MAIN IMPLICATIONS FOR RMA MEMBERS

SEPTEMBER 2024

This is a summary of the Introduction to the panel session ‘Publishing Musical Scholarship in the Age of Open Access’, which took place on Thursday 12 September 2024 during the RMA’s 150th-Anniversary Conference at Senate House, London. The Introduction was written and presented by Prof. Rebecca Herissone, Chair of the Publications Committee, and is an update of an earlier document she produced for the Committee in January 2022.

The panel’s participants were:

- Chris Banks (RMA Publications Committee Open Access Representative and Director of Library Services, Imperial College, London)
- Kate Brett (Cambridge University Press)
- Michael Middeke (Boydell & Brewer)
- Robert Adlington (Royal College of Music)

The Powerpoint presentations and related written material from the session have also been made available to RMA members.

What is Open Access?

1. Open Access is a model for making scholarly research publications and data freely available, removing charges and all other barriers to access. An Open Access publication is defined as one that ‘anyone can read, download, copy, distribute, print, search for and search within ... or use ... in education or in any other way within the legal agreements’.¹
2. The traditional financial model for scholarly publication has been for material to be available primarily via institutional subscription (mainly journals) and purchasing (mainly monographs, edited collections and other long-form publications) – so institutional libraries and individual researchers paid to access the results of research.
3. The Open Access movement originated within the scientific community in the late 1990s as a form of protest against this model: scientific journals had begun to raise their subscription costs to prohibitively high levels, which was acting as a barrier to people accessing the results of scientific research in a timely manner.
4. Over time, however, OA gained momentum as part of a broader principle of making scholarly research results more visible and transparent to the world outside academia. This is considered to enhance the likely influence and reach of the research, but the underlying context is one of public accountability: funding bodies must seek to ensure that the outcomes of publicly funded research are made freely accessible to all in order to help to justify to the taxpayer the costs of research funding allocated to academics and their institutions.
5. The effect of the rules that have been introduced to implement the principle of Open Access has been to initiate a slow but monumental shift in the world of academic publishing away from the traditional ‘pay-to-access’ model towards a ‘pay-to-publish’ model: that is, scholars and/or their institutional employers pay to have the results of research published, making it free at the point of access.

¹ <https://www.openaccess.nl/en/what-is-open-access>

What research is affected by Open Access rules?

6. Because of OA's close links to the principles of public accountability, in the UK, OA requirements have mainly been associated with two forms of research:
 - a. Publications resulting from research funded by one of the Research Councils within UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).
 - b. Publications submitted by HE institutions to the government's Research Excellence Framework (REF), where only items that fulfil the OA requirements are eligible to be submitted.
7. The UKRI's OA regulations have applied to journal articles produced from projects they have funded since April 2022, and to monographs and book chapters since January 2024.
8. REF regulations are somewhat different: in the 2021 REF, OA eligibility requirements applied only to scholarly journal articles – they did not apply to long-form publications, thus excluding all monographs, edited collections, and non-standard publications such as compositions and music editions. The plan was to add long-form publications to the OA requirements for the next REF, due in 2029, but, as many will know, it has recently been announced that this transition has been delayed and will not occur now until after REF2029. This is a great relief to many, given the tight timescale and long lead-time for producing a monograph. However, there is an international agreement to move towards Open Access for the majority of academic research outputs as soon as possible, and it is clear that long-form publications will need to be available on OA for any REF exercises that occur after 2029.
9. Although OA regulations technically only apply in these two contexts, in practice, the fundamental changes in the way academic publications are funded mean that they affect, or will soon affect, most academic publishing, regardless of whether it has been publicly funded by a research grant or because of research funding received by an HE institution.

How are the rules applied?

10. At the moment, there remain two ways of complying with OA regulations:
 - a. Gold access route (Route 1): when the research outcome is published, the author pays the publisher the full cost of publication (for journal articles this is known as the APC, or Article Processing Charge), usually using funds that have been provided in connection with a research-project grant or by the researcher's institution. The publisher then makes the final, edited version of the article, known as the Version of Record (VoR), free to access.
 - b. Green access route (Route 2): within three months of a research outcome being accepted for publication, the author must ensure that the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM: the version of the outcome accepted for publication, but preceding the final, edited version that is published) is deposited into an authorised repository from which it can be freely accessed; this is normally an institutional research portal. At the moment, access to the VoR can be delayed for several months or even years if the publisher imposes an embargo; in that case the only version of the output available remains the AAM, accessed via the authorised repository rather than from the publisher themselves.
11. Because most of the emphasis has so-far been on facilitating Open Access to journal articles, this is where we have seen the most substantial shifts in the way that scholarly research outcomes are funded – that is, where the move from pay-to-access to pay-to-publish has been most obvious. This is resulting in fundamental changes to publishers' business models and consequently to the financial relationships between Higher Education institutions and academic publishers. Over the past several years, individual HE institutions have been negotiating with individual academic publishers to put in place so-called Read and Publish agreements (also known as Transformative Agreements), through which the institutions pay

publishers to enable their researchers both to publish their journal article on Open Access (whether or not it was funded by a UKRI grant) and to read the content of the publisher's journals and other publications, so these can be freely used by those affiliated to the Institution. Most of these agreements have been made between larger HE institutions and major academic publishers: smaller institutions and publishers do not always have the same financial resources to make such agreements workable.

