



LMS RESPONSE TO 2014 RCUK INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF OPEN ACCESS IMPLEMENTATION

1. The London Mathematical Society welcomes the opportunity to respond to this call for evidence.

About the Society

2. The London Mathematical Society (LMS), founded in 1865, is the UK's learned society for mathematics. The Society's main activities include publishing journals and books, providing grants to support mathematics and organising scientific meetings and lectures. The Society is also involved in policy and strategic work to support mathematics and the mathematics research community. This work includes engaging with government and policymakers on mathematics education and research, participating in international mathematical initiatives and promoting the discipline.

About the Society's Publishing Activity

3. The London Mathematical Society has a long history of publishing and managing high quality international journals in the Mathematical Sciences. It currently looks after eight titles, compliant with RCUK Open Access Policy. The portfolio aims to offer opportunities to meet with the distinct needs of individual authors. It should be noted that only 15-20% of the authorship is UK based, with sales of the journals (where relevant) similarly being international. The Society's publishing strategy must therefore address needs of mathematicians operating under a variety of different legislations.
4. Six of the journals published are 'hybrid' in that they offer a paid open access option: on receipt of an APC, the article will be freely available in final published form on our website, and reuse of the article is permitted under the CC-BY licence. Thus they meet the conditions for 'gold' open access described in the RCUK policy. Authors unable to pay the APC may publish in these journals under the 'green' route and still be compliant with RCUK policy. Versions up to the accepted version of such a paper may be posted on the math arXiv at any time, and, if required, the same version may be posted in an institutional repository.
5. The Society has recently launched a new, purely gold OA journal, with an APC charge currently lower than that of our established journals and with no library subscriptions. (This is an introductory offer aimed at establishing the journal, and the APC will inevitably have to rise in due course to meet the full cost of publication.) Authors may post any version of their paper they wish in an institutional repository. The journal was set up with the intention of covering all possible options for mathematicians around the world and recognised that some universities and funders require authors not to publish in 'hybrid' journals.
6. All our 'gold' open access papers are made immediately and freely available on our journals' websites and may be reused under the CC-BY licence, which is the version required by RCUK. Recognising that many authors, including those who are not funded by RCUK, prefer a non-commercial re-use licence, we also offer CC-BY-NC as an alternative licence.
7. The Society has for many years run a further journal in Computation and Mathematics which is freely available to readers and authors, and complies with RCUK policy as green

OA; gold OA is not available for this journal. It does not offer a CC-BY licence that allows commercial re-use of the articles, but it does offer an exclusive licence where the author may post any version up to and including the final accepted manuscript in an institutional repository

About the LMS Response

8. In formulating this response, the Society sent a questionnaire to mathematical researchers. The Society identified 136 individuals based at UK HEIs who had published in the LMS's publications within the previous 12 months. These 136 individuals were contacted by e-mail on 15th August and a total of 14 responses were received. The responses received represent a good cross-section of UK academic mathematical science, as regards seniority, subject field within the mathematical sciences, and range of HE institutions represented.
9. The Research Policy Committee of the Society has led work on this response and developed the questionnaire. In doing so, the Committee was mindful that the review is about the implementation of RCUK policy, rather than about the principle of Open Access. As such, the questionnaire was structured to get responses from individuals about their experience as researchers with respect to open access.
10. The collated responses to the questionnaire are given in the annex. The names and institutional affiliations of the respondents have been removed to preserve confidentiality.

Conclusions

11. A summary of the main conclusions which the LMS believes can be drawn from the responses to our questionnaire is as follows.
 - Understanding of the policies of RCUK and the UK Funding Councils with regard to Open Access amongst current UK-based authors of papers in the mathematical sciences is patchy at best.
 - In particular, there is a lack of clarity within the mathematical science community in the UK about the differences between RCUK and Funding Council policy on Open Access.
 - Implementation of the policy has so far made very little difference to the behaviour of most UK-based research mathematicians. This is primarily because many (if not a majority) were already routinely using the arXiv.
 - There would be considerable value to be gained from the provision, in a single location, of a comprehensive and reliable listing of mathematical science journals, with brief but complete information regarding their compliance or otherwise with RCUK and Funding Council policies on Open Accessⁱ.

