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► Plan S and cOAlition S: from principles to implementation

1 A set of complementary policies

Plan S has a single ambitious goal: all peer reviewed scholarly publications resulting from research funded by cOAlition S members must be published in full and immediate Open Access (OA) starting from 2021. The 10 principles of Plan S spell out a number of conditions of the process of transition to OA that all cOAlition S members have aligned on.¹

The cOAlition currently brings together 26 organisations² that have jointly started implementing a number of policies and are developing tools to realize this ambition.³ cOAlition S policies primarily provide a framework for researchers and publishers. cOAlition S-funded researchers are required to publish all peer-reviewed articles that result from cOAlition S funding in full and immediate OA. Therefore, they need to know how the journals of their choice conform to Plan S requirements. Plan S also makes it clear that publication in ‘hybrid’ journals will no longer be financially supported by cOAlition S funders unless these journals are committed to completely transitioning to OA. This means that publishers needed to know under which conditions they can continue to receive payment for OA publishing services from cOAlition S members, and how cOAlition S will facilitate the transition from the subscription model to OA models. Many other stakeholders – e. g. university associations, university libraries, scholarly societies – also have to be informed about these new policies, as cOAlition S is seeking alignment with them as well.

1 URL: https://www.coalition-s.org/plan_s_principles/ (last access 10 June 2022).

2 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/organisations/> (last access 10 June 2022).

3 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/plan-s-funders-implementation/> (last access 10 June 2022).

2 Plan S Guidance

The Plan S Guidance on implementation (June 2019) set out the conditions of compliance that apply to peer-reviewed articles financed by cOAlition S members.⁴ First and foremost, cOAlition S funded authors must apply a CC BY licence by default to all their peer-reviewed articles. Authors can submit papers to any journal of their choice, as long as one of the following conditions is fulfilled:

- ▶ Route 1: The journal is fully OA and registered in the Directory of Open Access journals (DOAJ). Any publication fees will be covered by the funder if fair and reasonable.
- ▶ Route 2: Publication in hybrid and subscription journals is possible *if* a copy of the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) is deposited in a repository on publication. No payment is provided.
- ▶ Route 3: The journal of choice is under a Transformative Arrangement. These journals are in the process of transitioning to OA via negotiated deals with university libraries, which not only give researchers associated with the university the right to read articles in these journals but also to publish OA in them. As more and more of such deals are struck, the journals gradually transition to OA.

Finally, the Guidance also identifies the technical and quality criteria that OA platforms and repositories have to conform to.

3 Helping authors: the Journal Checker Tool

For individual authors, the three routes outlined above may be confusing. How does an author know whether their journal of choice is under a Transformative Arrangement, or whether they have to deposit their AAM in a repository? cOAlition S-funded authors need to be informed how their journals of choice comply with the three routes outlined above. That is why cOAlition S developed the *Journal Checker Tool* (JCT),⁵ a search engine that allows authors to type in just three pieces of information: the name of the journal, their funder, and their institution. This combination provides authors with the OA status of their journal in relation to the three routes, and advises them on what they have to do. Since January 2021, the JCT helps authors find their way in the landscape of OA routes available for their journals of choice.

Information on journals is sourced from the DOAJ, Shareyourpaper.org Permissions, the ESAC Transformative Agreement Registry, CrossRef, the Research Organization Registry Community, and a cOAlition S-specific database of Transformative journals.

4 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/guidance-on-the-implementation-of-plan-s/> (last access 10 June 2022).

5 URL: <https://journalcheckertool.org/> (last access 10 June 2022).

The JCT now has 3,000 unique users and 4,700 searches per month, with 20 per cent return users. Primary access is from the UK and US, but demand from Europe is growing. Use is expected to grow substantially as soon as the new cOAlition S policies have their effect on authors' outputs.

Future upgrades of the JCT will reflect funder-specific policies and language. The goal is to make the JCT into an authoritative and reliable one-stop shop for authors and librarians checking journal compliance with cOAlition S policies.

4 Three policies for the transition to full and immediate Open Access

To support specific aspects of the Guidance and implement the 10 Principles, cOAlition S designed three policies: the Transformative Journals framework, the Price Transparency framework, and the Rights Retention Strategy.

