

SCUDD: Position Paper on Open Access

Introduction

Open Access (OA), the principle of making published research free and open to all readers with an internet connection is, in theory, an aspiration worth pursuing for the obvious reason contained in its definition. However, its implications are altogether more complicated and potentially damaging to those publishing in the Arts and Humanities (A&H). There are also a number of political and economic matters associated with OA. This paper, however, aims to address issues that SCUDD members may encounter directly as a result of OA policy in a single, relatively short document.

For the most part, this document concerns the workings of OA at present and future issues that are likely to arise. In terms of REF 2021, however, the OA requirement only extends to journal articles and the stipulations can be accessed [here](#).

The OA movement is driven by the hard sciences, primarily by the biomedical sciences, where the swift sharing of experimental results has economic implications. A problem arising from this driver is that OA is being implemented as a universal principle without reference to the specificities of different disciplines and forms of output. A&H outputs in general and Drama, Theatre and Performance outputs in particular do not conform to the standard science model of the article-length written publication. OA seeks to apply its principles not only to journal articles and conference proceedings, but to monographs and edited collections. Non-print outputs, such as practice-as-research and its related practical outputs, are yet to be addressed by OA. However, the REF category of 'open data' may indirectly impinge on such outputs, although issues of copyright and income for artists should keep such outputs protected.

OA is a prominent feature of publication policy, especially since the advent of the movement known as 'Plan S' or '[cOAlition S](#)', as it now seems to be called. UKRI has signed up to the principles of the coalition, along with the EU, many European research agencies, the Wellcome Trust and others. The 'S' may stand for 'science' as seems to be the case in the following line taken from the Coalition's website:

Universality is a fundamental principle of science (the term "science" as used here includes the humanities): only results that can be discussed, challenged, and, where appropriate, tested and reproduced by others qualify as scientific.¹

Here A&H is parenthetically included, although the word 'results' is problematic and already indicates that the meaning of 'science' understood by the Coalition remains with the STEM subjects. That is, A&H become a part of a standardized OA without a proper understanding of how the disciplines differ from the sciences and the implications OA has for those disciplines.

¹ Anon, <https://www.coalition-s.org/why-plan-s/> [accessed 20 August 2019].

The purpose of this working paper, which will be updated as the OA landscape changes, is to outline the (potential) problems associated with OA and to give a position on each of them with respect to SCUDD.

Journal Publication

The REF already mandates all outputs for submission to be 'compliant' which means that a version of the published article appears in an OA form, at a maximum of three months after acceptance. This 'author-accepted version' (AAV) is usually to be found in an institutional repository (the 'green' route). The AAV is often the raw electronic copy, unformatted and/or unedited before publication. Journals offer 'gold' open access route where the 'version of record' (VOR), the final, edited, formatted and paginated copy is available to all for free through the journal itself. Neither green nor gold routes imply cost, although the gold route often incurs sometimes high 'article processing (or publishing) fees' (APC).

This current state of play is not ideal. Authors can be rightly displeased that the OA version of their work, the AAV, is not identical to the VOR. The advantage of this compromise, however, is that authors can publish without paying a fee and remain REF-compliant.

cOAlition S articulates one overarching principle:

With effect from 2021, all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in Open Access Journals, on Open Access Platforms, or made immediately available through Open Access Repositories without embargo.²

The cOAlition rejects the 'hybrid' model, by which authors can bifurcate publication into an AAV and VOR, and insists on the gold route. It is not clear, however, what 'grants' means in the context of A&H research where a large proportion is funded by governmental 'quality-related' money, based on REF performance. This is not a 'grant' as such, but a centralized funding mechanism.

A sub-principle on the same webpage states:

Where applicable, Open Access publication fees are covered by the Funders or research institutions, not by individual researchers; it is acknowledged that all researchers should be able to publish their work Open Access.

This is woolly, to say the least, and SCUDD would need to see concrete plans for funding journal publication before agreeing to the overarching principle. SCUDD would have to be satisfied that its members would not find their access to funding in some way 'rationed' or part of an institutional hierarchy of priorities.

² Anon, <https://www.coalition-s.org/principles-and-implementation/> [accessed 20 August 2019].

There is a further issue here, in relation to ownership of research. It seems that, in the sciences, there is an assumption that research grants purchase, in full, time and resources for the production of results on which the funder has an absolute claim. This is emphatically not the case in A&H, where much research, including – perhaps, especially, Practice Research – relies on large transfers of what has been described as a ‘hidden subsidy’: the time and personal resources of scholars and artists. Many outputs in A&H would never be brought to fruition without the unquantified, and therefore unaccounted-for, additional time and resources of individual scholars and artists. This is particularly evident in smaller institutions, and where work is done in partnership with arts organisations or independent artists, and also applies to the production of monographs by colleagues working in institutions where, for instance, research leave policies do not exist or are infrequent.

Monographs and Edited Collections

The cOAlition notes, again on the same webpage, that

The [...] principles shall apply to all types of scholarly publications, but it is understood that the timeline to achieve Open Access for monographs and book chapters will be longer and requires a separate and due process.

As is clear, this short statement tacitly acknowledges many issues that have proved difficult to address.

- Monographs are often understood as a gold standard for A&H publishing, something that does not apply to the sciences where articles are the main medium for significant, high-impact research. Treating OA monographs like OA journals is a problematic conflation and potentially disastrous for A&H scholars for whom study-length publication may become far more difficult under OA.
- There is an ecology in the publishing industry that allows for cross-subsidy to support the publication of book-length outputs, and the implications of OA need to be understood in this context. It is not that SCUDD supports the high margins associated with some journal publishers, but that the financial structures need to be in place to continue to offer suitable outlets for major studies and edited collections.
- Currently, publishers’ charges for OA monographs can reach five figures, sums that individuals or departments would be unable to pay. Government support would have to be forthcoming unless substantial parts of institutions’ library budgets were diverted to researchers’ APCs.
- Practically, readers often prefer a bound book in their hands as opposed to a single electronic document.

