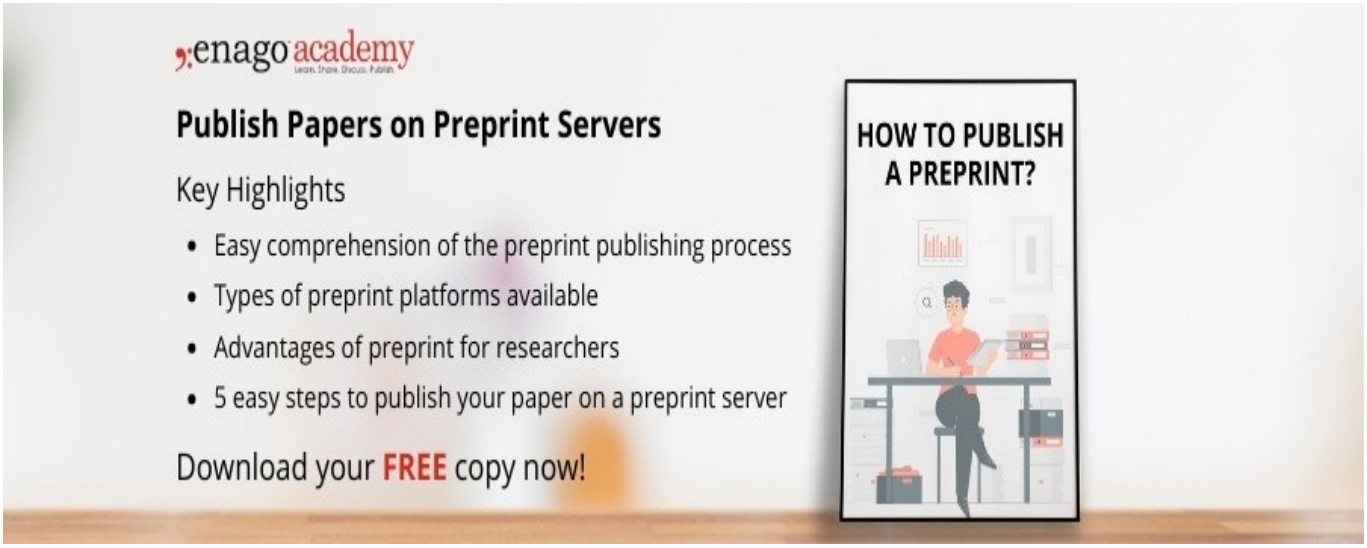


Description

Not many open-access scientific journals meet the draft Plan S requirements. This initiative by European funders aims to make the research they fund freely and immediately available. According to the latest updates, the Coalition S has released the implementation guidelines of Plan S and asked the concerned stakeholders to provide their feedback on the same. On the other hand, recently few researchers conducted a study to examine how many existing open access journals comply with the proposed Plan S requirements. Let us find out more about the study and the consequent results obtained.



Study on Plan S Compliance

Do open access journals comply with Plan S requirements? In order to answer this, Jan Erik Frantsvåg (University of Tromsø–the Arctic University of Norway) and Tormod Strømme (University of Bergen in Norway) explored the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ's) metadata. They wanted to know:

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1. How many open access journals currently comply with Plan S?
2. Do publisher size, business model and subject fields affect Plan S compliance?
3. Why do small, non-APC financed open access publishers find Plan S requirements challenging?

Criteria for Plan S Compliance

They downloaded the DOAJ's published journal metadata. Following the download, the researchers analyzed the number of journals that comply with some of the criteria for Plan S as follows:

1. **Registration with DOAJ**: The journal must have DOAJ-indexing or be in the process of being indexed. In fact, the study included all DOAJ-indexed journals.
2. **Journal license**: Authors must be able to publish under a CC BY 4.0 license (creative commons attribution 4.0 international license). This is a copyright license which states that the author(s), article's title, journal citation and DOI must be credited in any distribution of the work.
3. **Open access:** The research must be free to access, read and download immediately upon publication.
4. **Author copyright:** Authors as well as institutions must retain full copyright of the work. Moreover, there cannot be any transfer or restriction of these rights.
5. **Review process:** Details of the review process must be available online. In addition, they must comply with the standards of the relevant discipline and committee on publication ethics.
6. **Article processing charges (APC):** These must be waived for low-income countries and discounted for authors of middle-income countries.
7. **Permanent identifiers**: Journals must use DOIs (digital object identifier) as permanent identifiers.
8. **Digital archiving**: Content must be deposited with a long-term digital preservation program.
9. **Full text**: The full text as well as the data must be available in "machine readable format" to allow for effortless text and data mining.
10. **Machine-readable CC-licensing:** The article must have this information embedded or displayed.

Plan S Requirements Study Results

Only one of the requirements listed above (review process) relates to the quality of the article. The rest are, however, technical requirements. Of the 5987 science and medical journals listed in the DOAJ, only 15% were Plan S compliant. Interestingly, the ability of a journal to meet Plan S requirements correlated with publisher size and journals charging APC's. Therefore, smaller publishers may find the Plan S article cap fee too low to cover their costs. Larger publishers, however, can supplement the costs of their lower income-producing journals with their more profitable ones. Smaller publishers do not have this luxury.

The Future of Plan S

Future Plan S grant holders will only be allowed to publish in journals that meet Plan S criteria. The concern, thereby, is that limiting Plan S grant holders to publishing in compliant journals may simultaneously restrict the opportunity to publish their work in the more traditional and prestigious journals.

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Publishers feel that it is going to take longer than the current time-line (January 2020) proposed for subscription-based journals to become Plan S compliant.

While some scientists welcome the improved access to research, others worry that their journal choices may be limited when it comes to publishing their work. Do you think Plan S is a sustainable model for journals? Please let us know your thoughts in the comments section below.

Category

1. Industry News
2. Publishing News

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