In connection with the first two points above, it is important to bear in mind that most research in the mathematical sciences carried out by UK-based researchers is done without the support of RCUK grant income.

ⁱ The existing database, Sherpa, is in our view not always completely reliable, and does not always cover more complex cases in full detail. Moreover, as the responses show, it is not very well known in the community.

ANNEX – RESPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Did you find that advice and guidance was available on how UK policy on Open Access would impact on you and your research? Were you satisfied with the quality of advice and guidance? Which source(s) of advice did you find most useful?

Author A: Documents from RCUK. Session run by LMS at British Mathematical Colloquium.

Author B: I don't understand what this is about, and I don't wish to. My research output is available from the arXiv preprint server or from my website or other (often multiple) sources, so I assume that there is no future impact on my work. My papers for the recent REF had doi numbers attached to them by other people. I have never sought advice or guidance, and have never listened when it was available. To that extent, I am entirely satisfied.

Author C: The paper was submitted to the LMS in June 2013; at the time I was unsure of how the rules regarding open access would be in the next REF, which was unsatisfactory. I have only later learnt that the “green” route (author's version available through the arXiv or university repository) will be accepted for REF submissions.

Author D: I've yet to publish under open access, and until I do I won't fully attempt to absorb any advice/guidance.

Author E: I still don't have a very good grasp of UK policy on Open Access, my understanding is that everything needs to be at least on arxiv in the final (pre-edited version) and, if it is funded by EPSRC, I need to ask my university to pay for full open access publishing, if available.

Our faculty has an administrator who specialises in Open Access and I fully rely on her guidance, as it is not entirely clear to me how to find out, without a doubt, whether a journal has an open access policy (short of emailing every editor-in-chief).

Author F: No

Author G: Some advice was provided at an hour workshop put on by library staff put on in the department. I left feeling somewhat confused. There are various statements about it on our university website.

Author H: No

Author I: [INSTITUTION] Library

Author J: I have found that the relevant policies on Open Access (from research councils, ERC etc) could usually be found using a web search. What I found most useful is the information that posting an author (post-acceptance) version of the articles in question on a repository such as the arXiv satisfies all current requirements for Open Access.

Author K: I didn't notice much advice that spoke directly to how I work. I've ignored the whole issue (and certainly don't choose journals based on it), and so far I have not noticed any effect on me. However, I haven't held an RCUK grant during the past year, and I imagine I will have to search out information when I do. Satisfaction would be achieved by a clear link that says “this is what you need to do if you have an RCUK grant” and explains the implications in two sentences.

Author L: Yes, advice is available.

Author M: I found this helpful:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/documents/RCUKOpenAccessPolicy.pdf>

Was advice on Open Access and its implementation made available in your department? If so, from whom?

Author A: Via our Research Committee, via our University Library.

Author B: Don't know, but I could find out if I had to.

Author C: I spoke to my department's Head of Research about obtaining funding for Open Access, and he gave me some valuable advice.

Author D: Advice was available principally from central university sources.

Author E: See previous answer.

Author F: No

Author G: -

Author H: No

Author I: Representative of the Library

Author J: I have communicated information about Open Access requirements to colleagues in the department myself. There have also been some communications from library representatives.

Author K: Yes. The library held workshops. I attended, but don't remember what was said.

Author L: Yes, advice on Open Access was made available from [INSTITUTION] central services, see [website]

Author M: Did not seek advice.

If you needed further advice regarding Open Access, whom did you approach?

Author A: N/A

Author B: Not applicable.

Author C: I got advice from library staff on how to apply for open access funding from the university's allocated budget.

Author D: N/A

Author E: See Previous Answer

Author F: N/A

Author G: Various people; informal common room discussion

Author H: I did not need further advice.

Author I: Representative of the Library

Author J: I would normally approach those responsible within library services, or colleagues in the department.

