



Invest in Open
Infrastructure

“Reasonable costs” for publishing

**What do we
know now, and
what can library
publishers help
us find out?**

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Investigating 'Reasonable Costs' to Achieve Public Access to Federally Funded Research and Scientific Data

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Find all project information and outputs:
[https://investinopen.org/data-room/
reasonable-costs/](https://investinopen.org/data-room/reasonable-costs/)

Purpose - to investigate:

- How much does it cost to publish “public access” works in major publication formats (including articles and data)?
- Who is charged and what prices do they pay for these publications under different OA publishing models?
- How are institutions (including universities, labs, societies, and other players) helping researchers identify “public access” channels for their federally funded research outputs?
- How might we measure any inequitable impacts on institutions in different tiers and different demographics?

Project team

Principal Investigators:

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Partners:

American Geophysical Union (AGU)
Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA)
Dataverse
Dryad
Figshare
HBCU Library Alliance
IvyPlus
Knowledge Commons (KC Works)
Mendeley Data
Open Science Framework
re3data
UC3
US Repository Network (USRN)
Vivli
Zenodo

One piece of the puzzle:

Surveying the Landscape

Purpose: develop a better understanding of “reasonable and allowable costs,” in Nelson memo context; synthesize the history, stakeholders, models, and approaches that have shaped the current landscape and demonstrate that “real-world” information on actual costs and payments is still lacking and needed.



Key definitions

COST:

The expenses incurred by *publishers* and *publishing organizations* in the course of providing public access to research outputs, or the resources used to produce, deliver, and maintain a research output online.

These expenses can be identified, individually or in groups, as *cost components*.

PRICE:

The charges paid by *authors* or their *institutions* in the market exchange for the service of providing public access to a published research output.

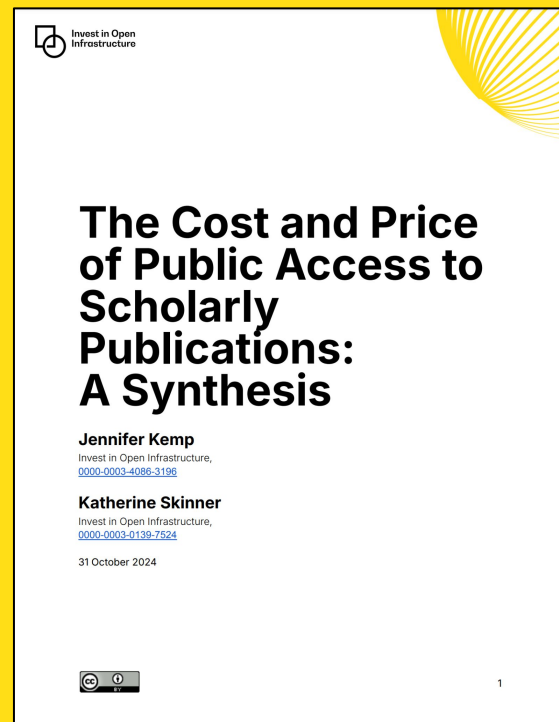
Publications: Cost and Price

Cost and Price

- Cost is relatively unknown for all publisher types
- Price reporting is ad-hoc and difficult to generalize
- Variance by discipline is high
- Lots of business models but most derive directly from traditional subscription formats

Biggest questions:

- **Standardization** - Comparisons between publishers is incredibly difficult, but knowledge of single presses is growing
- **"Unfunded Mandate"** - who pays



Publication:

<https://zenodo.org/records/14013060>



What do we know?

APC Tracking (price)

[OpenAPC](#) project &
[OpenCost](#) schema

Publisher self-reporting,
e.g. [PLOS](#)

DOAJ APC data
analysis, e.g. [Morrison
2021](#)

Large buckets of costs

Publisher reporting in annual
reports, e.g. [Cambridge](#)

Best example we found: [EMBO
OA Journals Toolkit](#)
recommends a set of buckets
of indirect costs.

Cost or price per unit

Book (e.g. [Pinter 2018](#))

Article (e.g. [Digital
Science & Hook 2023](#),
[Grossman & Brembs
2021](#), [Eve 2017](#), [Fisher
2008](#))

Pages, e.g. XML
conversion ([Grossman &
Brembs 2021](#))

Disciplinary differences in price

Chart of APC & subscription differences across disciplines

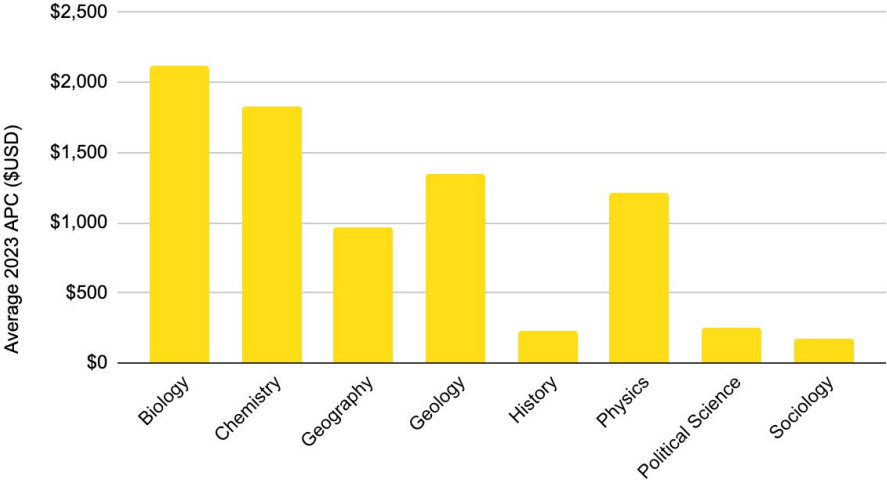
Sources:

