

**NSCF 2017**

**NATIONAL SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS FORUM 25:**  
*Improving Access to Australia's Research – Policy Frameworks*

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**Open access progress in the UK**

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The Shine Dome, Australian Academy of Science

Canberra ACT Australia



# Open Access Progress in the UK

**NSCF**

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Canberra August 31<sup>st</sup> 2017



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# What is Open Access For?

## Setting the context for the UK position on Open Access

Proponents come from two directions:

- **A 'Principled' View:** that research (and certainly publicly-funded research) should be freely available (for a number of reasons)
- **An 'Economic' View:** as a lever to disrupt an inefficient market (often described in more ideological terms such as 'curbing excessive publisher profits')
- **At present there is not a compelling case for our government to interfere in the market:** there are periodic mentions of the Competition and Markets Authority but nothing substantive.
- **This talk is about making research outputs freely available,** ideally with enabling licences for further use. It is not about market disruption.



## The UK Research Context - current

### Several government agencies along with influential charities

Agreeing policy has been difficult due to the multiplicity of funder stakeholders:

- **Seven Research Councils:** Major project funders who can reasonably impose conditions on how research outputs from their funded work are handled. The cost of research council decisions is important as they have fixed budgets and long-term commitments.
- **A university funder:** My organization (along with partner organisations in Scotland/Wales/N Ireland), the largest research funder but as a block grant funder it is not reasonable to identify specific pieces of work which can be attributed to 'HEFCE funding'. It is not possible to impose conditions on publication. However we are also the bodies who assess the quality of UK university research (aka ERA) and we can impose on conditions output submitted to the exercise. This is our lever.
- **Charity Funders with strong views on Open Access:** With a strong motivation to encourage open access and the resources to support it – also willing to engage in market disruption.



## How we got to here – The Finch Group

### Established by HEFCE and Research Councils at Ministerial Request

Involved a broad range of stakeholders and made many recommendations – selected ones presented here:

- **Clear policy direction toward support for publication in open access or hybrid journals funded by APCs** as the main vehicle for the publication of research, especially when it is publicly funded
- **The Research Councils and other public sector bodies funding research in the UK should establish more effective and flexible arrangements** to meet the costs of publishing in open access and hybrid journals.
- **Restrictions on rights of use and re-use should be minimized:**



## Finch Immediate Consequences

### Considerable concern in universities.

The Research Councils, following government advice, provided a policy statement indicating a preference for 'gold' open access, interpreted by universities pehrrhap.

- **Concerns from universities about an exposure to uncontrolled costs of publication:** noting, along with comments from academics that universities had 'no control' over where academics chose to publish.
- **Academics making strong points about the important of journal 'brand':** as their perceived quality mark.
- **Research Councils respond:** by making funds available to the 'top universities' to contribute to article processing charges
- **With the benefit of time and acting primarily as an assessor of research, HEFCE able to announce a balanced 'green/gold' policy:** which, along with the RC funding and the establishment of a monitoring group (Tickell), largely addressed the immediate concerns



## Finch Medium-Term Consequences

### Progress but increased costs.

The Tickell Group reported in 2016.

- **Substantial Progress:** ‘By April 2017, almost all journal articles will be available under Open Access routes’ – currently being tested. However ‘approaching 20% will be available on the date of publication and without any further restriction’.
- **Transition to Open Access happening with relatively little public discord:** but key word is probably ‘public’. Very considerable concern about the size of the funding going into hybrid routes (‘paying twice’ being a hotly contested view) as Tickell noted and about licencing conditions
- **Government response said ‘advantages of immediate gold access are well-recognised:** but moderated by ‘continue the preference for gold where this is **realistic and affordable** and ‘**I also accept the validity of green routes, which will continue to play an important role in delivering our open access commitment**’
- **I (The Minister) note your recommendation that the Research Councils continue to support gold open access charges:** Research Council policies are not determined by Government but I know they are looking carefully at your report.
- I want to see gold access charges reducing over time in a healthy competitive market



## The UK Research Context - future

### One government agency along with influential charities

Possibly easier to agree policy:

- **UK Research & Innovation:** An umbrella body which brings together the seven disciplinary councils and Research England (the block grant funder in England) but not the devolved block funders. Has to address the ‘funder’ and ‘assessor’ roles. As it is being established it is strongly oriented towards ‘Open Science’ and has greater influence and power with government and the publishing industry.
- **Committed Charity Funders:** With a strong motivation to encourage open access and the resources to support it – also willing to engage in market disruption.





## Current Position

Currently the focus for discussion is the Tickell Group but UK Research and Innovation introduces a new dimension

Key current issues:

- **The cost of gold open access:** This is underpinned by Research Council funding which is limited.
- **Licencing Conditions:** particularly around CC BY-ND and CC BY-NC – non-derivative and non-commercial uses. This partly driven by monograph stakeholders.
- **Hybrid Costs:** The size of these has triggered greater consideration of how open access addresses market disruption issues.
- **Concern about embargoes increasing not decreasing:** completely divergent views about the impact of shorter embargos on the viability of a subscription-based market
- **Close working with devolved administrations** on UK-wide activity to help UKRI deliver national priorities and become experts on UK HE system.



## Scholarly Communications Licence (1)

An initiative to regularise some of the copyright issues.

Based on the Harvard Licence:

- **A university initiative:** with the agreement of their academics the university will claim a non-exclusive licence to research papers, prior to publication, thus allowing immediate repository access..
- **Drivers:** Burden of implementing diverse funder policies, escalating costs and uncertainty about long-term gold funding.
- **Initial stages:** twelve universities have taken SCL through formal approval processes (Council/Senate)
- **Strongly opposed by some subscription and hybrid journal publishers:** due to lack of embargos undermining subscription journals and because it undermines gold OA. Not opposed by publishers who only publish APC-based OA journals. Policy allows publishers to request a waiver and some publishers say they will ask for universal waivers



## Scholarly Communications Licence (2)

### The Harvard OK Policy Model.

Adopted by at least 70 universities world-wide, though mainly in the US:

- **Harvard report less than 5% waiver:** all of which are accepted.
- **Some differences, notably around embargos:** Harvard policy does allow an embargo to be requested in particular cases by the author. Harvard may agree to more systematic embargo in return for significant value-add from the publishers such as auto-deposit in the their respository. The SCL allows for waivers to requested up to two years, to comply with UK funder policies but not for embargoes.
- **A flavor of fury:** Read the Scholarly Kitchen piece (must include all the comments) on July 26<sup>th</sup> by Karin Wulf. Note the responses by Martin Wolf, Torsten Reimer and Peter Suber particularly.



## Scholarly Communications Licence (3)

### My Own Comments

The debate about the SCL is symptomatic of the enormous difficulty in the community working with the publishing industry:

- **Some of the opponents make comments which are readily refuted:** For example making comments about Harvard which are clearly refuted by Peter Suber and comments about our (HEFCE) policy which I know are inaccurate
- **Opposing comments also make predictions about the consequences:** These are difficult to understand unless the industry in the UK is completely different from the US – do we have a global market? ‘disastrous for UK science’
- **There is debate around whether disruption is itself bad:** Because (see Tickell) we are making satisfactory progress anyway. Should we ‘defer any decision until evidence gathering and policy review is completed’ – but this is a matter for individual universities



Thank you for listening

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