



**Get Smart About Plan S
Recorded at 2018 Frankfurt Book Fair**

**For podcast release
Monday, October 15, 2018**

HEMENWAY: Good morning, everybody. Good morning, and welcome to our panel discussion entitled Get Smart About Plan S. I'm Chuck Hemenway with Copyright Clearance Center. Plan S was announced just a couple of weeks ago, and now everyone in scholarly publishing is talking about it here at the book fair. It's an initiative of 13 national research funding organizations, and it puts pressure on open access publishing business models by capping article fees, ending embargoes, and withdrawing support for hybrid OA journals. Not only are publishers affected by Plan S ambitions, but authors as well. Authors and researchers are concerned that under Plan S, they may have limited choice about where they can publish their work, which could adversely affect their careers.

Robert-Jan Smits, the European Commission's open access special envoy and Plan S mastermind, says the S in Plan S stands for speed, shock, science, solution perhaps. And in the half hour ahead, we aim to have S stand for smart when it comes to the future of your OA publishing program. To do that, I'm happy to welcome three leading executives from open access programs. Today with us we have Tim Britton. Welcome, Tim.

BRITTON: Thank you.

HEMENWAY: Tim is managing director of the open research group at Springer Nature. Tim's responsible for the open research portfolio across the organization, which includes BioMed Central, SpringerOpen, the open access journals of Nature Research, the open access monographs program from Springer and Palgrave Macmillan, and the open data from Springer Nature. Tim was previously head of strategy and transformation for PricewaterhouseCoopers' global data research and insights center, r2i. We also have Malavika Legge.

LEGG: Hello.

HEMENWAY: Welcome.

LEGG: Thank you.



HEMENWAY: Malavika is acting director of publishing at Portland Press, the wholly owned publishing arm of the UK Biochemical Society. She has strong roots in content development and extensive licensing and commercial experience. She's interested in workflows and publishing technology specifically. Previously, Malavika held a variety of editorial roles at Informa. She has a degree in biochemistry and a master's in bioscience.

We're also joined by David Ross. David, welcome. David is executive publisher for open access at Sage, a leading independent academic and professional publisher. Every year, Sage publishes more than 1,000 journals and 800 books, reference works, and databases in business, humanities, social sciences, technology, and medicine. David has global responsibility for the strategic direction of open access as well as the development of systems, processes, and policies.

So we've established a small brain trust here that might give you some good information to take back with you after the fair to understand and act appropriately for your publishing house around Plan S.

So why don't we dive right into the soup and talk about what's happening? Tim, why don't we start with you? At the market level, there's been a measurable and marked increase in the uptake of OA. Springer Nature has great statistics around this for your own performance in the UK and EU, and those were published recently, maybe a year or so ago. It's easy to see that Springer Nature's a dynamic organization around open access. You've been building options, making strategic acquisitions to build a portfolio, and it's plain to see to the naked eye that Springer's actively pursuing the market and moving in that direction.

So when you first heard the remedies suggested by the coalition designed to speed the change, what was your initial reaction? And how do you see Plan S affecting the way things work at Springer Nature?

BRITTON: OK. As you say, obviously within Springer Nature, OA is already a critical part of what we do. Globally, Springer Nature publishes about 30% of all (audio cuts out; inaudible) content that's available – you know, almost 600 OA journals, open access options in 2,500 Springer journals, open monograph program, as you say. So I think there is no doubt whatsoever that we are more than just supportive of open access. We do see it as a huge part of the publishing future.

That said, the question you asked me is what was my reaction when I heard Plan S? And the underlying – you know, the world is moving in a direction of open access.



How can we facilitate it? Fully support that, which is what we do. But it is more complicated than just saying everything must be open access. There is a mixed model out there. I think that's for three different reasons, and it isn't just about publishers putting up a paywall to stop people getting at content. It's actually that in different parts of the world, different funders behave differently.

In Europe, I think it's sometimes really easy to forget, particularly in Germany, northern Europe, this is kind of a high point of gold OA. If we were having this conversation in Washington or indeed Shanghai, opinions would be different. There are different approaches to funding and not everybody is demanding the same approach. And as a global publisher, we've got a range of stakeholders that we have to support and serve, of whom northern European funders are a hugely important one, but one.

