

# Do Business Schools have a Plan B for Plan S?

For those involved in STEM research and the publishing industry, the last year has been all about Plan S and its potential impact on both constituencies. But what are the consequences, unintended or otherwise, for business schools and their research programmes? **Simon Linacre** lifts the lid on Plan S and what might be in store for the sector



Anyone who has spent substantial time in the business school sector will be aware of a familiar trope that occurs every so often. It goes something like this: science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) researchers demand something; universities move heaven and earth to satisfy them; business schools are left to tidy up the mess it creates as no one thought about the consequences for them.

This may be slightly cynical but there have been numerous examples of unintended consequences that have impacted negatively on the business school community. Because, from governmental policy to local politics business schools are regarded as “different” (often a euphemism for “rich”); no one seems to look out for them in the same way as other core departments.

There could be another case of this heading the way of business schools in the shape of “Plan S”. This is an initiative co-ordinated by Science Europe, a group of heads of national research funding organisations, and backed by 14 major funding agencies in Europe (and increasingly further afield), which have formed cOAlition S to ensure that all published research they fund is made open access from 2020.

Agencies include UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Agence Nationale de la Recherche (France) and the Wellcome Trust, which are demanding that the articles they fund are not only made open access but are done so in compliant journals or on compliant platforms.

### Open, not closed

The initiative was launched in September 2018 and is the latest significant step in the push to move academic articles from behind publisher paywalls into an open environment. In the early 2000s a number of declarations were made defining what open access meant and promulgating its adoption. Recent years have seen governments in different countries legislate in favour of open access publication in some form or another although these are often at odds with each other, causing some confusion among scholars and publishers alike as to what constitutes open access in which country.

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Even so, ever since the internet came of age in the 1990s, research has been shared more openly as some of the barriers to publication were removed.

Add to that market disruption in the shape of Sci-Hub, a website that claims to give free access to the vast majority of academic articles, then it is fair to say that there is a significant degree of turmoil in publishing at the moment.

At Cabells – which provides academics with accurate information and reputable outlets for publication – we hear a lot about this from customers, journal editors and researchers concerned about the future of the scholarly publishing environment they depend on.

Fundamental to the arguments of all those pushing for open access is that publicly funded research should be made accessible to all, which is why the national funding agencies have been so keen to push forward as they have seen a significant proportion of tax payers’ money fund research that has remained behind publishers’ paywalls.

While this has changed somewhat in recent years as open access has gained traction, a recent report by Clarivate Analytics’ Institute for Scientific Information showed that while over 80% of research articles funded by the Wellcome Trust had been made open access, only around a third of the articles funded by Agence Nationale de la Recherche in France were openly accessible.

## Research impact

In addition, the same report predicted that up to a half of all the published output for some EU countries could be open access following implementation of Plan S. There is much to rejoice about here as this will mean a much greater percentage of scientifically important work will be accessible to non-scientists who do not have the luxury of belonging to an institution with multiple subscriptions to academic journals. For anyone who has felt the annoyance of coming up against a paywall for a newspaper or magazine article, this must be increased tenfold if you are trying to find research about a disease affecting a loved one.

But it is surmountable. Currently there is a vast EU research fund called Horizon 2020 that has been sharing out €80 billion for research in member states and which will be superseded by Horizon Europe, which will have an even bigger pot.

It is already an established mechanism for STEM authors to use some of their funding to pay for their articles to be made "Gold OA", which comes in the form of an article processing charge (APC), which ranges from \$500 to \$5,000. Increasingly, authors are being mandated by funders and governments alike to make their articles OA and therefore use funding (if they have any) to pay publishers an APC.

If they do not have funding, they can opt for what is known as 'Green OA', which is to make a version of their article available as OA on an institutional repository or elsewhere while the final "article of record" is published in a journal.

So, what has all this got to do with business schools? Well, various mandates have allowed both Green and Gold OA routes to develop over time while making allowances for publishers to gradually think of new business models and alternatives to the traditional paywall model, none have gone so far and on such a scale as Plan S.

Crucially, it currently does not allow for any member-funded research to be published in a so-called "hybrid" journal, that, is a journal that publishes OA articles alongside paywall articles, unless there is a statement from the journal and

its publisher to the effect that it is committed to transitioning to pure OA by a certain date.

Many STEM journals are already pure OA or are making the transitions but here is the rub: what about the long tail of non-STEM journals that may publish a funded article or two each year in among the majority non-funded articles?

