

SfAM position statement: Open Access Publishing

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Many learned societies rely on income generated from publishing in order to deliver the aims and objectives of a business and charity. SfAM is no different in this respect and the income that we generate from publishing five internationally acclaimed journals with our partner, Wiley-Blackwell, enables us to deliver training and development, offer grants and awards, and ensure that membership of our Society continues to be exceptional value for money. There is clear potential that, as more titles become Open Access, our income from publishing will reduce – this possibility requires careful consideration.

SfAM accepts that to make it possible for all interested parties to view the latest high quality research, the business model for journals has to change.

In the past, the majority of sales of journal titles have been institutional subscriptions. This has excluded many people from accessing the majority of scientific titles, including two groups that are significant subsections of SfAM's membership – industry scientists, and scientists working in countries that have a less developed economy.

In the UK, it is our impression that the Gold Open Access model is the one that has been more readily accepted, though SfAM, in partnership with Wiley-Blackwell, has a range of models applied to our titles. Taken in isolation, a Gold Open Access title is obviously more sustainable, as long as the fees charged to the author (or their sponsor) continue to cover the costs of publishing. We do, however, accept that market forces may seek to lower that author fee, in future. We also acknowledge that for organizations with more than one title, a mixed model approach can work favourably.

Although a move completely away from the subscription model of journal publishing will inevitably have an impact on SfAM, we expect changes to the economics of publishing will continue to be gradual, which is a great advantage; we have time to assess what is happening and plan accordingly. SfAM will seek to develop other income streams, in the short term, and look at additional options in the medium to long term, should our net income from publishing begin to fall.