

Plan S: Will Subscription-based Journals Get Rapidly Outdated?

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The internet has revolutionized our world, and scientific publishing is no exception. To realize the dream of placing the world's knowledge at anyone's fingertips, the movement to promote open access publishing has grown significantly. But major journals and publishers still [rely on paid subscription models](#) for access to research. Recently, a group of 11 European funding agencies decided to push back by launching "Plan S." The Plan requires all funding recipients to [publish in immediate open access journals](#). Will they succeed in changing the way major publishers operate? Let us learn more about this initiative below.

What is Plan S?

As the open access movement launched, it seemed the subscription model used by academic journals would soon become a thing of the past. Instead, publishing has become a battleground between funding institutions and journals. Many feel that publicly funded research [should be available to anyone](#) who wishes to read it. In support of this view, 11 major European funding agencies known as Coalition S created Plan S.

Plan S is a commitment by these agencies to ensure that all research they support is published in “full, immediate” open access journals or compliant open access platforms, effective from January 1, 2020. Additionally, there are 10 principles with respect to Plan S. One of these principles state that they will no longer support publication in hybrid journals which allow open access after 6 or 12 months of publication. Simultaneously, Plan S will also [limit the article processing charges](#) and forbid monetizing articles in any way.

Members of Plan S

The ambitious Plan is led by the Science Council of Europe and the European Commission’s envoy on open access, Robert Jan Smits. Eleven EU countries have joined: Austria, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia, the UK, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and Sweden.

The organizations that have joined are the Austrian Science Fund, the French National Research Agency, the Irish Science Foundation, the Italian National Institute for Nuclear Physics, the Luxembourgish National Research Fund, the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research, the Norwegian Research Council, the Polish National Science Centre, the Slovenian Research Agency, the Swedish Research Council and the British Research and Innovation organization. Together, they [provide a combined 7.6 billion Euros](#) in funding annually.

A Huge Impact on the Research Community

Plan S has already sent a shock wave through the research community. Mostly the reactions have been positive. An eminent personality in the publishing community, Peter Suber, is in support of the plan. He is the director of the Harvard Open Access Project and the Harvard Office for Scholarly Communication in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He feels that [Plan S was a natural next step](#) to take. Previously, weaker policies have failed. Hybrid journals have not been the stepping stone to full open access that the research community hoped for. As a result, a stronger policy comes into existence, as Plan S. Jeremy Farrar, director of the Wellcome Trust, also made a statement of support.

However, others have [expressed doubts](#) about the feasibility of the plan and its impacts on researchers in poorer countries. Such is the opinion of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) that publishes the journal *Science*. As a matter of fact, it stated that Plan S would not support high-quality peer review and research dissemination. As a result, there is a potential for researchers to be sanctioned or [not receive full grant funding](#) in case of violation of any plan.

It is hard to say what impact the Plan S will ultimately have on the research community. However, it is clear that it will force some serious changes to the current model of publishing. Academics will no doubt keep a close watch as the plan is put into action.

What do you think of Plan S? Will it make open access the dominant model in research publishing? Please let us know your thoughts in the comments section below.

Cite this article

Enago Academy, Plan S: Will Subscription-based Journals Get Rapidly Outdated?. Enago Academy. 2018/09/09. <https://www.enago.com/academy/plan-s-will-subscription-based-journals-get-rapidly-outdated/>