

MyScience Inquiry: proposal for inquiry into Plan S

The Royal Astronomical Society proposes that the Science and Technology Select Committee investigate Plan S, which will mandate Gold Open Access publishing for most UK researchers from 1 January 2020.

We ask MPs to consider this for the following reasons:

- Plan S assumes that researchers have been unwilling and / or slow to move to an open access model. In astronomy and geophysics this is far from true, and the vast majority make accepted papers available at no cost - and with no embargo - on the arXiv and EartharXiv servers
- Many hybrid journals actively encourage posting on these open access subject repositories, including those published by the RAS (Monthly Notices of the RAS and Geophysical Journal International)
- RAS journals (and many others) will likely have to 'flip' to a fully paid Gold Open Access model to accommodate the new policy and authors will then need to pay substantial Article Processing Charges
- This will likely have unintended consequences, such as penalising research groups without significant funding, and leading to difficult discussions in groups with funding on who should use financial resources to publish papers
- In at least some cases university libraries are the direct recipients of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funds for open access, and UKRI grant holders do not make the decision about where they should publish their results.
- The UKRI diktat therefore also effectively compromises academic freedom
- Such a drastic change needs further consultation and should not be imposed on such a short timescale

In summary, this is a major change with potential for significant disruption to the UK research landscape in the near future. The research community is managing significant uncertainty as a result of Brexit, and is already working to accommodate the changes resulting from the creation of UKRI. The lack of consultation by that new body on such a significant change is a major concern for the Royal Astronomical Society, and we therefore urge the Science and Technology Committee to consider Plan S as a topic for investigation.

Post-submission note

The Committee selected this for further consideration, and the Deputy Executive Director made a 5-minute pitch on this on 29 January. See