The Transformative Journals Framework⁶ (January 2020) was developed to accelerate the transition of hybrid journals to full OA. To qualify for reimbursement of publication fees by cOAlition S funders, a Transformative Journal (TJ) must commit to transitioning to full OA, and comply with ambitious year-on-year increases in OA content. 15 publishers – including Elsevier, Karger, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press and Springer Nature – have signed up to the framework.⁷ cOAlition S will be monitoring the progress of the 2,250 journals that have committed to this accelerated transition to full OA.⁸

The Price and Services Transparency Framework (May 2020)⁹ aims at collecting and comparing transparent pricing information for specific publishing services. cOAlition S endorsed two frameworks for this purpose. The *Plan S Price and Transparency Framework*, developed by Information Power, was piloted by *Annual Reviews*, *Brill*, *The Company of Biologists*, *EMBO Press*, *European Respiratory Society*, *F1000 Research*, *Hindawi*, *IOP Publishing*, *PLOS*, and *Springer Nature*. The *Breakdown of Publication Services and Fees* developed by the Fair Open Access Alliance was implemented by *Frontiers*, *MIT Press*, *Copernicus* and *MDPI*.

Currently, cOAlition S is building a Journal Comparison Service (JCS) that will list this information. For reasons of competition law, publishers should not be allowed to see each other's price information. The service will therefore only be accessible to selected users (university libraries, consortia, funders). This service will go live in summer 2022, and help the research community better understand if publishing fees are commensurate with the services delivered and provide better insight into the elements of those services.

The JCS also provides publishers with the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to open business models and cultures, build awareness of their services and value, and build

6 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/addendum-to-the-coalition-s-guidance-on-the-implementation-of-plan-s/> (last access 10 June 2022).

7 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/plan-s-compliant-transformative-journals/> (last access 10 June 2022).

8 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/plan-s-compliant-transformative-journals/> (last access 10 June 2022).

9 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/price-and-service-transparency-frameworks/> (last access 10 June 2022).

understanding and trust. Once the JCS is up and running, the Journal Checker Tool will indicate whether a journal has provided price and service data to the JCS.

cOAlition S hopes that price comparison will exert downward pressure on prices and create a more open market for publishing services.

The **Rights Retention Strategy** (RRS)¹⁰ (July 2020) calls on cOAlition S-funded researchers to apply a CC BY licence to all of their papers, and thereby retain sufficient intellectual rights to reuse material from their papers as they please, and to share the article in a repository of their choice. In this way, the RRS also supports Route 2 above. It allows cOAlition S authors to seek publication in hybrid and subscription journals, while at the same time making sure they retain sufficient rights to be able to deposit a copy of the Author Accepted in a repository on publication. cOAlition S organisations have modified their grant conditions to make sure that a CC BY licence is applied to all future AAMs. 150 publishers were informed of this change in the grant conditions. Authors wishing to publish in hybrid and subscription journals are asked to inform the publisher with their submission that they are funded by a cOAlition S organisation, and that they apply a CC BY licence to the AAM arising from their submission.

Of course, publishers are at liberty to refuse articles that come with a CC BY licence on the AAM. Publishers have reacted negatively to the use of the RRS. They have often confused researchers by asking them to sign additional contracts that require researchers to respect embargoes that conflict with their previously signed grant conditions. cOAlition S and other stakeholders – including CESAER, the European University Association and Science Europe – have repeatedly called for the publishers to provide clarity on this important issue.¹¹

To reinforce the message of the RRS, cOAlition S started an information campaign about it in April 2022, which includes various resources available to all.¹²

5 Open Access Books

In line with Principle 7 of Plan S and the implementation Guidance, cOAlition S issued a statement on Plan S principles for academic books in September 2021. Academic books are defined to include monographs, book chapters, edited collections, critical editions, and other long-form works. Many cOAlition S funders have already developed their own OA policies around academic books, converging on critical elements like embargoes and licences. Most cOAlition S funders have adopted or advise CC licences, with embargoes between 0 and 12 months.

10 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/rights-retention-strategy/> (last access 10 June 2022).

11 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/enabling-open-access-through-clarity-and-transparency-a-request-to-publishers/> (last access 10 June 2022).

12 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/resources/rights-retention-strategy/> (last access 10 June 2022).

cOAlition S recognises that academic book publishing is very different from journal publishing, and commits to making progress towards full OA for academic books as soon as possible. cOAlition S members will seek to adopt a set of five recommendations regarding academic books within their own remits and jurisdictions.¹³ cOAlition S-funded academic books should be made available OA on publication with a CC licence, with sufficient intellectual property rights being retained for re-use. Embargo periods should never exceed 12 months. cOAlition S funders will financially support OA of academic books via their funding schemes and OA publishing business models via dedicated arrangements.

cOAlition S will collaborate with the OA books community to develop implementation guidelines that respect this bibliodiversity: the Directory of Open Access Books, OAPEN, and the OA Books Network.

