Non-corresponding authors Task & Finish group

Summary of the second meeting [21st September 2022]

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The chair welcomed all attendees, and the group introduced themselves to the new members. The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed and approved. LCG that noted that attendees from the publishing sector needed more time to review the Briefing Paper and the Terms of Reference.

Discussion

The group began by discussing how to develop a shared set of principles to guide the Task and Finish group, against which to view and evaluate possible solutions or approaches to support UKRI funded authors.

There was discussion about the issue of visibility vs friction and the differing opinions around demonstrating the value of the library’s role in the publishing process to authors. CB noted that there were often informal arrangements between research institutions and publishers that provided co-authors with the ability to publish OA and outlined different scenarios where this was the case. The role of infrastructure and technologies was discussed, for example, could systems like Jisc Publications Router play a role in identifying co-authors and providing a compliant route. The need to identify the scale of the problem was highlighted again as this would influence the amount of resource attendees would put into developing solutions, their exposure to financial costs and prioritisation.

It was clear from conversations between both sectors and researchers how sensitive the issue of the role of corresponding author (CA) is, and how important it is to most of the researchers for the assignment of this role and credit be fair, acknowledge contributions to papers correctly and that the CA role is accurate. Therefore, care and consideration must be given to the issue, and we should not support routes that conflict with author and publishing ethics.

The issue of cost, set in context of wider global market, was raised by both sectors with the understanding that cost neutral/sustainability could mean different things to publishers, institutions and funder. It was strongly felt by attendees from the publishing sector that the cost of any changes needs to be borne fairly and with the division of costs transparently communicated. Publishers are not yet splitting publishing by author share, and it would be complicated to do, but the role of corresponding authors may not necessarily be appropriate as the prime determinate for OA funding eligibility. The potential to distort the market, e.g., by inflating the UK’s output was also noted and any solution must not do this, noting that the faster transitional arrangements are adopted globally, the quicker this issue will be resolved as more UKRI funded co-authors will be covered by an OA publishing arrangement.

Members discussed security of funding noting that UKRI and Wellcome funding is not guaranteed post 2023. The requirements for the next REF will shape our response to this issue and it was agreed that Jisc will present feedback to UKRI on this point.
The group acknowledged that although all were open to ensuring flexibility and openness to a range of solutions, the complexity of publishers’ systems is that they are all different and a single solution or mechanism would be extremely challenging.

It was agreed that the shared set of principles to guide the group should be based around:

1. Ethics. Any proposed solutions should not result in a situation where authors' individual academic contributions are misrepresented or distorted in order to publish openly.
2. Sustainability.
3. Equity. Arrangements should not impose a barrier to other countries or non-funded authors publishing OA.
4. Flexibility.
5. Transparency. To ensure other resources to cover OA costs (such as grants from non UKRI funders) are considered to ensure an even distribution among available resources.

The second part of the discussion centred around understanding the scale of funded co-authors issue in relation to HE institutions / publishing houses to inform next steps. There were several suggestions about who could undertake the scoping exercise e.g., Jisc, the Publishers Association, or an independent third party, and what data sources we could use e.g., research offices, UKRI, Dimensions, Web of Science. It was noted that accessing the sector data sets could be problematic for both sectors.

After debating the pros/cons of the above, and with careful consideration being paid to the methodology behind pulling data out on both sides and data sharing / parameters, it was agreed that both sectors would consider how their institution/company could undertake the data analytics task (subject to internal agreement at respective attendees’ organisations), share their methodologies at the next meeting, and that the date parameters would be the academic year 2019/20 for three years. The group will then agree how the work will be governed to ensure data veracity and consistency.

The aim of the data extraction task is to estimate the population of co-authors that would be expected to publish open access via their funder’s policy (please note that this method estimates the number of co-authors that are subject to the UKRI, Wellcome Trust or NIHR policies). Some publishers flagged that there are serious practical considerations e.g. in their systems/workflows/metadata all authors (corresponding and co-) are listed with the same funders.

**Method**

1. Exclude all articles where all corresponding authors are from UK institutions.
2. Of the rest, exclude all that are not UKRI, NIHR or Wellcome-funded.
3. Of this subset, are there corresponding authors from institutions that can publish under a TA.

The PA raised concerns regarding the sharing of data and volunteered to work with their members around the anonymisation of data. It was agreed that Jisc would do the same with their members.

**Actions**
1. Review briefing paper and terms of reference document and feedback to AH by Friday 14 October [ALL]
2. Share feedback with UKRI [CM, AV, AH]
3. Refine agreed principles and share with group [CM, AV, AH]
4. Those present on the call to consider how their institution/company could undertake the data analytics task [ALL]
5. Group to share methodologies at the next meeting so we can reflect if the data sets fulfil the need with a view to discussing whether we need to find solution that aligns with our agreed principles [ALL]
6. Set up next meeting via poll [AH]