

Research gap:
*Academic Scholars, Reputation,
Prestige and Careers*

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Research gap

“One of the biggest conundrums surrounding the OAP debate, which often seems not to be highlighted sufficiently by most literature, is the logical connection between scholarly authors’ incentive to creation, academic reputation and prestige, scientific journals’ impact factor, and the academic road to tenure and promotion. The analysis of the interaction between these variables seems a very relevant line of research that may prove critical for strengthening or weakening any arguments discussing the sustainability and broader adoption of OAP models. In particular, besides a general overview of these notions within the context of OAP, studies may be welcome in defining roadmaps and solutions to adjust the emergence of OAP to academic procedures, policies and standards in the field of academic careers. Again, in close association with the sought investigation mentioned above, research should also look at the effects of OAP on new entrants in the academic markets, in light of part of the economic literature that seems to suggest that OAP may have more beneficial effects for well-established and super-star academic authors than for others.”

An observation

Academics publish for the greater good as well as for personal gain.

Open access articles get more citations and, by being open, create more potential for impact.

Open access publishing can therefore work to bring these two aims even closer together.

So, what are the real sources of tension?

We must recognise that open access and academic prestige can and should work entirely in harmony.

- Existing journals are offering 'hybrid' OA options.
- Publishers are converting journals to open access.
- There are an increasing number of high-prestige open access journals.
- The vast majority of journals permit 'green' self-archiving. (This permissiveness is slightly weighted towards the more prestigious journals.)

Question

How widely understood is it that these options exist?

There are concerns about OA among academics

- Wrong belief that OA always means ‘author pays for gold’
 - Which would risk freezing out some academics in the longer term
- Wrong belief that OA always means publishing in an ‘inferior’ journal
 - Which ignores ‘hybrid’ and ‘green’
- There are connected concerns about ‘predatory’ OA journals

Questions

How widely are these beliefs held?

How have they changed over time?

How are they challenged, and who will challenge them?

The “logical connection” between impact factors and careers

- We need more evidence of this:
 - To what extent are impact factors (formally and informally) used to determine an academic’s career progression?
 - To what extent is this seen as a desirable / unhealthy thing?
 - What are the alternatives? How well understood are they? How widely used are they?

Assuming that OA should “adjust” to fit academic practice is problematic.

- OA need not, and in most cases does not, present a challenge to existing academic practices. So:
 - **Where** does it present a challenge? Is it just in situations where OA policies force authors to change journal? Where is this happening? Which policies are having this effect? How pronounced are the effects? How has behaviour changed?
 - **Should** it present a challenge? To what extent is OA viewed as a solution to ‘problems’ within the academy, and what are these problems? Implicit in the research gap is the assumption that OA should not change academic practice. How widely felt is this?

Effects on different groups

- All of these questions may benefit from exploration through different lenses:
 - The distinguished professor
 - The post-doc
 - The mid-career academic seeking promotion

What about monographs?

- There are issues around open access and monographs that are not included in this research gap.
- HEFCE is doing some research to understand these issues better:
 - Academic attitudes towards monographs
 - Patterns of scholarly communication
 - How new models of publishing can replicate the desirable features of the monograph while realising the potential of e- and OA publishing
- Link up, and feed in, but don't duplicate.