The other point I'd make is that when it comes to selectivity, it's actually really hard to make the open access model work. I mean, for us, *Nature* is a really obvious example, but there's others – you know, *Cell*, *Science*. When you are rejecting an enormously large amount of articles, the APC model is really, really hard to sustain. You would get very, very high levels of APC. Now, in principle, we haven't got a problem with that. I suspect the funders would have a problem with that.

Last but not least, different disciplines have different levels of access to open access funding, and I'm sure that somebody will come in to talk about humanities and so on. There are parts of the scientific community that have very easy access to funding, and there are other parts that have less easy access to funding, which means that we have all of the stakeholders to serve, and therefore we have a mixed way of doing that so the relevant community, the relevant geography, the relevant funders can take the right decisions.

Now, none of that is to take away from the importance of making our research as open and as freely available as possible, and there are lots of other ways of doing that. It's about seamless access. It's about allowing people access to document of record – for example, our shared opportunity does that. There are lots of ways of making the information freely available. Open access is a massively important part of that. We are engaging very actively with the people at Plan S to help influence it and develop it. But I don't think it is as simple as just saying there is only one way to do it.

And there's one further point, if I may make, particularly around the hybrid conversation. This is something I feel particularly passionate about. There is this



kind of mantra that kind of hybrid is bad, and I just don't get that. I know there is the double-dipping accusation, but it is an accusation. We adjust our pricing to take volumes into account rather than charge twice for the same content. What it actually means – the access to hybrid – is that if you can use existing subscription journals as a way to allow content to be available open access, you have got a huge network of existing journals and publications that can be used.

To give you an example, where we've got arrangements as we have in the UK and the Netherlands and Sweden, where there are national agreements where people can access all of our articles, we're getting – in Sweden, we have over 90% of all of the content published from Springer Nature is published fully gold open access, because it can use our journals through the hybrid option.

Now, to be fair, in Plan S, it overtly recognizes that and says hybrid as part of a transitional arrangement is acceptable. But more generally than that, why would we want to relaunch or recreate a whole existing journal network to kind of have a separate OA offer? It does seem to me that the use of the existing journals that's been around for hundreds of years – we'll talk about some of the society journals in a moment, I'm sure – you know, why are we trying to shut them out of the market? It doesn't make sense to me. We should use the collateral, the – sorry, the capital that we've already got as a way of helping us move forward.

HEMENWAY: Excellent. Thank you. To that point, talking about shutting folks out of the market, David Ross, I'd like to get your feedback. I noticed in the immediate scuffle over the details – or the lack of details really, at this point in Plan S – that a few voices were raised in support of humanities and social sciences, but one could easily argue that these important publishers have had the least representation in the discussion. Now, Sage has a strong rank of partners in this sector, and perhaps you could offer us some perspective here. Are the humanities and social sciences at risk of being affected disproportionately, and how does that affect the Sage outlook?

ROSS: I mean, yes is the simple answer. There is no direct funding in social sciences – in the humanities and social sciences. So how have clearly a model that was being developed for highly funded biomedical disciplines could just be read across to these disciplines just I don't understand. Within that, many social science journals and many humanities are small niche journals, and they're communities in themselves. There's actually no way you could convert them to a charge per article basis. They just would never be sustainable. And this isn't really a plea so much for Sage, per se, but it's for all those small social science publishers, of which there are thousands, which literally would not be able to operate under this model.



I think that's really – you know, that's the focus of Sage at the moment. We also represent over 200 social science societies, and they have an existential threat to their business, which I'm sure Malavika will talk a bit more about as well. For us, it's the case that there is so little detail around what the implementation is going to look like. They've made this bold statement, and I'm actually supportive of the statement. As Tim said, we were very much transitioning to an open access world. We were talking to the national consortia and striking what we were calling national OA ideals that were looking to an OA future in Europe specifically.

But that, I think, in the social sciences and humanities really has to rely on a combination of hybrid and green archiving. It's very difficult to see – there are no high-quality gold OA journals out there at the moment. And the idea that they could just – anyone could just flip some of these journals and create vehicles – brand new vehicles that this research is going to go to is beyond me.