Author K: The science librarian in our University Library.

Author L: Not relevant: at the time I published my paper in the Journal of the LMS I did not have an EPSRC grant, so my understanding was that I was ineligible to claim open access costs from [INSTITUTION].

Author M: N/A

Did you find that a clear mechanism is in place for the payment of Article Processing Charges within your institution (independently of whether you actually made use of the mechanism)?

Author A: Yes

Author B: I know that there are mechanisms in place, because people from the library etc. write to me every few months to offer payment of processing charges, that I have never had occasion to call on.

Author C: Yes

Author D: I've yet to put this to the test.

Author E: Yes

Author F: No

Author G: I would say that a fairly opaque mechanism is in place.

Author H: No

Author I: Yes

Author J: I have not looked into this in detail so far, since I have never made use of the mechanism.

Author K: No. I believe it is there and that I was told about it, but without a grant it is information that has no place to live in my head.

Author L: Not sure.

Author M: Did not make enquiries.

Did you feel that there was sufficient communication in general about the move to Open Access during implementation?

Author A: It seemed to me that there was insufficient attention given to detail. For example, I did not feel sufficient attention had been given to the very complicated problem of determined which journal outlets would qualify under Gold / Green Access. One result was waste of senior academic time particularly in trying to ensure qualification of significant and highly rated journals published at very low cost by some scientific societies.

Author B: There was various general communication on the subject, but I never paid the slightest attention to it.

Author C: No. In particular, I have received some very negative comments from colleagues after publishing my paper as open access. This seems very unfair, as the information (that the “green route” would be OK, as mentioned above) was not available at the time I made this decision.

Author D: I felt that the rationale, if any, was poorly explained.

Author E: Both too little and too much. There were several emails from various sources, but none of them written in a language that I could fully understand.

Author F: No

Author G: No

Author H: No

Author I: Yes

Author J: Communication is always a difficult matter, and I suspect that many people may still not be fully aware. At the same time, I have the feeling that the information has been available for people looking for it.

Author K: Yes, I think it was there – the fact I’ve missed it is my own fault.

Author L: Yes

Author M: Was not aware of the move, but found this consultation helpful in drawing my attention to it.

Has Open Access affected how you conduct research, for example with regard to collaborative work?

Author A: As implemented, it definitely inhibits (a) the possibility of publishing in published collections of papers, for example Festschriften, (b) collaboration with international colleagues who are not subject to the same constraints. Point (a) is serious because this is a productive way of disseminating work at early stages of development. Point (b) is serious for obvious reasons: it inhibits efforts to maintain academic competitiveness.

In general terms I have for the last fifteen years gone to considerable efforts to ensure that my area of science is well- represented in Open Access, both in my personal authorship and also by serving for a time as Chief Editor of a free journal. I do not feel the UK policy has attempted properly to support or reward such efforts by myself and my peers.

Author B: Not in the least. All of my recent collaborators have agreed with me on when to make work public on the arXiv preprint server or on our websites.

Author C: No

Author D: I’ve had to apologize to collaborators for it; and it has made me less inclined to publish.

Author E: No, and I refuse to let it affect how I conduct my research.

Author F: No

Author G: The extra bureaucracy is certainly a discouragement to publish in journals. Instead there is an incentive just to put material on the arXiv, as in any case most research in my area is now read from arXiv papers rather than in journals which now usually do no more than provide an assurance that a paper has had some sort of refereeing. It also gives a disincentive to apply for grants or take on research council funded PhD students.

Author H: No

Author I: No

Author J: No. I have always posted my articles on a preprint server, and paid attention to journals' copyright policies in deciding where to submit. Following the recent HEFCE decisions, I now make sure to upload the final accepted version of articles directly after acceptance, but it has not made a difference to how I conduct the research.

Author K: No, not at all so far.

Author L: No, at least not yet.

Author M: Not as yet.

Please add any other comments you wish to make regarding the implementation of the UK's policy on Open Access.