6 Smaller publishers in the transition to Open Access

cOAlition S recognises that smaller publishers may find it harder to transition their portfolio to OA options that are aligned with Plan S. In September 2019, the *Society Publishers Accelerating Open Access and Plan S* (SPA-OPS) project set out to identify routes through which learned society publishers could successfully transition to OA and align with Plan S (September 2019). The project was led by Alicia Wise and Lorraine Estelle of Information Power, and was commissioned by Wellcome, UK Research and Innovation, and the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP). Following up on the outcomes of this project, cOAlition S and ALPSP commissioned Information Power to deliver a study to review progress on transformative and other OA agreements between library consortia and smaller independent publishers.

Information Power's report (June 9, 2021) indicates that OA agreements between libraries and smaller independent publishers are increasingly used worldwide since 2020. However, a full transition to OA is a serious challenge for smaller independent publishers: society publishers without a larger publishing partner, university presses, library presses, and small independent commercial presses.

Practical collaboration in a number of areas is needed to align on shared principles, licence language, data exchange, and workflows, followed by engagement to embed these in practice. The report recommends that funders take steps to enable universities to aggregate all their expenditure with publishers via the library. They also encourage publishers who closely link the price of OA agreements to article volume to think carefully about more equitable models.

This report led to a third phase of the *Society Publishers Accelerating Open Access* (SPA-OPS 3.0) project, again commissioned by cOAlition S and ALPSP. Information Power, working

13 URL: <https://www.coalition-s.org/coalition-s-statement-on-open-access-for-academic-books/> (last access June 2022).

together with librarians, publishers and library consortia, developed a toolkit¹⁴ allowing smaller independent publishers, libraries, and consortia to more easily enter into OA agreements. This toolkit contains a report with shared principles for developing an OA agreement; a data template; six example licences ready to be used and adapted as necessary. It also provides a detailed workflow with an overview of the entire process, from contract negotiation to achieving compliance with funder policies and reporting to libraries.

7 Diamond Open Access

‘Diamond’ OA refers to a scholarly publication model in which journals and platforms do not charge fees to either authors or readers. In March 2021, a consortium coordinated by OPERAS – including Sparc Europe, Utrecht University, DOAJ, UiT The Arctic University of Norway as partners, and LIBER, OASPA, ENRESSH, Redalyc-AmeliCA and CSI as associate partners – published an in-depth report and recommendations on OA diamond journals, the Open Access Diamond Journal Study.¹⁵ This study was commissioned by cOAlition S and financially supported by Science Europe.

The study examines critical areas for OA diamond journals, from legal structures and governance to technical capabilities, editorial processes, and funding models. The report finds that diamond journals represent a vast archipelago of relatively small journals serving a wide variety of scientific communities. They largely depend on volunteer work, universities, and government funding. Diamond journals are making headway towards Plan S compliance but face a number of operational challenges despite multiple scientific strengths. They need to be more efficiently organised, coordinated and funded to better support researchers in disseminating their work.

The study’s recommendations were to prepare an International Workshop and Symposium, set up a funding strategy, and establish a Diamond Publishing Capacity Center.

In the wake of the Open Access Diamond Journal Study, Science Europe collaborated with cOAlition S, OPERAS, and ANR to organise an online Diamond OA Workshop with international experts on 2 February 2022 to discuss a Diamond Action Plan. This event was sponsored by the French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in preparation for the Paris Open Science European Conference (OSEC). The Diamond Action Plan was published on 3 March 2022, and has been signed by 110 organisations worldwide. Parts of the Diamond Action Plan will initially be taken forward under the umbrella of the Horizon Europe project ‘Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication’ (DIAMAS; 2022–2025.) The goal of this action plan is to create a scholarly publishing infrastructure that is equitable, community-driven, and academic-led and -owned.

14 URL: <https://www.alpsp.org/OA-agreements> (last access 10 June 2022).

15 URL: <https://scienceeurope.org/our-resources/oa-diamond-journals-study/> (last access 10 June 2022).

8 Looking forward

In the next few years, cOAlition S will continue to seek new members and foster alignment around Plan S principles to make sure it has a more international and diverse footprint. We look forward to working in partnership with all stakeholders in scholarly publishing to help create a level playing field for equitable OA.