Dear AAAS,

This is an open letter concerning the recent launch of the new open access journal, *Science Advances*. In addition to the welcome diversification in journal choices for authors looking for open access venues, there are many positive aspects of *Science Advances*: its broad STEM scope, its interest in cross-disciplinary research, and the offering of fee waivers. While we welcome the commitment of the Association to open access, we are also deeply concerned with the specific approach. Herein, we outline a number of suggestions that are in line with both the current direction that scholarly publishing is taking and the needs expressed by the open access community, which this journal aims to serve.

The first of these issues concerns the licensing terms of the journal articles. The default choice of a non-commercial licence (CC BY-NC) places unnecessary restrictions on reuse and does not meet the standards set out by the Budapest Open Access Initiative. Many large funders, including Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust, do not recognise this as an open license. The adoption of CC BY-NC as the default license means that many researchers will be unable to submit to *Science Advances* if they are to conform to their funder mandates unless they pay for the upgrade to CC BY. There is little evidence that non-commercial restrictions provide a benefit to the progress of scholarly research, yet they have significant negative impact, limiting the ability to reuse material for educational purposes and advocacy. For example, NC-encumbered materials cannot be used on Wikipedia. The non-commercial clause is known to generate ambiguities and uncertainties (see for example, NC Licenses Considered Harmful) to the detriment of scholarly communication. Additionally, there is little robust evidence to suggest that adopting a CC-BY license will lead to income loss for your Association, and the $1,000 surcharge is difficult to justify or defend. The value of the CC BY license is outlined in detail by the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association.

We raise an additional issue with the $1,500 surcharge for articles more than 10 pages in length. In an online-only format, page length is an arbitrary unit that results from the article being read in PDF format. Can the AAAS explain what the additional costs associated with the increased length are that would warrant a 50% increase in APC for an unspecified number of additional digital pages? Other leading open access journals, such as PeerJ, the BMC series, and PLOS ONE, offer publication of articles with unlimited page lengths. The extra costs create constraints that may adversely incentivize authors to exclude important details of their study, preventing replication and hindering transparency, all of which are contrary to the aims of scholarly publication. Therefore it seems counterproductive to impose this additional charge; it discriminates against researchers' best effort to communicate their findings with as much detail as necessary.

We feel that the proposed APCs and licencing scheme are detrimental to the AAAS and the global academic community. As such, we recommend that *Science Advances*:

- Offers CC BY as standard for no additional cost, in line with leading open access publishers, so authors are able to comply with respective funding mandates;
- Provides a transparent calculation of its APCs based on the publishing practices of the AAAS and explains how additional value created by the journal will measure against the significantly high prices paid by the authors;
- Removes the surcharges associated with increased page number;
- Releases all data files under CC0 (with CC BY optional), which has emerged as the community standard for data and is used by leading databases such as Figshare and DataDryad.

We hope that you will consider the points raised above, keeping in mind how best to serve the scientific community, and use *Science Advances* to add the AAAS to the group of progressive and innovative open access scholarly publishers. We hope AAAS will collaborate with the academic community to facilitate the dissemination of scientific knowledge through a journal committed to fully embracing the principles of Open Access.

We kindly request that you allow your response(s) to be made public along with this letter, and look forward to hearing your response soon.

Signatories - please note that we do not formally represent the institutions listed.
[If you would like to be added to this list, please leave details in a comment.]

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