To formulate an example, let's say we have a well-regarded, highly-ranked marketing journal that publishes 50 articles a year. In 2019, one of those articles has been funded by a cOAlition S signatory and the author requests it be made OA, which the publisher does on payment of a \$2,000 APC. If the same thing happens in 2020, when Plan S comes into effect, the author(s) will not be allowed to publish in the journal of their choice, bound as they are by their funding conditions. Their research will be lost to the journal community they chose to share it with, the publisher will lose some high-impact research and the article may appear in a less relevant, more STEM-focused journal that is pure OA.

The reason the marketing journal in this example cannot transition to OA is because 98% of its articles are unfunded and, with little or no means to pay an APC, publication has to be paid for through a subscription model. If that 2% balance rises to 5%, 10% or 25%, the paywall model comes under threat as subscription prices have to be reduced; and caps placed on APCs means that costs cannot be recovered through the funding channel.

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# €80bn

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But, don't publishers have double digit profit margins? Couldn't they swallow some reductions in revenue to maintain the equilibrium? Well, yes, some can and some do. Larger publishers have already looked to offset any impact and diversify their activities, while experimenting with new OA models.

However, a STEM-based push into OA could put at risk many journals that have neither a big name or ranking to sustain them through high-quality paywall articles nor the community of authors with funding to pay for OA. Such journals may see quality submissions drop and cease to become viable for the publishers or societies that operate them – and as such the outlets for business school academics could narrow quite significantly.

For the majority of business school scholars where you publish still matters. If you publish in top management journals then you as an author are happy, your head of department is happy, and perhaps most importantly your deans are happy. If you are unable to find a suitably ranked journal for your article then despite the decades-old railings of the “publish or perish” culture, no one is happy, least of all those tracking publication performance targets.

Should Plan S come to fruition, there will undoubtedly be changes in the scholarly communications landscape that will have ramifications for business schools. Some of these may well be for the better as increased openness can lead to greater engagement and collaboration with business.

Whatever the changes, whether the business school community like it or not, they should look to their friends across campus in STEM for some pointers and plan for what a new open research environment could mean for them.



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Plan S is based on ten principles based on the premise that on January 1st 2020 scientific publications on the results from research funded by public grants provided by national and European research councils and funding bodies, must be published in compliant Open Access journals or on compliant Open Access platforms. In addition:

1. Authors retain copyright of their publication with no restrictions. All publications must be published under an open license, preferably the Creative Commons Attribution Licence CC BY. In all cases, the license applied should fulfil the requirements defined by the Berlin Declaration
2. The Funders will ensure jointly the establishment of robust criteria and requirements for the services that compliant high-quality Open Access journals and Open Access platforms must provide
3. In case such-high quality Open Access journals or platforms do not yet exist, the Funders will, in a co-ordinated way, provide incentives to establish and support them when appropriate; support will also be provided for Open Access infrastructures where necessary;
4. Where applicable, Open Access publication fees are covered by the Funders or universities, not by individual researchers; it is acknowledged that all scientists should be able to publish their work Open Access even if their institutions have limited means
5. When Open Access publication fees are applied, their funding is standardised and capped (across Europe)
6. The Funders will ask universities, research organisations and libraries to align their policies and strategies, notably to ensure transparency The above principles shall apply to all types of scholarly publications but it is understood that the timeline to achieve Open Access for monographs and books may be longer than 1 January 2020
7. The importance of open archives and repositories for hosting research outputs is acknowledged because of their long-term archiving function and their potential for editorial innovation
8. The “hybrid” model of publishing is not compliant with the above principles
9. The Funders will monitor compliance and sanction non-complianceSource: <https://www.coalition-s.org/10-principles/>

Want to learn more about Open Access and Plan S? Look up the following for deeper insight:

- The cOAlition S website is at <https://www.coalition-s.org/>
- An open letter signed by nearly 2,000 researchers voicing concern about Plan S is at <https://sites.google.com/view/plansopenletter/home>
- Overview of Plan S from research industry expert Rob Johnson on UKSG website (<https://insights.uksg.org/articles/10.1629/uksg.453/>)
- Report from Institute for Scientific Information on impact of Plan S (<https://Inkd.in/eQwCqgK>)
- Interview with European Commission’s former open access envoy on status of Plan S in research (<https://www.researchresearch.com/news/article/?articleId=1380142>)



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#### About the Author

*Simon Linacre is Director of International Marketing and Development at Cabells having spent 15 years in publishing at Emerald, where he had direct experience in journal acquisitions, open access and business development. His background is in journalism and he has been published in academic journals on the topics of bibliometrics and knowledge transfer. He holds masters degrees in philosophy and international business and has global experience lecturing to researchers on publishing strategies.*