[*Klebel and Ross-Hellauer \(2023\) Library Journal Periodical Price Survey \(2023\)*](#)

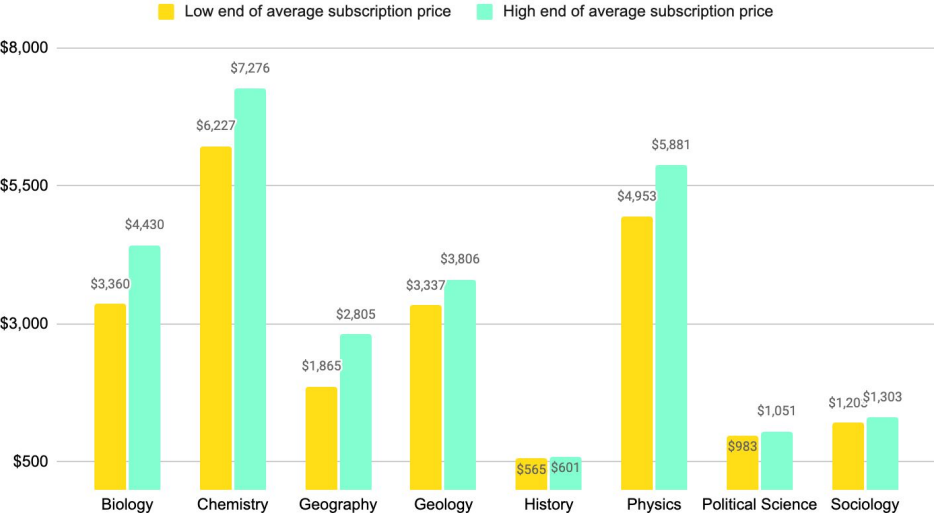
Discipline	Average 2023 APC (\$USD)	Average 2023 Subscription Price (\$USD)
Biology	\$2118	\$3360–\$4430
Chemistry	\$1824	\$6227–\$7276
Geography	\$971	\$1865–\$2805
Geology	\$1343	\$3337–\$3806
History	\$225	\$565–\$601
Physics	\$1217	\$4953–\$5881
Political Science	\$250	\$983–\$1051
Sociology	\$170	\$1203–\$1303

Disciplinary differences in price: visuals

Average 2023 APC (\$USD) by Discipline



Average 2023 Subscription Price (\$USD) Ranges by Discipline





What we don't know

Components of cost

We often know how much is generally spent on a publishing program, but not how much different components cost.

Difference between cost and price

What is the difference between the cost of publishing and the price charged for a service?

What research is needed

Better granularity

We know general buckets of costs, but we don't know monetary amounts for them.

Publishers and repositories in our study report that labor is their highest cost, but is that always the case?

Standardization of terms & presentation

As we tried to standardize our use of "cost" and "price", the "buckets" of cost and "units" of cost and price can use some attention.

Better usability and interoperability (most info is in annual report PDFs). See OpenCost for an example.

How library publishers can help

Individuals: What costs do you already know about in your own program? Can you share this information?

- [EMBO](#) provides a good set of examples for reporting
- Sharing budget outlines following the [OA Journals Toolkit](#), including cost categories and kinds of cost
- Might your library consider contributing to the [OpenCost](#) project? What can you find out using their metadata schema?

Collaborations / groups: Create and share information about a few standardized data points.

- Any budget information
 - Even if not specific numbers, the different categories of information you track. Can we standardize this list across kinds of programs and institutions? (Starting point: [OA Journals Toolkit](#))
- Cost per unit:
 - How much does your library spend to publish a book, journal, article, page?
 - What are the units that are relevant for tracking these costs?
- Price information for library publishers
 - Do you take in funding for your work?
 - How much is the “price” for library publishing? What are the general practices in this space?
- Disciplinary differences
 - How do we divide up categories of disciplines? (see [our paper](#) on p. 26 for a start)
 - What differences in cost and price per discipline do you see in your publishing portfolio?

Resources

Calculations of cost:

Bot, M., Burgemeester, J., & Roes, H. (1998). The cost of publishing an electronic journal: A general model and a case study. D-Lib Magazine, 4(10). <https://www.dlib.org/dlib/november98/11roes.html>

Fisher, J. H. (2008). Scholarly Publishing Re-invented: Real Costs and Real Freedoms. The Journal of Electronic Publishing, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0011.204>

Eve, M.P. (2017, February 13). How much does it cost to run a small scholarly publisher? <https://eve.gd/2017/02/13/how-much-does-it-cost-to-run-a-small-scholarly-publisher/>

Grossmann A. and Brembs B. Current market rates for scholarly publishing services [version 2; peer review: 2 approved]. F1000Research 2021, 10:20. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.27468.2>

Morrison, Heather et al., 2021, "2011 - 2021 OA APCs", <https://doi.org/10.5683/SP2/84PNSG>

Digital Science, & Hook, D. (2023). Dimensions and Society Publishers' Coalition Members Report: a shared commitment to open scholarship (Version 3). figshare. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.21922404.v3>

Calculations of Price:

Klebel, T., & Ross-Hellauer, T. (2023). The APC-barrier and its effect on stratification in open access publishing. Quantitative Science Studies, 4(1), 22–43. https://doi.org/10.1162/qss_a_00245

OpenCost and OpenAPC projects: <https://www.opencost.de/en/project/>

PLOS Price Transparency Update 2021: <https://theplosblog.plos.org/2023/02/plos-price-transparency-update-2021/>

Library Journal, 2023. "Going for Gold, Deep in the Red": <https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/going-for-gold-deep-in-the-red>

EMBO: <https://www.embo.org/features/the-publishing-costs-at-embo/>

Thank you!

If you pursue any of these topics or anything related, we'd love to hear from you.

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