

Results of AMHP Journal Survey on Open Access

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Day PC. Results of AMHP journal survey on Open Access. *Aerospace Med Hum Perform.* 2018; 89(1):70–71.

We were interested in learning about our authors' and reviewers' understanding and preferences concerning publishing in an Open Access (OA) journal. Many institutions are now requiring some kind of OA or depositing of work in a repository. Many journals are moving towards an author pay model and away from subscriptions. The Aerospace Medical Association's journal has successfully avoided page charges for nearly 90 years and is not ready to embrace OA as of yet. But we need to keep informed about trends in publishing and the needs of our authors. A Survey Monkey questionnaire was sent via a weblink to 476 current authors and reviewers of *Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance* listed in the Journal's Editorial Manager manuscript submission system. There were 26 questions, some with up to 15 subparts. We received 202 responses plus 8 emails giving opinions or reasons for not completing the survey. The response rate of 42% is notable considering the size and scope of the survey. The basic message was fairly simple, but the answers were quite complicated. The majority of respondents did not express a favorable view towards Open Access journals, but were sensitive to the needs of their employers/funders. Most are unwilling or unable to pay to publish. They appreciate a quality publication with robust peer review. The full survey and responses are available as supplemental data online (<https://doi.org/10.3357/AMHP.5032.2018>). We are grateful to all who participated in the survey as it shows above all how committed our authors and reviewers are to maintaining the quality of *Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance*.

In addition to opinions regarding Open Access and author fees, we were also interested in the perceptions concerning the role of publishers, editors, peer review, usage, dissemination of articles, and several other aspects connected to the publishing of scientific articles.

To give a framework to the business of publishing in our journal, we included the following information in the survey: "Our journal (*Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance*) expenses are roughly \$300,000 per year. This includes salaries

for two full-time employees, one contractor editor-in-chief, and one part-time contractor assistant to editor. It also includes: the cost of the manuscript submission and peer review system; hosting and maintaining an online journal; hosting and maintaining an online archive; typesetting; and printing and distribution. Income from subscriptions is approximately \$100,000 and the journal is considered a member benefit, provided to all members of the Aerospace Medical Association in print and/or online. We receive approximately \$9000 in advertising revenues.

We publish approximately 1,000 pages per year; 45% of those are research; the other 55% is made up of review articles, case reports, and features. A conservative estimate of the cost of publishing an Open Access article is between US\$500–US\$2500, depending on the journal's level of selectivity. However, this figure is probably an under-estimate because it excludes contributions to overheads and profits. We also included definitions of Author Publication Charges, Open Access, Hybrid, and Repository to help the respondents understand the concepts in question.

Results of the survey suggest that many respondents perceive OA articles to be: 1) easier to find; 2) published faster; 3) more widely disseminated; and 4) providing more equitable access to research for readers in less developed nations. However, the perception of paying to publish was viewed as a negative factor. When asked about the importance of the benefits of OA, no overwhelming benefits stood out, except perhaps having a wider audience and free access. The advantages of the traditional subscription model were perceived as more rigorous in terms of peer review, higher impact factor, and higher quality submissions.

There are far reaching ramifications to publishing an article in an open access journal. The article may be available to anyone on the internet at any time and monetization can be

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3357/AMHP.5032.2018>

accomplished by any third parties, but not the publisher once the OA charges are paid. Our survey asked respondents their opinions regarding permissions for reuse. The majority were comfortable with having their work reused without permission so long as the same conditions applied as to the first publication, as well as for data-mining, translations, adaptations, and for non-commercial use in anthologies. However, they were opposed to having their work used for commercial gain or in commercial anthologies. So, in this sense, the majority were opposed to OA. Respondents overwhelmingly wanted rigorous peer review and felt that post-publication peer review was the worst fit for their work.

About two-thirds had deposited their work in a repository—about half of those in institutional repositories and about one-third in personal or departmental websites. The majority of those who did not deposit their work had no requirement to do so. Slightly more than half thought the accepted version of the manuscript was as useful in a repository as the final version. But over two-thirds thought that the repository version was not as easy to find as the published version.