So I think, for us, it's the practical things. You know, what are we doing? What we are trying to do is get in front of Robert-Jan Smits himself and more importantly, I think, at this stage, the implementation task force. The details of that are slightly unclear at the moment, but it seems to be being led by UKRI and the Norwegian Research Council. Robert-Jan did say at COASP that they're working on putting together an implementation plan by the end of the year. That will be a blueprint for the agencies to adopt if they want. They've got to adhere to the 10 principles, but how they do that is kind of up to them, but they're going to come up with a kind of framework plan.

So that's the opportunity we've got between then and now is actually get in front of these people and say, right, can we talk a bit more about how this will work in different disciplines, what the global picture's going to be going forward, what the implication for societies is going to be? And can you at least – and again, in his panel presentation at COASP, Robert-Jan Smits actually acknowledged – paraphrasing, he said we thought about treating humanities and social sciences differently, but we decided not to. Now, I'd like to ask him why. But the positive I take from that is that they have at least acknowledged themselves that there is a difference in humanities and social sciences.

So to try and get in front of them and the implementation task force and influence them now and try to get some of our points across and try and get them, hopefully, to change their minds, but if not that, to certainly refine some of the implementation details for different disciplines – I think that that's – we have an opportunity to do that now, and that's what we're trying to attain.



HEMENWAY: Excellent. Thank you. Now, Malavika Legge, as director of publishing at Portland Press, you have an excellent vantage point from which to report back to this audience as to the potential impact on learned societies and their authors. So in your opinion, how will the press fare under the proposed measures, as we know them? And as importantly, how do you think the authors of the press will fare? I know in our discussion, you'd mentioned things like in certain cases, long editorial cycles that may or may not fall within the timelines and other issues. Could some of these measures create a market of haves and have-nots? As we look at trying to include the global South and authors collaborating, what does this mean for authors?

LEGGE: I will come to the author perspective in a second, but to just represent directly, if I may, the society voice and the fact that as an independent publisher and a publishing arm of a learned society, I think there's two things to say, one about scale and one about focus. We've got an advantage in that we are discipline-specific and focused around a certain cohort, a certain community that is global. The global point is really important. At the same time, scale – we are tiny. We are small. That comes with advantages and, in the context of Plan S, potentially some disadvantage.

The advantage is that we take a view, knowing our products, knowing our communities, knowing the funding situation for the molecular biosciences, that open access is mighty exciting. It's fantastic. And because of our focus, we feel that we should be transitioning. We are embracing it. The society has a stated open – not just open access position, but open science, and open access being a facilitator of open science. So we are along this trajectory and are taking loads of steps towards transitioning.

Then you throw in the context of Plan S, and we find ourselves facing certain challenges, because here's where scale can be a disadvantage in that Plan S says, oh, the hybrid model might be tolerated where there are transformational agreements. There isn't a definition, and we've heard about the fact that the details are yet to come out, and that's quite key. But if you take transformational agreements as I'm currently reading them to be, read and publish deals or some kind of arrangement like that, we are just too small from a librarian's perspective to have those individual conversations, because from an institute's perspective, the output from their researchers in our tiny portfolio of journals is not high enough that it warrants a conversation around a bespoke read and publish deal or some other kind of bespoke arrangement. So they say as far as APCs are concerned,



we'll deal with those as and when they pop up on the individual article basis, and then we talk about subscriptions differently and separately.

If Plan S is going to say, oh, hybrid is only compliant in a world where you have these kind of deals, well, these kind of deals can only be done by the biggest publishers with the largest scale. So where does that leave the kind of publisher that we are? And we're not alone. I've given a view from the molecular biosciences, and there's been a view from the humanities, but there's mathematics, there's the geological sciences, and societies in these spaces that serve their respective communities, so there's a bit to think about there.

And then coming to your question specifically about authors, I think here's where again the detail really matters. I mean, science doesn't have borders. Science is about international collaboration these days. It's getting more multicultural, more interdisciplinary. You've got people collaborating across the globe. So when you have a group of funders in a ring-fenced number of countries saying, oh, where we are funding things, we want these rules to play out, what happens? What happens when a Chinese author is collaborating with somebody based in Europe, is collaborating with somebody based in the US, and the work is only part funded by one of these funders? Whose rules are going to play out?

