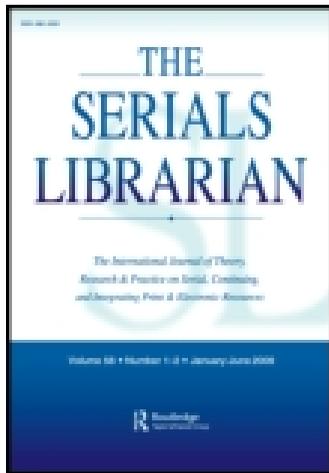


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## Building a Successful Service: Developing Open Access Funding and Advocacy at University College London

Catherine Sharp<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> UCL Library Services, University College London, London, UK

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## ARTICLES

# Building a Successful Service: Developing Open Access Funding and Advocacy at University College London

CATHERINE SHARP

*UCL Library Services, University College London, London, UK*

*The UK Research Councils (RCUK) introduced an open access policy, and accompanying funding for Article Processing Charges (APCs), in April 2013. This article describes University College London (UCL)'s experience of managing its institutional, RCUK, and Wellcome Trust open access funds, and highlights its success in exceeding the RCUK target in the first year of the policy. A large institution, processing around 1,770 APCs in 2013–2014, UCL has established a dedicated Open Access Funding Team. As well as advising authors on funders' and publishers' requirements, managing payments, and liaising with publishers, the Team delivers a comprehensive open access advocacy programme throughout the institution. Researchers who have used the Team's services show astonishing levels of enthusiasm for open access, and for UCL's approach to supporting them.*

**KEYWORDS** *open access, funding, advocacy, RCUK, APC, Finch, HEFCE, Gold, Green*

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Address correspondence to Catherine Sharp, UCL Library Services, University College London, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT, UK. E-mail: [catherine.sharp@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.sharp@ucl.ac.uk)

Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at <http://www.tandfonline.com/wser>.

## BACKGROUND

In June 2012, the Report of the Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings, colloquially known as the Finch Report, controversially recommended that the United Kingdom adopt the Gold open access model.<sup>1</sup> Following the UK government's acceptance of the Report, and promise of a "simpler, more flexible and transparent mechanism" by which the UK Research Councils would fund Article Processing Charges (APCs),<sup>2</sup> the RCUK Policy on Open Access was introduced in April 2013.<sup>3</sup> In the interim, in September 2012 the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills made an initial award of £10m to 30 institutions, to enable them to begin developing policies and establishing funds for APCs.

The familiar distinction between Gold and Green open access is critical to an understanding of the new UK open access environment. Gold open access entails payment of an APC in exchange for open access to the article, conference paper, or book chapter on the publisher website, along with permission (depending on the licence applied) to re-use the published Portable Document Format (PDF), including depositing it in institutional repositories. Conversely, Green open access involves depositing a version of the paper in an institutional or subject repository. The version deposited is usually the author's final manuscript, after peer-review but before publisher copyediting and typesetting. Publishers normally impose an embargo of between 6 and 24 months before the full text can be made open access. The length of the delay depends on the journal and the discipline.

The RCUK open access policy follows the Finch Report in preferring immediate open access, but supports both the Gold route (with the Creative Commons Attribution [CC BY] licence) and the Green (deposit in a repository, without restriction on non-commercial re-use).<sup>3</sup> The policy itself specifies maximum embargo periods of 6 and 12 months respectively for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and AHSS (Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences). However, the accompanying Guidance, amended in May 2013, permits longer embargoes (12 and 24 months) where funds for APCs are not available. With limited funds from the Research Councils, designed to cover the RCUK target of 45% compliance for the first year of the policy, institutions have adopted different approaches. Some advise authors to choose Green if possible; some fund Gold on a first-come-first-served basis; others apportion funds to particular departments or faculties. Institutions' initial responses to the policy, and their procedures for raising awareness and administering the funds, have been critical to their success in reaching the target.

The Wellcome Trust has long been a champion of Gold open access. As one of the heaviest users of Wellcome Trust open access funding, University College London (UCL) has developed considerable experience of

providing Gold open access services to its Wellcome Trust-funded authors since the Wellcome Trust's first open access block grants were awarded in October 2006. The challenges, with the award of funding from the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) in October 2012, and RCUK funding in April 2013, were to extend these services to support a wider range of researchers, to achieve value for money and to develop a comprehensive advocacy programme.

UCL is a multidisciplinary, research-led institution, with approximately 4,800 staff and postdoctoral researchers, and around 4,500 research students. UCL's annual research publications total more than 9,000. Open access is high on the research agenda, with the Vice-Provost (Research) declaring that it "underpins UCL's research mission."<sup>4</sup> UCL's Publications Policy requires that, copyright permissions allowing, all research outputs are deposited in UCL Discovery, UCL's institutional repository.<sup>5</sup> There are now approximately 18,000 full-text records in UCL Discovery. UCL's compliance with the Wellcome Trust open access policy has grown from 93 papers in 2007–2008 to more than 500 in 2013–2014. RCUK estimated that the target of 45% compliance in 2013–2014 equated, in UCL's case, to 693 papers. UCL exceeded this target by some margin, with 1,217 of its RCUK-funded papers being made open access in the reporting period April 2013–July 2014.

