Open Access – One Size Does NOT Fit All

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The Pressures of “Open”

Open Access  ->  Open Science  ->  Open Engagement

- Mandates/calls for Open Access
  - government and funding bodies + research community + public

- Mandates/calls for Open Science/Data
  - by government and funding bodies + research community

- Increasing calls for Open Engagement
  - by academic societies + non-profit organizations + academic institutions
One might think that the message of Open Access is received loud and clear, especially since there is so much effort being exerted in the UK to push the mandate.

ASSUMPTION: An author simply opts in, or they don’t.

A recent survey conducted by Editage (Cactus Communications) found that the OA message is not being received equally, or in similar tone, in other countries. Hence, there are geographic differences in attitudes and understanding of what OA means and its adoption trends.
In the survey report, we provided an overview of the OA-specific responses received from over 6,000 researchers from around the world.

The survey was administered using SurveyMonkey. It was deployed electronically in English, Japanese, Simplified Chinese, Korean, and Portuguese.

Data is presented from the seven countries with the highest response rate: Brazil, China, India, Japan, South Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom.
Overall, across all survey respondents, with Yes at 45% and No at 35%, OA advocates may feel comfortable that the pendulum is swinging in the right direction.

Yet, there remains one concerning fact – overall, 9% of respondents reported that they did not know what Open Access publishing was!
There were some striking differences in the geographic profiles of whether or not an author chooses to publish in an OA journal, with an overall 9% of responding authors indicating that they don’t know what OA publishing is.

Clearly, Brazil (68% of 1,133 respondents) and the U.K. (60% of 111) are success stories for the penetration of OA publishing habits – both have very active publishing models, and public awareness programs in place.
Why Publish in an Open Access Journal?

- In response to why respondents chose to publish in an OA journal, more than 60% of authors in almost all geographic areas responded “I wanted my paper to be read by a larger audience.”

- However in South Korea, only 37% of 181 authors responded in such a manner.
  - Instead, 71% of 181 authors in South Korea indicated that “I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper, and it happened to be OA.”

Brazil: 60% of 766
China: 69% of 710
India: 64% of 121
Japan: 64% of 415
South Korea: 37% of 181
U.K.: 63% of 67
U.S.A.: 60% of 215
Authors in the UK who have published in an OA journal acknowledged that they preferred the OA model of publishing (54% of 67), and that they wanted the paper to be read by a larger audience (63% of 67).

The respondents were wary of “predatory publishing” practices. Only 4% (of 67) respondents indicated that they published in an OA journal because of promises of guaranteed publication – however, even this number is alarming!

In other countries it ranged from 5 -10%, however, In China 18% (of 710) reported that they published in an OA journal because the journal guaranteed publication.

Informed / successful OA messaging?
In the group of UK respondents that had never published in an OA journal, none of them indicated that they didn’t understand OA publishing.

If they had “not” published in an OA journal, the reasons for doing so were that they could not afford the article processing charges (56% of 34), or the journal of best fit for their paper happened to be a subscription journal (65% of 34).

This latter point was very telling. The message of why to publish in an OA journal was understood, yet one-third of the UK respondents (34 of 101) seemed to choose not to publish in an OA journal, or felt shut out because of the cost of article processing charges (56% of 34).
Institution or Funding Body Mandate

- Also striking, was the difference in reporting that the author’s institute or funding body mandated OA publishing.
- In the **UK**, 37% of 67 reporting authors who had published in an OA journal indicated the mandate.
- In no other country was this mandate reported in greater proportion than 7%.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2% of 766</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>7% of 710</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4% of 121</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
<td>4% of 415</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>1% of 181</td>
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<td>U.K.</td>
<td>37% of 67</td>
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<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>7% of 215</td>
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Preference for an OA Model of Publishing

- A reasonable proportion of authors who had published in an OA journal indicated that they prefer the open access model of publishing (30-54%).
- The same was not true for South Korea, where only 6% of 161 authors indicated that they prefer an OA model of publishing.
  - So, they had published in an OA journal, but they generally preferred not to.

Brazil: 44% of 766
China: 52% of 710
India: 30% of 121
Japan: 32% of 415
South Korea: 6% of 181
U.K.: 54% of 67
U.S.A.: 43% of 215
Don’t Understand of the OA Model of Publishing

- When authors who had not published in an OA journal were asked why not, about **10%** of authors in countries other than the UK responded that they don’t understand the OA publishing model.
- Notably, in **Japan** this proportion of authors was **22% (of 260)** and strikingly, in **China 32% of 967** authors who had not published in an OA journal indicated that they do not understand the OA publishing model.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of Authors</th>
<th>Total Authors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>10% of 293</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>32% of 967 **</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>6% of 76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>22% of 260</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>11% of 176</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>0% of 34</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>10% of 181</td>
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Not Published in OA – Could Not Afford the APCs

• In India, the principal reason offered for why the author had not published in an OA journal was that they could not afford the article processing charges (69% of 76).

• Interestingly, as noted above, the second highest proportion of responses indicating an inability to afford the article processing charges was from the UK (56% of 34).