I think that sort of detail is important especially from the author perspective, because in a gold APC model at least, the authors have at least an initial headache around who's going to pick – you know, is there a bill to be paid, and why, and who should pay it, and where should it go? This sort of administrative burden matters, because ideally none of us want to burden a researcher's life with the hassle of any of this. So that's a few thoughts.

HEMENWAY: Good points. Can I ask you a follow-up question? It touches on a point you just raised – was that – is Plan S possibly going to drive further consolidation in the market? If the major complaint of the science funding bodies is that the major publishers have too much leverage, this type of fast movement can force the hand of smaller societies to give over their programs. Do you see that as a potential byproduct of this plan?

LEGGE: Maybe. I mean, it's a tricky landscape to navigate, because from our perspective, we're committed to being independent at the moment, so it is challenging. And I think with Plan S, what we have is the problem, perhaps, or the challenge of a lack of consultation or consideration around these perspectives, potentially, a lack of details, certainly at the moment, and it remains to see what that detail is. And I think a lot rests on what that detail looks like. And thirdly, a



lack of time, because 2020 is essentially right here. I mean, we're at Frankfurt Book Fair and we are talking about everything that's going to play out in 2019. The deals are already being done. So 2020 is the next thing.

I think that's a real challenge. And for an independent publisher navigating this space, sure, it is a concern. I think what we have to do is look at what other models might there be? There is green, but green with an embargo doesn't seem to be compliant under Plan S. There is gold, and I think that comes back to the have and have-nots question. And I think that's a serious consideration, because gold cannot work for everybody everywhere, and that comes back to the point you made, Tim.

Is there another way? Do we need to leverage the existing relationships that publishers have with libraries in a sort of different way and say, well, if you are frustrated with big deals and if you are frustrated with subscriptions, let's talk about you funding open access in a different way? I don't know if – you know, this is purely theoretical, but is that something to explore? I think we've got to find a way to make it work.

HEMENWAY: That leads me into a space in this discussion which I think is important. And Tim, your Mr. Ropers from Springer Nature mentioned this in his address to STM a couple of days ago, and I thought it rang very true, is that in some cases, it feels like publishing as an industry is struggling to prove its value, to be seen as a worthy and decent partner in the pursuit of scholarship.

So my question to you is obviously this change will bring increased vigor and dialogue between the parties. It's inevitable. But are there things publishers and industry should be doing to raise their visibility as excellent partners in the delivery of information?

BRITTON: Yeah, it's a fair point, because what it comes back to is are we in kind of conversation, in partnership to make it work? Because there are – and this is really what you're saying – there are authors, there are publishers, there are funders, there are librarians – you know, there are a whole range of different stakeholders that have to be involved in dialogue to get this to work.

So in terms of publishers raising their profile, I think it's just incumbent upon all of us to remind of the value that it's brought, because I think in a lot of this, there is sometimes a starting point that the kind of publisher bad is a position, particularly commercial publisher bad, and we often get into a cost conversation. So they're talking about the cap on hybrid and so on, as opposed to the value which the publishing process brings, which – you know, fundamentally, we are there for the



dissemination of verified research that's to be used for the good of the world. It isn't any more complicated than that.

Is there something we should be doing differently? Not sure. You know, we all talk a lot – actually, a publisher standing up and saying we're wonderful because we provide all of this kind of value. Often it's heard as so much blah-blah-blah-blah, to be honest with you. That is the challenge. But actually, we do do a good job, and some of it, to me, is just sticking to that – just doing a good job, reasserting the value. We are there to serve the community, and it just gets forgotten time after time. So when it comes back to – you know, we want to publish across the world, we want to publish across disciplines, and therefore we put different models forward.

Now, because those different models represent us making money, because we do – we're a profit-making organization, we make that profit in various different ways – it is assumed that everything we do is for the purpose of making ever greater profits, which just isn't true. Of course, we're there to make a profit, but we can only make a profit if we successfully serve the scientists and the community that we do serve and that we have the right things in place that meet the policies of the funders that fund the sciences, and so it goes on and so it goes on.

