

March 16th, 2021

Publication fees for manuscripts accepted in the main scientific journals.

Dear colleagues,

As the FESN Scientific Advisory Board and Management Committee, we want to draw your attention to a matter of concern, that is, publication fees for manuscripts accepted in the main scientific journals (article processing charges or APCs). Elsevier as well as Springer-Nature have recently announced that they are converting a lot of their subscription/hybrid journals to fully Open Access (OA) journals. Over a certain time period (months? years?) such a so-called “Transformative Journal” intends to gradually increase the amount of OA content to gradually transition to a fully OA journal. We have attached a list of these “Transformative Journals” (announced on the publishers’ websites) to this email. You will see that also many journals relevant in the field of Neuropsychology and Cognitive Neuroscience are designated as “Transformative Journals”, including journal such as “Cortex”, “Neuropsychologia”, “Experimental Brain Research”, “Nature Neuroscience” and many others (note that “Neuroimage” and “Human Brain Mapping” have already been transformed recently).

While in principle it is of course to be welcomed that scientific content is as easily accessible for as many readers as possible, it is equally to be taken into account that there is the risk that the costs for publications in such transformed OA journals have to be borne by the authors themselves or the institutes to which such authors are affiliated. (And the costs are not minor, as suggested by the recent decision by Nature Journals to charge up to € 9.500,- per open-access article [see reference attached].)

There have been some responses to this worrying state of affairs. Some countries have negotiated deals with the main publishers about OA without APCs for the submitting authors (e.g., Finland, the Netherlands) while others have specific funds allocated for (partly) covering OA publications (e.g., the UK, Germany). Also, individual universities – or sometimes even departments – may have negotiated discounts for specific OA journals (e.g., institutes in Finland, Italy, Netherlands). These deals thus vary across countries and institutes, but (in view of the fees currently charged in OA journals in the field of neuroscience) they constitute significant sums of money.

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For this reason, we feel that, as FESN, we should take a position in this matter, as we represent all researchers who review papers and edit these journals for free, yet have to pay APCs for publishing in them.

We argue that this business model is no longer sustainable and should be changed drastically. One option in the short term, for instance, could be to reduce APCs for a specific journal (or publisher) for authors who have reviewed (see example attached) or serve as editors (which some journals already do). Alternatively, the use of preprint servers such as bioRxiv.org should be promoted in the field of neuropsychology and cognitive neuroscience (or maybe start a NeuropsychXiv). Ultimately, we could keep our foot down and end editing, reviewing and writing for journals or publishers that do not want to comply. In a longer term, we feel however that universities, institutions, or better, the educational system at the country, and ultimately and more effectively at the European Union level, should relieve the individual author who publishes in an OA journal of the financial burden, also in order to support the maximal accessibility of scientific content.

Perhaps you feel similarly to us in this matter and find this information and the attached material helpful. Of course, you are welcome to use the attached text (suitably modified) for your own purposes. If you have further questions, please contact Hans-Otto Karnath karnath@uni-tuebingen.de, he will be happy to answer your questions.

Best wishes,

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