

STM Statement on Green OA

STM publishers are committed to the widest possible dissemination of and access to the content we publish. We aim to support and develop a flexible, interoperable, and enduring scholarly communication environment, which includes Green OA, and support any and all sustainable models of access that ensure the integrity and permanence of the scholarly record as it is published in peer-reviewed journals. We believe that Green OA can be consistent with fostering a viable system for funding publication of authoritative communications about research commonly referred to as “final published articles” or “the Version of Record”. With this principle in mind, we propose the following key factors that should be taken into account by all stakeholders when setting and refining their Green OA policies.

1. The publication in journals of authoritative, credible articles reporting on research advances has associated costs – including the key quality control measure known as peer review, the process by which ideas and findings are examined and questioned by expert reviewers, and electronic enhancements such as linking key terms, data, and graphical material to related and relevant material. The cost of these important activities, especially the quality assurance process and the value that it adds to scholarly communication and the public trust in science, needs to be funded in a sustainable way for the scholarly communication system to operate. In the case of Green OA this funding derives from the subscriptions paid for licensed access to journals.
2. The potential benefit of Green OA is closely linked to setting flexible and appropriate embargo policies that reflect the practices of different scholarly communities. This is especially true in the absence of funding for universal immediate Gold OA. Usage profiles of the final published article, or version of record, by journal and by discipline, are intensely variable over time and need to be considered when setting embargo periods to ensure that the scholarly communication system can continue to generate the authoritative final published articles upon which the progress of science is based. Green OA policies should also give due consideration to what version of an article (e.g. preprint, manuscript, final version) should be made available, as well as how, when, where, and by whom it should be made available. Publishers give careful consideration to all of these factors in setting their own Green OA policies and while many are experimenting within a 12-24 month envelope, there are wide variations.

3. Because there is an absence of clear evidence of the impact of Green OA on the quality, integrity, and viability of scholarly communication, in particular on subscription revenue that provides the funding which makes Green OA possible, policy makers should exercise due care in setting their guidelines and establish procedures for adjusting measures as needed. Further evidence of the impact of Green OA on the key dynamics of scholarly communication would be beneficial to all stakeholders, such as on subscription behaviour, on the metrics of academic recognition, and on the capacity for publishers to enhance their reader services in the longer term. No single publisher or research funder can yet see the impact of Green OA on the entire global scholarly publication ecosystem, so broad collaborative efforts to collect and respond to evidence would be welcome.

4. STM publishers are constantly innovating and providing new ways for researchers and the public to discover and better understand scientific advances. We offer a range of services that maximize the global impact of our authors in a healthy and evolving research communication ecosystem, which includes all the investments in publishing that enable Green OA. Policies that encourage Green OA should foster an environment that allows publishers to compete in improving and growing their services to authors and the wider public, including improvements in the discoverability and reach of their work to core and emerging audiences. Publishers have built and continue to evolve an interoperable infrastructure that both enables and enhances scholarly communication through progressive significant investments over time. To duplicate these costs and the effort and skills involved would seem an unnecessary use of public funds.