So we have a number of different stakeholder groups, of which our shareholders are one, of which our authors are one, of which our employees are one, of which our funders are one, and that is why, ultimately, we do have a mixed model. All we can do is continue to point out what we do and the value that we bring. *Nature* brings enormous value as a subscription journal. *Scientific Reports* brings enormous value as a fairly low-cost open access volume. They bring different types of value to different parts of the community, but they both bring value. And all I can do in my job is continue to point that out and continue to publish as much great research work as we possibly can.

HEMENWAY: Perfect. Thank you. Now, David, communication on a different level – Sage is guide, Sage will be Sherpa to hundreds of societies through this mountain pass. How does one go about informing them and keeping the pack together, keeping the group together, as you cross this divide?

ROSS: Well, I've never been called a Sherpa before, so that's a new one. (laughter) Keeping them together, I suppose, is not the point, if you like. They're very different. They cover a lot of disciplines, many of them based in the US, who this doesn't really impinge upon. There's a lot of the US societies kind of shrugging their shoulders at this and going, well, we just won't publish that 2% of researchers



in our journals, then, and we'll move on, because it's not impacting the US. But there are many European-based societies who are looking at kind of like 60%, 70% of their content being affected by this, and they are the ones to focus on. So that's the first point – it's not a one-size-fits-all solution in any sense.

Being honest with them is a starting point. This is where it is slightly frustrating, because we were starting to have conversations with those societies about how they needed to face the fact that their European content, one way or another, was going to be open access, and that that one way or another was either through a green archiving route – and Sage actually has a zero embargo on green archiving, so the societies can opt to do whatever embargo they want – or the hybrid route through national sales deals such as pioneered by BSNU (sp?).

So we were starting to have that conversation, and the more enlightened ones were beginning to understand that they needed to look a bit further down the road at their revenue streams and what they do with that money and the noble causes they serve. There are many others that really just don't want to engage and are just kind of like terrified in the headlights. So yeah, my role in that is actually refining the conversation and talking to them as individuals and talking about their own particular needs and how they individually can address them.

And again, that – I'll come back to that point – it's not about leading them together over the pass. It's actually about finding. This is academic publishing. Every journal is different. That's why they're not fungible goods in that way. They're communities. And many of these communities, if it were played out as in the 10-point plan, would be destroyed by that. That's how you've got to engage.

HEMENWAY: Thank you. Now, in the final two minutes, Malavika, what do you think will need to be done for the author? Obviously, this will bring changes for the author, which means the institutions may need to play a larger role in helping prepare them for the publication process. But at the publisher level and a society level, what do you think will come in the way of responsibilities to the author? What will need to be done for them?

LEGGE: My ideal case would be once we have the detail – because as I've said, a lot of it rests on that – but my ideal case would be that we don't have that much to tell the authors, because we don't want to disrupt and burden them with more or another way or another policy to comply with. They've got enough of that between funders and institutions already, so the point is not to add to that. So my ideal would be that we'd have to do very little. I think where we have to work is with the funding bodies, with the institutions, to make workflows and make ways that can shield the



researcher community from this, because their focus needs to be on the science. That's my ideal.

HEMENWAY: Fantastic. Thank you. Well, this brings us to the last few seconds of our panel, and I'm wondering if there's anyone in the audience that might like to squeeze in one question before we close. OK. One question – thank you.

F: Thank you very much. So one question – what do you think happens after 2020, because I am very skeptical? I do not see that we are ready then.

HEMENWAY: Anyone like to take that?

BRITTON: Sure. As you say, 2020 is tomorrow. Do I believe that there will be fully open access across the world in 2020? No. I think what Plan S will do – it's aimed to accelerate it, it's aimed to push it forward as fast as possible. Actually, Plan S for 2020, Horizon 2020, they're looking for similar goals. All of it is a push in the direction. I am sure it will effect certain change, but I don't think it would be across the board in that timescale.

HEMENWAY: Well, that brings us to the close of our panel. I'm sorry, we're out of time. We could have had an hour on this easily, and it's fascinating. I'd like to thank our panelists – Tim Britton, Malavika Legge, David Ross. Everyone, please join me in thanking our panelists.

(applause)

Feel free to continue to follow this conversation at the copyright.com blog or follow us on Twitter at [@copyrightclear](https://twitter.com/copyrightclear). Thanks very much for your time, and enjoy the rest of the show.

END OF FILE