

APC: the toll road to continued high quality communication

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Abstract

In this article we briefly review the reasons and advantages that underly our publisher's decision to introduce article-processing charges (APC) for manuscripts submitted to *Cell Communication and Signaling*. The charge is an attempt to develop a new business model for distributing biomedical information and has been accepted in a number of other journals. APCs will enable BioMed Central to continue to provide their excellent service and will help to establish our journal.

Introduction

Since its inception, *Cell Communication and Signaling* (CCS) has been published by BioMed Central as an Open Access journal. BioMed Central is an independent publisher committed to ensuring high quality publications in the fields of biomedical research. Articles published in CCS are freely available to everyone online, and are archived in internationally recognized free repositories. Although it is still young, CCS has been moderately successful, as indicated by the several thousand accesses to the manuscripts published throughout 2004. Of course, becoming established will require more years, but the quality of the publications that have been accepted by our editorial board is a sign of good health.

Open Access : what is it ? what does it provide ?

Thanks to an Open Access policy, articles that are published become freely and instantly available to any person connecting to the World Wide Web. Because articles are intended to remain available at no cost forever, they can be read, downloaded and printed in perpetuity. Copies of the published manuscripts are also archived and searchable in PubMed Central [1], the US National Library of Medicine's full-text repository of life science literature, and also in repositories at the University of Potsdam [2] in Germany, at INIST [3] in France and in e-Depot [4], the

National Library of the Netherlands' digital archive of all electronic publications.

Since the authors hold coyright for their published work, they can make their articles freely available on their institution's website. The copyright policy also stipulates that the authors grant anyone the permission to reproduce and disseminate the article, provided that no errors are introduced and that it is adequately cited.

As a comparison, several journals now offer free access to their articles on line, but it is generally, either for a limited period of time or only after 6 to 12 month following publication.

Thus, Open Access offers several benefits to authors and readers in the scientific community and the general public. First the authors are assured that their work is widely disseminated and that it is likely to be cited more often than when it is published in a journal whose access is limited to subscribers. At a time when politicians in many different countries are urging the scientific community to better communicate with the general public, this aspect is of prime importance.

Another major consequence is that there is no financial barrier to the dissemination of knowledge. The impact of a country's economy on access to knowledge is considerable and is often under evaluated or ignored by those who live in wealthy environments. As long as a researcher has Internet access, he or she can read Open Access articles (although enabling them to get Internet access is, admittedly, a big issue).

Why is there a need for APC ?

Contributing to the cost of publishing by paying APCs is comparable to paying a toll for driving safely and more rapidly on good quality highways. Multiple clean, fast and safe lanes kept in good condition, with same services provided to all customers.

Any publishing of quality, traditional or electronic, involves processing that is generally paid by the scientific community (either as authors, readers or subscribers). It may seem to some authors that the requested fee of 525 US\$ is exceedingly high but, in truth, it is very low compared to the revenues made per article in the traditional publishing model, which some have suggested were as high as US\$3000, if not higher.

The APC pays for the article to be freely accessible, and for the processes required before inclusion in PubMed and archiving in PubMed Central, e-Depot, Potsdam and INIST. No extra charge applies for color printing. Authors can circumvent the charge by getting their institution to become a 'member' of BioMed Central, whereby an annual membership fee covers the APCs for all authors at that institution submitting to any journal published by BioMed Central in that year. Current members include NHS England, the World Health Organization, the US National Institutes of Health, Harvard, Princeton and Yale universities, and all UK universities [5]. No charge is made for articles that are rejected after peer review. Many funding agencies have also realized the importance of Open Access publishing and have specified that their grants may be used directly to pay APCs [6].

Conclusion

On behalf of the Editorial Board of CCS, I wish to reassure readers and authors that we are committed to evaluating manuscripts on the basis of their scientific quality, not on whether author's can pay article-processing charge. If an author is unable to afford the APC, the Editor-in-Chief will be able to waive payment, if deemed necessary.

We hope that introducing APCs does not inhibit authors from submitting their work. Besides, we firmly believe that publishing Open Access can only help scientific communication and improve results, hence becoming an excellent service to society.

We do hope that you will support our effort towards this end by submitting manuscripts to *Cell Communication and Signaling*.

References

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6. **Which funding agencies explicitly allow direct use of their grants to cover article processing charges?** [http://www.human-resourceshealth.com/info/faq/apcfaq.asp?txt_faq_no=8]

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