An interim [UUK report on OA Monographs](#) reached few conclusions on OA monographs in March 2019, and there is no sense of an overall policy for after REF 2021. SCUDD, other A&H subject associations, learned societies and representative bodies need to make a vocal case because the OA monograph project is being driven by forces that do not properly understand our forms of publication. The above recognition that the processes for making monographs and edited collections OA will be more complicated is a small concession to the issue, but

lobbying will be required to ensure that A&H researchers do not suffer as a result of the concerted push for full OA implementation across all disciplines and output formats.

The CC BY Licence

The cOAlition stipulates that all OA publications ‘must be published under an open license, preferably the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY)’. This license is highly permissive. According to the CC website, readers may share (‘copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format’) and, more worryingly, adapt (‘remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially’) the material covered by the license.³ The latter category clearly violates the scholarly norms associated with quotation from sources and runs the risk of skewing or, more worryingly, misrepresenting research.

Authors may also fail to gain permission from third parties, such as photographers or other copyright holders, to reproduce their material in an OA format. The absence of such material may undermine the integrity of the output. Due payment may secure permissions, but this needs to be provided. The question of third-party materials that appear in research outputs should be considered in greater depth in order to understand the nature and extent of the issue. A consultation among SCUDD members may be sensible.

The cOAlition accepts that the more restrictive CC BY-ND license, which forbids adaptation, can be granted ‘for individual articles, provided that this is explicitly requested and justified by the grantee’.⁴ As this type of license represents the scholarly norm and an absolute minimum standard in terms of referencing in A&H publishing, SCUDD maintains that CC BY-ND should be the default license for *all* outputs. This will not only ensure the accessibility of the work, but also that its integrity is maintained.

Early Career Scholars

As the Royal Historical Society notes:

Plan S’s sponsors articulate entirely laudable goals with respect to supporting ECR research and career progressions. However, the funding norms and career structure for H[umanities] &S[ocial] S[cience] research suggest that Plan S implementation will pose especial challenges for ECR publication, progression and mobility. Lacking free and consistent access to compliant OA platforms and working in disciplines in which most researchers lack external funds to pay for publication costs in compliant journals, ECRs run the risk of exclusion from scientific careers under Plan S.⁵

³ Anon, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> [accessed 20 August 2019].

⁴ Anon, <https://www.coalition-s.org/principles-and-implementation/>.

⁵ Margot Finn, *Plan S and UK Learned Societies: The View from History*, February 2019, p. 4, <https://5hm1h4aktue2uejbs1hsqt31-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/RHS-Plan-S-Feb-2019.pdf> [accessed 20 August 2019].

The RHS sets out the problems for ECRs that affect researchers in our disciplines, too, and SCUDD supports the call for fairness in funding.

Peer Review

OA publication has a tendency, in the sciences at least, to accept outputs for publication that are 'scientifically sound', and this is the central criterion.⁶ Such a stance is problematic for A&H for fairly obvious reasons. A successful doctoral thesis, for example, would be 'sound', but would also require an amount of revision for publication. Elsewhere, scholars use articles to debate different views and approaches, and it is the originality and cogency of argument that are important. The Open Library of the Humanities (OLH), perhaps the best known humanities platform for OA, originally followed the science lead, intending to apply this scientific criterion to A&H research.⁷ Since then, OLH has retreated from this hard-line position and now states that 'all of our academic articles are subject to rigorous peer review'.⁸ This may suggest that this particular battle has been won, but SCUDD should remain vigilant nonetheless.

SCUDD and *Studies in Theatre and Performance* (STP)

SCUDD has a close association with *STP* although it is now owned by Taylor & Francis. At the time of writing (September 2019), the journal offers [a hybrid route to publication](#). Authors can save their AAVs to a repository and publish behind a paywall free of charge, or pay an APC of £1995 for gold OA. This means that authors who are not mandated to archive their work in a repository may publish their work in *STP* without any OA option. As *STP*'s publishing policy is now beyond SCUDD's control, SCUDD will not be able to exert any direct control over the journal's OA practices. However, it would be desirable for SCUDD to influence *STP*'s OA policy as much as possible through its editors.

Conclusion and Future Actions

It is clear that OA with all its attendant problems is far from being resolved.⁹ There are a number of issues that need to be addressed and resolved, and SCUDD should play its role, through its Working Group, to influence the various debates. However, SCUDD is only one subject association, and so it should seek to connect with others and other relevant A&H

⁶ Claudia Lupp, 'Sound science research – an insider guide', 14 July, 2017, <https://www.elsevier.com/connect/editors-update/sound-science-research-an-insider-guide> [accessed 20 August 2019].

⁷ Open Library of Humanities, 'The OLH Model', <https://www.openlibhums.org/about/the-olh-model/> [accessed 14 February 2014].

⁸ https://www.openlibhums.org/media/files/olh_prospectus.pdf [accessed 20 August 2019].

⁹ See 'A commentary by the British Academy on cOAlition S's final version of Plan S', July 2019, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/commentary-british-academy-coalition-s-final-version-plan-s> [accessed 20 August 2019] for a similar set of conclusions to the issues considered above.

organizations to present a larger, hopefully united A&H voice in the ongoing process towards a fair conclusion of OA implementation.

SCUDD Open Access Working Group
September 2019