Brazil: 43% of 293
China: 34% of 967
India: 69% of 76
Japan: 41% of 260
South Korea: 37% of 176
U.K.: 56% of 34
U.S.A.: 38% of 181

Geographic Trends in Attitudes to OA: https://bit.ly/2Z1Hf1x
Gap in Understanding of OA (China vs. the U.K.)

- When you see the gap in understanding of OA publishing by authors in the U.K. — who had not published in an OA journal — compared to authors in China, the low level of awareness/understanding of OA in China is perhaps a little surprising.

- Given that China is now the largest producer of research papers globally, and major Chinese agencies have been promoting various forms of OA for the past several years, this is not only surprising, it is somewhat concerning.

- There is clearly a need for “OA benefit” awareness-building in China.

[Fig. 4. (CHINA) If you have never published in an open access journal, why?]

[Fig. 16. (THE U.K.) If you have never published in an open access journal, why?]
Do not assume the understanding of OA or the perceptions surrounding OA are the same around the world.

- It seems that local cultural factors are powerful promoters/deterrents.

Emphasize less the mandate of OA and promote the benefits.

- It is not about the “what” it is about the “why”!

Greater transparency in OA journal processes will likely help in building brand confidence.

APC affordability is partially reality and partially perception. There is an opportunity here to wrap APC charges up with other “up-sell” professional/premium offerings to reduce the focused emphasis on the APC in isolation. It is not just about the absolute value of the APC – it is the perceived value in return.
Fig. 5. [BRAZIL] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

- 44% I prefer the open access model of publishing
- 60% The journal guaranteed publication
- 53% I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be open access
- 2% My institute or funding body mandated open access publishing

Fig. 6. [BRAZIL] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?

- 10% I don’t understand open access publishing
- 43% I couldn’t afford the article-processing charges
- 7% I don’t see any adequate benefits of open access publishing
- 11% I doubt the quality of open access journals
- 44% I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be a subscription journal
China

Fig. 3. [CHINA] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

- 52%: I prefer the open access model of publishing
- 18%: The journal guaranteed publication
- 65%: I wanted my paper to be read by a larger audience
- 7%: My institute or funding body mandated open access publishing
- 39%: I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be open access

n = 710

Fig. 4. [CHINA] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?

- 32%: I don’t understand open access publishing
- 28%: I doubt the quality of open access journals
- 34%: I couldn’t afford the article-processing charges
- 18%: I don’t see any/adequate benefits of open access publishing
- 47%: I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be a subscription journal

n = 667

Geographic Trends in Attitudes to OA: https://bit.ly/2Z1Hf1x
India

Fig. 11. [INDIA] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

- 30%: I prefer the open access model of publishing
- 64%: The journal guaranteed publication
- 4%: I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be open access

Fig. 12. [INDIA] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?

- 6%: I don’t understand open access publishing
- 22%: I doubt the quality of open access journals
- 69%: I couldn’t afford the article-processing charges
- 9%: I don’t see any adequate benefits of open access publishing
- 35%: I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be a subscription journal

Geographic Trends in Attitudes to OA: https://bit.ly/2Z1Hf1x
Fig. 7 [JAPAN] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

- 32% I prefer the open access model of publishing
- 64% The journal guaranteed publication
- 68% I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be open access

Fig. 8 [JAPAN] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?

- 22% I don’t understand open access publishing
- 30% I doubt the quality of open access journals
- 41% I couldn’t afford the article-processing charges
- 37% I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be a subscription journal

Geographic Trends in Attitudes to OA: https://bit.ly/2Z1Hf1x
Fig. 9. [SOUTH KOREA] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

- I prefer the open access model of publishing: 6%
- The journal guaranteed publication: 10%
- I wanted my paper to be read by a larger audience: 37%
- My institute or funding body mandated open access publishing: 1%
- I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be open access: 71%

Fig. 10. [SOUTH KOREA] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?

- I don’t understand open access publishing: 11%
- I doubt the quality of open access journals: 25%
- I couldn’t afford the article-processing charges: 37%
- I don’t see any adequate benefits of open access publishing: 14%
- I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be a subscription journal: 39%
United Kingdom

Fig. 15. [THE U.K.] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

- I prefer the open access model of publishing: 54%
- The journal guaranteed publication: 4%
- I wanted my paper to be read by a larger audience: 63%
- My institute or funding body mandated open access publishing: 37%
- I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be open access: 31%

Fig. 16. [THE U.K.] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?

- I don't understand open access publishing: 0%
- I doubt the quality of open access journals: 9%
- I couldn't afford the article-processing charges: 65%
- I don't see any adequate benefits of open access publishing: 12%
- I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be a subscription journal: 56%
United States

Fig. 13. [THE U.S.A.] If you have published in an open access journal, why?

- 43%: I prefer the open access model of publishing
- 60%: The journal guaranteed publication
- 7%: My institute or funding body mandated open access publishing
- 53%: I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be open access

n = 215

Fig. 14. [THE U.S.A.] If you have never published in an open access journal, why?

- 10%: I don’t understand open access publishing
- 30%: I doubt the quality of open access journals
- 38%: I couldn’t afford the article-processing charges
- 56%: I chose the journal that was the best fit for my paper and it happened to be a subscription journal

n = 161

Geographic Trends in Attitudes to OA: https://bit.ly/2Z1Hf1x