

Briefing on CUP recommendation for PASA to transition to OA by 2025

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1. Executive summary

The publisher of PASA, Cambridge University Press (CUP), recommends that PASA moves to a [Gold Open Access](#) model from 1 January 2025. This recommendation is based on an analysis and forward projections performed by CUP. There is a [glossary](#) at the end explaining some of the most relevant terms.

The ASA has the option to either agree or disagree with the recommendation.

Potential impact: After transitioning to [Gold Open Access](#), traditional subscription fees will no longer be a source of income. The change will not be dramatic, however, 81% of published articles in 2022 already qualified for OA under a transformative agreement. For the minority of articles not covered by an agreement, CUP would introduce an article processing/publication fee (APC), currently set at GBP 2190. Waivers will be available in many cases. Since revenue from subscriptions is projected to be only about GBP 7500 by 2024, it would only require 3 to 4 additional APCs to make up for the shortcoming. In the CUP recommendation summary, the switch for PASA to become a fully Gold OA journal in 2025 is therefore deemed “*financially low risk*” to the journal. On the other hand, not switching to open access may have negative consequences. [PlanS](#) (mostly European/UK) <https://www.coalition-s.org/> and the new [OSTP](#) guidelines (USA) <https://tinyurl.com/mr2tf39k> will require much research to be published as open access without barriers. While this may be possible via open access payments in a non-open access journal, a Gold Open Access journal may be more attractive for many authors - both because of funding requirements, and because there is evidence that open access papers attract more citations.

2. Background

2.1 Shift towards open access publishing in astronomy/astrophysics

The astronomy and astrophysics publishing landscape is in the process of undergoing drastic changes. As of 2022, all AAS journals (ApJ, ApJL, AJ, ApJS, PSJ) are Gold Open Access. Submission numbers have remained steady after the switch, while article access/download has greatly increased.

<https://journals.aas.org/news/update-on-open-access-for-aas-journals/>

The Royal Astronomical Society (UK) has also announced that all of their journals will become Gold Open Access from January 2024. This will affect MNRAS and MNRAS Letters. <https://academic.oup.com/mnras/pages/mnras-open-access>

Astronomy & Astrophysics (A&A) is open access from 2022 under the slightly different “[Subscribe-to-Open \(S2O\)](#)” open access model. <https://www.aanda.org/subscribe-to-open-faqs>

2.1. Summary of APCs for a selection of astronomy/astrophysics journals

For clarity, I only list the non-discounted standard APCs.

PASA is currently free, but some authors choose to pay an APC for open access.

MNRAS is currently free, but there will be a GBP 2310 ~ AUD 4380 APC from 2024. (There is a 20% discount for members of the Royal Astronomical Society).

AAS-journals have a more nuanced pricing structure, based on “quanta” and differing on the journal. In 2023, a “normal” length ApJ Letter would cost USD 2448 ~ AUD 3760 and “normal” paper in ApJ, AJ, or ApJS would typically range from AUD 1800 to over AUD 7000, depending on length.

<https://journals.aas.org/article-charges-and-copyright/>

Astronomy & Astrophysics (A&A) has page charges if the first author does not have their first affiliation on the list of sponsoring countries and is not listed from a GroupA country of the Research4Life list. The current charges are EUR 100 (AUD 164) per page.

<https://www.aanda.org/for-authors/author-information/page-charges>

PASJ is another OUP journal. The charges are 6000 Yen (AUD 66) per page.

https://academic.oup.com/pasj/pages/general_instructions#Charges

3. Transformative (read-and-publish) agreements

To fund open access model publishing, publishers such as CUP and OUP enter “[transformative](#)” agreements with different entities (individual universities, research consortia, etc). The agreements and fees are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. In the following, I discuss the Council of Australian University Librarians ([CAUL](#)) agreements with CUP and OUP.

The [transformative agreement](#) between the [CAUL](#) and CUP includes “Gold Open Access” for most Australia-based corresponding authors in all CUP journals, including PASA.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/open-access-policies/read-and-publish-agreements/oa-agreement-caul>

It is very important to note here that not all CAUL members are currently included in this agreement! UNSW and ANU opted out of this deal and corresponding authors from UNSW or ANU would currently not be eligible to publish in PASA under the CAUL-CUP agreement and APCs would apply.

There is a similar agreement between CAUL and OUP, which covers MNRAS until the end of 2024.

<https://academic.oup.com/pages/open-research/read-and-publish-agreements/australia-and-new-zealand-institutions-caul-affiliated>

Again, not all CAUL members are included in this agreement. Notably, UNSW, ANU, Curtin, and Macquarie University are not part of the read-and-publish agreement (although they can read). This means that, unless something changes, when MNRAS becomes open access in 2024, ANU (~33 first author MNRAS papers in 2022, using Lister Stavelly-Smith’s numbers), UNSW (3), Curtin (14), and MQ (7) corresponding authors will need to pay an APC of GBP 2310. To illustrate further, in the past 5 years, ANU had 220, UNSW 53, and Curtin 80 papers in MNRAS (using Andy Casey’s API), demonstrating that over time substantial costs would accumulate. We have raised these issues with the respective heads of school so that they are aware.

7. Membership feedback and FAQ’s

We solicited feedback from ASA members on the issue of PASA flipping to open access: The responses are available here:

Membership Feedback Answers

It is evident that there is a wide range of opinions regarding this issue in the community. I would like to respond to some of the questions and issues raised:

- ❖ UNSW and ANU are unlikely to join the CAUL/CUP agreement.
- Individual institutions make decisions based on cost-benefit analysis relevant to them. Our understanding is that, for some universities, it has so far been more cost efficient to use the subscription plus APCs model rather than read-and-publish agreements. However, open access publishing is a fast moving space, with rapid

increases in rates of open access across the developed world over the past few years. Astronomy has also been slower than other disciplines to move towards open access publishing - many disciplines have not had the equivalent of MNRAS or PASA to publish without APCs. This will no longer be the case for MNRAS soon. Our preliminary discussions with UNSW and ANU librarians indicate that they are open to the possibility of revisiting the CAUL/CUP decision.

