Quality Control in Open Science publishing: Challenges, solutions and way forward

Online discussion – 04.06.21

Summary

Elsevier and Wageningen University and Research organized an online discussion event providing information to WUR researchers on the transition to Open Science in scientific publishing. The event took place online via Zoom and lasted 90 min, with 30 min dedicated to a Q&A from the audience to the panel, composed of representatives from WUR and Elsevier:

Dr Anna Besse-Lototskaya | Program leader WUR Open Science & Education, WUR Library
Dr Theo Jetten | Policy Advisor WUR Library - Executive Secretary of PE&RC
Prof. Vincenzo Fogliano | Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Functional Foods | Chair of Food and Quality Design at WUR
Prof. Marcel Zwietering | Editor of the International Journal of Food Microbiology | Chair of Food Microbiology at WUR
Morgane Dagot | Publisher at Elsevier - Food Science Journals
Dr Charon Duermeijer | Global Director Customer Success & Engagement at Elsevier
Hubert Krekels | Director of WUR Library
Dolors Alsina Vila | Publishing Director Life Sciences Journals at Elsevier

80 people attended the event.

The Q&A raised the following questions:

How are researchers expected to pay for Open Access publishing, especially in developing countries?

The agreement between Elsevier and VSNU helps authors affiliated with member institutions to publish their research open access in Elsevier journals without having to pay an APC. You can search for the journals included in the arrangement, in the WUR Journal Browser.
It is a challenge to decrease costs as the amount of publications keeps increasing, also under the subscription model. Perhaps prioritizing quality over quantity can help limiting the costs. But quantity is still used to evaluate researcher's performance, and changing that will require a step-by-step, slow transition of a whole system, not only in the Netherlands.
For developing countries, the program Research4Life can offer waivers or discounts on the APC according to the authors' county of origin. This program was initially providing access to our Journals' content to developing countries, and we're now working on transitioning this program towards open access fees.

Is the transition to Open Access an opportunity to also modernize the peer-review process to incorporate the advantages of novel technologies?

The peer review process has changed with digitalization, for example with the help of AI and algorithms to find new reviewers and support editors in handling thousands of submissions a year. It remains old fashioned, with the need to find 3 to 4 people to spend a great amount of time and effort on one manuscript. It would be great to innovate in this area; it is challenging as the peer review process brings a lot of learnings to authors and reviewers. The risk with an

alternative model, for example sharing manuscripts online for the community to comment on, might be that no one feels responsible for the improvement of a manuscript.
Established scientists often receive several invitations to review a day; with the increase of scholarly output being published, there is a challenge of increasing the pool of scientists taking part in peer review and increase its diversity: in geography but also in experience. Early career researchers should be more involved in the peer review process as there is much to learn from it, but should also be recognized and rewarded for doing so. You can find courses on how to conduct peer review at the Wageningen Graduate School and at Elsevier Researcher Academy.

I have difficulty with the existence of different data repositories and different preprint servers, making (open) data and publications scattered.

It does not matter to editors & Journals which data / preprint repository you chose for your manuscript, it will not affect the outcome of your publication. Each publisher & institute might have their own repositories, making it difficult to choose: pick the one that is right for you. For Elsevier Journals, using SSRN as a preprint server and Mendeley Data as a data repository can be helpful to link these to your final, published article easily. Learn more about finding research data.

Where can I publish? How do I recognize predatory Journals? Is MDPI considered predatory?

Recommended reading:

- Predatory journals
- Think. Check. Submit.
- WUR Journal Browser
- Interesting read about MDPI

Other things to check: who are the editors of the Journal? What is the quality of the published articles? Is there any information about the peer review process? Is the Journal indexed (Web of Science, Scopus, etc)?

***Could we involve the industry to support the transition to Open Science publishing and the improvement and its processes, as I believe they're becoming more interested in investing in education*?**

This is definitely worth exploring, as Publisher and researcher institutes, we can open a dialogue with the industry to develop an understanding on how we could work together.