12. In future, some kind of equivalent arrangement will be necessary for monographs and edited collections, but, at the present time, Open Access for monographs remains largely restricted to individual books, where Route-1 access has been paid for as part of a funded project, or by accessing funds made available by the researcher's institution, either from internal funds, or where the institution applies to the UKRI to cover the costs of OA publishing.
13. The UKRI has made a pot of money available to cover publication costs in cases where Route 1 (Gold) Access is not otherwise available: the Open Access Block Grant. This can be used for both long- and short-form outputs,. Researchers in receipt of a UKRI project grant can apply via their institution for the costs of OA to be covered by this fund, so eligibility for the fund is open to all grant holders, regardless of the institution to which they are affiliated and whether or not they have an R&P agreement in place with the publisher concerned.
14. REF requirements relating to OA are eligibility criteria – if you can't meet the OA regulations for a particular output, you cannot submit the output – but there is no funding available to make outputs eligible. Unless researchers have institutional support that allows them access to funding for Gold access – either through Read & Publish agreements or access to the OA block grant – or access to a repository for Green access, then it is challenging for them to make outputs not funded by research grants eligible.

Unintended Consequences of OA

15. The UK regulations relating to OA publishing have, obviously, been designed from the perspective of the bodies funding research, so they are designed for research publications that are produced from this sort of research. They do not really take into account publication of research not resulting from direct UKRI project funding, nor the implications of the change from pay-to-access to pay-to-publish for a number of different types of institution and researchers in different forms of employment There are particular issues for smaller institutions and their employees, and even more so for independent researchers. Since not all the routes to access funding are open to everyone, there is a risk of a two-tier system being created, whereby UKRI- and institutionally funded research can be freely accessed, while non-funded research cannot.
16. We can use the RMA's two journals to illustrate these differences:
 - a. Both JRMA and RMARC are currently 'hybrid' journals and have Transformative Journal status with CUP: they continue to be subscription journals, but some of their content (at the moment not much) is available on OA because the author has acquired funding for Gold Access through one route or another.
 - b. A researcher employed at an institution that has negotiated a Read & Publish agreement with CUP that covers JRMA and RMARC is able to publish the material on open access in either journal, regardless of whether their research was funded by a UKRI grant.
 - c. A researcher employed at an institution that does not have an R&P agreement with CUP that covers the RMA journals may still be able to publish their material on full OA where the institution has provided funding to pay for the Gold access route for the publication in question. In the case of a publication resulting from a UKRI grant, this funding would come from the UKRI OA Block Grant; otherwise it would have to be money allocated for OA by the institution from its own funds.

- d. An independent researcher not required to follow the UKRI OA policy can still publish in either journal without having to pay to publish, but access to the published article will not be free of charge: institutions and individuals will have to pay to access it unless the researcher covers the APC themselves.
17. Where funding for Gold access is not available, and the researcher uses the Green route instead, there can be substantial differences in what is available on OA (i.e. the AAM) and the published research output produced professionally by the publisher (the VoR). This, after all, is why we have editors and copy editors and typesetters and designers. The AAM is in many cases a ‘second-class’ type of research output, and it is problematic that both the AAM and VoR may be in circulation simultaneously.
18. Even where Gold OA is a possibility, acquiring permission to include third-party copyright material, such as music examples, illustrations and images – the sorts of things for which an author has to apply for permission to reproduce as part of the publication process – can be difficult. There are different sorts of ‘Creative Commons’ licences that can be issued to allow the material to be used under particular restrictions. For example:
- a. A straightforward CC BY licence allows the user to ‘distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, so long as attribution is given to the creator’.²
 - b. A CC BY-NC licence allows the material to be used in the same way, but only for non-commercial purposes.
 - c. A CC BY-ND licence allows the material to be copied and distributed as long as it is attributed to the creator, but in unadapted form only
 - d. A CC BY-NC-ND licence allows unadapted, credited use, but only in a non-commercial context.
19. There are some questions about the pace of change among publishers internationally, so researchers who publish their material with international publishers need to consider whether their publication will be compliant with the UKRI and/or REF requirements. It is possible to make a case that a particular journal or publisher is the only appropriate location for an author’s research output to be produced where OA compliance is not possible with that journal/publisher, but routes to facilitate OA access internationally are only just beginning to be established.

The impact of the move towards open-access academic publishing has already been profound, and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. It is also a rapidly changing situation, so we will try to keep this information updated.

Glossary of Open-Access-Related Terms

AAM	Author Accepted Manuscript: the version of an article accepted by a journal for publication, but preceding the final, post-editing, published version.
APC	Article Processing Charge: the full cost of publication of an article, charged by the publisher to the author in order to place the article on Open Access.
REF	Research Excellence Framework: the UK government’s periodical research assessment exercise for Higher Education institutions.
TA	Transformative Agreement (also known as Read and Publish agreement): financial agreement between individual publishers and individual Higher Education institution allowing researchers employed at the institution to publish on Open Access, and to access the content of the publisher’s journals and other publications.

² <https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/licenses/>.

- TJ Transformative Journal: a status for which journals can apply so that it is formally acknowledged that they are in the process of making the transition to become fully Open Access journals, but that at present they are hybrid publications, in which some content is published on OA, while other content remains available to the reader only on payment of a charge.
- UKRI UK Research and Innovation: a non-departmental public body formed in 2018 to bring together Research England (comprising the seven research councils in the UK that support research and knowledge exchange at Higher Education institutions) and Innovate UK (the UK innovation agency).
- VoR Version of Record: the final, post-editing, published version of an article.

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