- ❖ Researchers from smaller Australian Universities will be disadvantaged.
- Currently, the only CAUL members that opted out of the CUP agreement are ANU and UNSW. All other institutions, including CSIRO, are included. See here for a list: <https://caul.libguides.com/read-and-publish/cambridge-university-press>
- ❖ How is eligibility determined regarding the CAUL/CUP agreement?
 - CUP looks at the affiliations of the “corresponding author”, which need not be the same as the lead author of the paper. This is an important distinction, since in astronomy the first author typically holds the most significance. It is possible (and from informal discussions with CUP not explicitly frowned upon) to assign a co-author from an institution covered as “corresponding author”.
- ❖ Researchers from developing and low-income countries would not be able to afford to publish in PASA if we were to flip to Gold OA.
 - Under the Cambridge Open Equity Initiative, academics from 107 low- and middle-income countries will be able to publish their research open access in Cambridge journals at no cost to them. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/open-research/open-access/cambridge-open-equity-initiative/faqs#countrylist> The new eligibility tool checker can be used to check if full waivers apply by default. <https://tinyurl.com/yrym749j>
- ❖ Flipping PASA to an open access journal gives the editors and reviewers incentives to waive through more (lower quality) publications to generate more income through APCs.
 - Neither the reviewers nor the editors benefit financially from increased publications and APCs. Financial viability of PASA is the responsibility of the ASA Council, while editorial decisions are made independently and at arm’s length from Council by the PASA Editorial Board.
- ❖ PASA is a society journal and it should serve first and foremost its members.
 - We have negotiated that there will be a discount for ASA members, the vast majority of which would be covered by a read-and-publish agreement anyway.

- ❖ Independent researchers not affiliated with any institution and therefore not covered by any agreement would be disadvantaged, for example retired ASA members without an affiliation.
- Independent (unaffiliated) researchers are eligible for APC waivers under the Cambridge Open Equity Initiative. <https://tinyurl.com/y3n254kj>
- ❖ What about those unfortunate researchers not covered by any of the exceptions (e.g. USA-based liberal arts college researchers) listed above?
- Anybody not covered under the points above can still apply for a discretionary waiver. These will be decided on a case-by-case basis. It is my understanding that waivers for well-justified requests will likely be granted.

8. Thank you

I thank Andy Casey from Monash University for using his API to query NASA/ADS for country and institution based publication figures in the past years in MNRAS and PASA and Lister Stavelly-Smith from UWA for his numbers for 2022. I also thank John Lattanzio, Stas Shabala, and Mark Duldig for their useful comments on the draft of this briefing. ChatGPT was used for an initial draft of the glossary.

GLOSSARY

1. **Gold Open Access:** Gold Open Access refers to a publishing model where research articles are freely accessible to all readers immediately upon publication. In this model, authors or their institutions typically bear the cost of publication through article processing charges (APCs) or transformative agreements, allowing unrestricted access to the content.
2. **Green Open Access:** Green Open Access, also known as self-archiving or repository-based access, involves authors making their research articles freely available in a repository or an institutional website. Authors typically deposit a version of their work (preprint or postprint) after a certain embargo period, which varies depending on journal policies.
3. **Subscribe-to-Open (S20):** Subscribe-to-Open (S20) is an innovative open access model that aims to transition subscription-based journals to open access. Under S20, if a sufficient number of libraries commit to continue their subscriptions, the journal will "flip" to open access, making all articles freely available to readers.
4. **Coalition of Australian University Librarians (CAUL):** The Coalition of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) is an organization representing the interests of university libraries in Australia. CAUL works towards improving access to scholarly information and supports open access initiatives and policies.
5. **PlanS:** PlanS is an initiative led by cOAlitionS, a consortium of research funding organizations and agencies committed to advancing open access. PlanS aims to accelerate the transition to immediate Gold Open Access for scholarly publications by setting specific requirements, such as mandating open access for funded research.
6. **cOAlitionS:** cOAlitionS is an international consortium of research funders and organizations that aims to make open access the default for scholarly publishing. cOAlitionS supports the

principles outlined in PlanS and advocates for systemic changes in the publishing landscape to ensure widespread access to research outputs.

7. **Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP):** The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) is a department within the Executive Office of the President of the United States. OSTP advises the President on matters related to science, technology, and innovation. It has played a significant role in shaping open access policies in the United States, including policies related to public access to federally funded research. One of the key future plans of the OSTP is the requirement for open access to all federally funded research. This initiative seeks to make research outputs resulting from government funding more accessible to the public. The OSTP, in collaboration with federal agencies and stakeholders, is working towards implementing policies that will mandate open access publication of research findings supported by federal grants by 2026.
8. **Transformative (Read-and-Publish) Agreement:** A transformative agreement, also known as a read-and-publish agreement, is a contract between a library or consortium of libraries and a publisher. These agreements aim to transition subscription-based journals to open access. Under a transformative agreement, the library pays a single fee that covers both access to the publisher's content (read) and the publication costs of researchers affiliated with the institution (publish). This model enables researchers to publish their work openly while ensuring continued access to subscription-based content. Transformative agreements play a crucial role in facilitating the transition towards a more sustainable and inclusive scholarly publishing system.