Author A: I have formed an impression that direction and implementation of this policy has not taken sufficient account of (a) the wide availability of journals which implement generous policies of depositing versions in public archives which are equivalent in content to the final published versions, (b) the thriving culture (in my areas of mathematics, statistics, and computer science) of making work available first of all on public archives and only then via the editing / refereeing / journal publishing process. Given the overall aims of the UK policy, it seems to me that policy directors and implementors should make it an urgent priority to do all they can to encourage and to facilitate both (a) and (b), which clearly fulfil the spirit of the concerns driving this policy, at minimal expense to the funders of public science.

Author B: It seems obvious to me that publicly funded research should be available on an Open Access basis, and I believe that I am fully compliant.

Author C: This appears to be a highly controversial issue, mainly due to the clear lack of sufficient funding for author payments. As already mentioned, I found it disappointing that the authorities stated that open access to papers would be required in the next REF, but it took a long time before they clarified the exact meaning of this statement.

Author D: I think it is far too early to judge the effects. I am disappointed that there is not merely a list of maths journals, each with a corresponding open access statement. It appears that each time I wish to submit a paper I have to research the possible journals.

As it is, I have always put my papers on the arXiv, which I consider to be a far better way of ensuring open access, and one which imposes no financial burden on my institution. This makes me very unhappy about the imposition of a scheme which I consider completely unnecessary.

Author E: -

Author F: I didn't know there was one!

Author G: Frankly, the situation is a complete mess. Different journals have a range of different open access models and it is now even harder to decide to which journals to submit papers. There is further confusion with the statement that the next REF will require publications to be on 'Open Access' but with a different definition (i.e. papers have to be in an institutional repository or on an arXiv – I think). Whilst I am relieved that the UKRC rules do not apply to the majority of research as it is not research council funded, it is always easy to determine what is grant funded and what is not.

I fear that the whole policy was badly conceived and not properly thought through.

Author H: I am worried about the whole question of how open access will affect mathematical research in the long term, for two reasons. Firstly, it is not clear if all mathematicians doing interesting research will have access to the funds, which I fear will become more and more needed if one wants to have a paper published in the future. Secondly, mathematics is the one science where it is essential to keep back issues of journals and books for at least 100 years, and ideally permanently. No other scientific discipline has this need, and one wonders how many open access journals will survive for such a long period of time, in some form.

Author I: I do not think that this policy is correct. Although I agree with the main objective of the policy, that is, to make available to everybody the research that is funded by governmental agencies, the implementation is clearly wrong. The government is paying to the editing companies APCs that are absolutely outrageous in many cases. This system is clearly not maintainable: who is going to pay the increasing APCs in the near future? Is the government going to continue this additional funding? Will the researchers be with their own research funds the ones to pay the expenses? Alternative compromises should be achieved. Green open access and preprint with almost last version repositories should be the natural way to go instead of gold open access.

Author J: I believe that a move towards Open Access is an important step for the scientific community. It seems clear that this is evolving and hasn't reached its final form, but on the whole I believe the efforts towards OA are a good thing for the discipline – assuming it happens in a way that does not prevent people from publishing (e.g. due to Open Access charges).

Author K: I am undoubtedly poorly informed, despite the availability of information, but it is probably still worth me saying that my general impression is that this has turned into a scam by publishers, or perhaps by some of their customers who'd rather not pay their subscriptions – I have published papers recently and of course not paid for their top level of access, but am appalled that they seem able to steal so much taxpayers' money when everyone who needs access (and is qualified to benefit from access) already pays subscriptions for the access they need.

The impact of implementation seems only to be to waste large amounts of taxpayers money.

Author L: -

Author M: -

Author N [Replied to this question only]: I have seen no impact of the LMS going not being open access. However, I frequently try to read articles by commercial publishers, for example Springer, that I cannot access from my home, and am strongly in support of everything being open access. I sometimes use authors' home pages to get copies of papers, but some do not put their papers on their home pages and some do not have home pages except in a formal sense. If the commercial publishers decide to pull out I will not weep.