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Wellcome's Open Access Policy Review

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Executive Summary

As part of Wellcome's review of its Open Access policy, individuals and organisations were invited to respond to an open consultation on the future of this policy.

Wellcome received responses from researchers, libraries and higher education institutes, publishers and funding organisations. Wellcome was frequently commended for its commitment to Open Access, both through policy and advocacy. However, there were disparate views as to the potential reforms and associated challenges of realising a fully OA world in future.

Wellcome will consider these comments, alongside other consultation exercises, in the development of its updated Open Access policy.

Introduction

Wellcome is currently reviewing its Open Access (OA) policy, with the aim of ensuring that publications stemming from our funding are shared and used to maximise their benefit to health.

Wellcome has carried out a series of consultation exercises to seek the views of key stakeholder groups including researchers, universities, funders and publishers through a variety of forums. This open consultation sought responses from individuals and organisations with an interest in OA and Wellcome's policy, with the most responses received from researchers (both Wellcome and non-Wellcome funded) and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

In total, Wellcome received 53 responses shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Responses to Wellcome's Open Consultation	
Total	53
Library/Higher Education Institute (HEI)	20
Researcher	18
Publisher	7
Independent	5
Funder	3

The consultation was designed as free-text, with respondents asked to state their affiliation and respond to three questions regarding Wellcome's current policy and possible policy reforms:

1. *What do you think has been the impact of Wellcome's existing OA policy on realizing open access?*
2. *What are the main reforms or developments needed to ensure 100% of Wellcome-funded research outputs are OA?*
3. *Wellcome wishes to support a transition to a fully OA world, where no research is behind a paywall irrespective of who funded it. In your opinion what action is required to enable this transition?*

Where individuals agreed to their response being made publicly available, these full responses can be viewed in the accompanying document.

1. Wellcome's Existing OA Policy

Wellcome's commitment to OA was noted across stakeholder groups and Wellcome was recognised as setting precedents for other funding organisations and acting as an OA advocate.

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Researchers were the group most likely to highlight the impact of Wellcome's policy in ensuring rapid dissemination of original research through immediate, fully OA publication – a view that was echoed by individuals from funders, publishers and HEIs.

The impact of the OA policy, combined with advocacy activities, was noted as facilitating and encouraging harmonisation across organisational OA policies in part through the establishment of the Charity Open Access Fund. Several publishers suggested that Wellcome's policy has enabled the expansion of their OA offerings and models which has contributed to increased OA uptake. Publishers further emphasised the accommodation of author choice within the current policy and noted Wellcome's support for gold OA routes.

Whilst HEIs and researchers commended Wellcome's commitment to OA funding and the support for both authors and HEIs in complying to the policy, they and other funders raised concerns over their perception of rising costs of OA publishing.

2. Reforms and Development

All stakeholder groups encouraged Wellcome to continue to participate and lead across stakeholder engagement. Funders and HEIs suggested expanding this advocacy to a broader range of stakeholders with the aim of widening the adoption of OA. A small number of researchers highlighted the potential for pre-prints to play a role in the future of OA.

HEIs and researchers commented that Wellcome could promote the use of OA platforms such as Wellcome Open Research. These stakeholders also encouraged Wellcome to develop a policy that is easy for authors to comply with. Individuals from all stakeholder groups identified harmonisation of OA policies as a mode of achieving greater compliance for both Wellcome and other funders, as well as facilitating a transition to fully OA.

HEIs also expressed that greater support from Wellcome - for example via guidelines or centralised payment processing systems – could aid HEIs in supporting authors to comply with the policy.

However, researchers and HEIs followed up their OA publishing cost concerns by encouraging Wellcome to exert greater downward pressure on the cost of OA publishing. The suggested modes of achieving this included reducing or removing support for 'hybrid' journals, setting a cap on Article Processing Charges (APCs) within the policy, and mandating greater levels of transparency amongst publishers with whom Wellcome-funded authors publish their research.

3. Transitions to Fully OA

To support a transition to a fully OA world, Wellcome was encouraged to advocate for greater harmonisation across other organisation's OA policies.

From the perspective of researchers, HEIs and funders, this harmonisation was viewed as a way of engaging with publishers and exerting pressure on the cost of OA publishing, as well as encouraging publishers to expand their fully OA offering. This group of stakeholders saw scope in Wellcome being more vocal and strengthening its leadership role in this manner.

Paying note to the mechanisms by which OA is delivered, HEIs would welcome greater support from Wellcome and funders in delivering OA, which might be furthered by increased communications and guidance to authors.

Publishers felt that enhancing the infrastructures used to deliver OA, for example by integrating ORCID and metadata, would enhance the 'F' and 'A' of the FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable and reproducible) OA principles.

Regarding the current model of scholarly publication, researchers encouraged Wellcome to promote OA platforms such as Wellcome Open Research. Some of those researchers further commented that alternate models of publication, such as post-publication peer review in Wellcome Open Research, could serve to

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progressively alter the publication landscape. In this regard, pre-prints were mentioned as an opportunity to further influence a transition to fully OA.

Similarly, in the vein of disrupting the publication landscape, researchers and HEIs proposed that Wellcome and other funding bodies should make use of alternative metrics to the journal impact factor.

Whilst funders and HEIs suggested that Wellcome remove support for 'hybrid' journals, there were mixed views amongst HEIs regarding the potential for offsetting agreements to be brokered in promoting a transition to a fully OA world. Publishers on the other hand, expressed support for Wellcome's funding support for hybrid journals and emphasised the role of hybrids in the ongoing transition to fully OA. Publishers encouraged Wellcome to continue to support and fund hybrids as a means of facilitating this long-term transition.

Finally, several respondents across stakeholder groups noted the disparity between the reasonably advanced OA landscape in the UK in comparison with the global OA landscape. Wellcome was therefore encouraged to continue to be a vocal advocate for OA at a global scale, across stakeholders and at all levels.



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Version 1

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