The decision about where to publish was influenced by the reputation of the journal and its relevance to their discipline, peer review quality, and the readers, as well as indexing and having a good relationship with the editor. Publication fees were a consideration for 70% of respondents. Immediate Open Access was not important to 60%, but extremely important to 17%. Impact Factor was important to about 60%. When asked about the number of papers they had published in the last 5 years, 62 published 1–5 papers; 47 published 6–10; and 47 published more than 10; 8 had none and 2 said NA; one person boasted 75! Many of the respondents publish in AMHP (38%), with 13% publishing in *Research*, 12% in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*, 6% in *Applied Ergonomics*, 5% in *Military Medicine*, and 30% in a variety of other journals. When considering the value of services provided by the publishers, many thought that checking references and weblinks was not very important (which hurts my feelings!). They were fairly equally split between single-blind and double-blind review.

When considering factors affecting a journal's reputation, the quality of peer review was of fairly high importance. Where the journal is indexed also received high marks. Quality of output, Impact Factor, and the opinion of the community (seen as the place to publish) were also all important. Less important were speed of publishing, the opinion of their institutional library, the open access status, the editorial board, and other publishing authors. Comments were: “publishing special issues on critical topics”; “In discipline is most important”; “OA is a bad model”; “Survey is too long!” (I agree!); and “not a money mill—PloS is not viewed favorably as editors are not interested in quality, only their point of view.”

Approximately 18% had published at least one OA paper and 29% more than one OA paper; almost half had not published any OA papers. Only 2% indicated OA was the most important factor in their decision of where to publish, whereas 29% said they would not submit to a journal with charges, and 32% would only if it was the only option. While 32% felt their

institutions would pay for charges, 20% would have to bear the full cost. Yet 42% said there was no budget for OA. Of the reasons for not publishing OA, half were unwilling to pay, a third were unable to pay, and over a third cited the perceived quality of OA as a contributing factor to not publishing OA. (More than one answer was allowed.)

As for the demographics, nearly 25% of respondents were Professors; 20% were Medical Professionals/Physicians; 10% were Associate Professors; 8% were Principal Investigators; 7% were Researchers; 5% each were Senior Scientists or Consultants; 5% were Students or Post-Doc Fellows; the other 15% were other related jobs. Of the 190 who answered the question regarding age, 40% were 60 years or older, 25% were 50–59, 16% were 40–49, and 16% were 30–39; only about 3% were 20–29. About 26% had been in the field for 31–40 years, 20% for 21–30 years, 15% for over 40 years, 12% for 6–10 years, 11% for 16–20 years, 10% for 11–15 years, and 7% for 1–5 years. The majority (107) were from the United States, 14 from the United Kingdom, 9 from Canada, 8 from Australia, 6 from France, 5 from Italy, 4 each from China, Netherlands, and Germany; 3 from Turkey, and 3 from India. At least 10 other countries were represented.

We also had several folks who just didn't have time to go through the long survey, but were kind enough to comment:

“I read it. I am against it. I think it lets rich labs buy space for their research, while poorer labs cannot afford to pay.”

“Much too complex and did not cover true significance of real research and development.”

“Thanks very much for taking the time to send me the survey. I am hesitant to answer the questions because I honestly don't have enough experience with Open Access versus other options. I am afraid that I might give you opinions that are not properly founded.”

“I'm sorry, but that form really is far too long and there are simply too many questions. My tax return forms are shorter! In summary, I have concerns about OA, because the quality of work appears to be less than in non-OA journals, there are many “predatory” OA journals, and I suspect in general the work in those journals is not as good as that in standard peer review journals. My preference is not to publish in those journals, although I have done so in the past.”

In conclusion, first and foremost, the number of respondents shows the dedication of our authors and reviewers. We realize your time is valuable, and we truly appreciate your donating so much of it to help us understand your publishing needs. Most of our authors have a fairly strong negative opinion of open access and paying to publish. We hope we can continue to publish free of charge to our authors, but as times change we will have to keep abreast of this issue. Most respondents also highly value peer review. They were fairly equally split between single-blind and double-blind review. Impact Factor still carries a lot of weight and so does where the journal is indexed. The comment that “This survey is too long!” was not lost on us. Hopefully we will not need to send another one for many years!