## PRINCIPLES

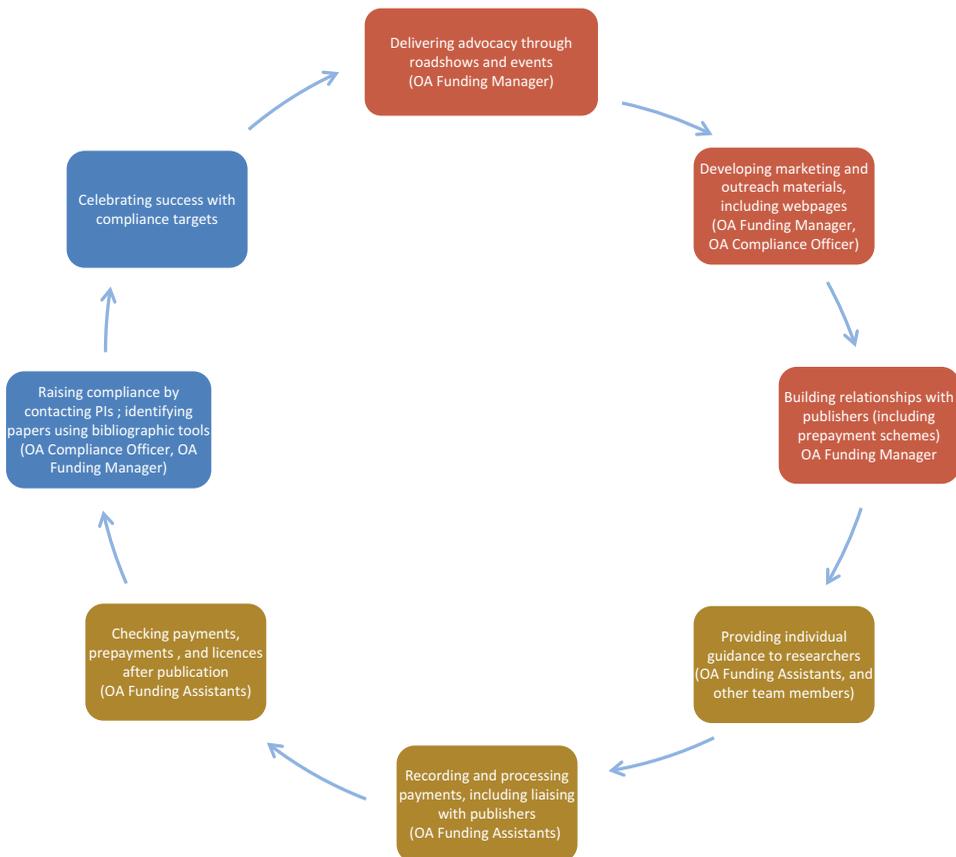
UCL strongly supports Green open access, with researchers depositing through its Research Publications Service (RPS). The Higher Education Funding Councils' (hereafter referred to as HEFCE, the Higher Education Funding Council for England) policy for open access in the Post-2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) stipulates that papers accepted after April 1, 2016 will only be eligible for REF submission if the final peer-reviewed manuscript has been deposited in an institutional or subject repository on acceptance. This puts repositories at the centre of the next REF, though HEFCE shares the view that Gold open access is the preferred, and the most sustainable, long-term model.<sup>6</sup>

The overarching principle of academic freedom is at the heart of UCL's approach to open access. Put simply, researchers are free to publish in the most appropriate forum for their work. Where publishers offer both Gold and Green open access (assuming both comply with any funders' requirements), researchers are free to choose whichever they consider most suitable: that choice is an academic decision. UCL's open access fund, established in August 2013, enables any researcher, regardless of seniority or discipline, to select Gold open access if they prefer (funds permitting). If Gold is chosen, UCL's Open Access Team will deposit the published PDF in UCL Discovery

on their behalf. UCL's RCUK Implementation Guidelines emphasise these principles.<sup>7</sup> UCL's open access policy exceeds the HEFCE mandate for the next REF: researchers are required to deposit all outputs in UCL Discovery at acceptance.<sup>8</sup>

## METHODS

This section describes UCL's open access funding services, and explains how UCL's Open Access Funding Team has delivered such overwhelming success from virtually a standing start. It sets out the practical methods that the Team has adopted to ensure that open access payments are processed and recorded efficiently, and to encourage authors to use UCL's open access services. **Figure 1** illustrates the key aspects of the Team's work, which focus both on relationship-building and on administrative workflows. Both



**FIGURE 1** The virtuous circle of open access funding services at UCL. These activities occur throughout the year, on a rolling basis.

are vital, and reinforce each other. This has led, at UCL, to what could be described as a virtuous circle of open access funding services.

### Payment and Administration

Early in 2013, as the RCUK open access policy was being finalised, UCL quickly set up systems to allow its researchers to use its RCUK funding. (UCL had used the bulk of its initial allocation of BIS funding to pay APCs.) While payments were initially made by individual invoice for each APC, UCL was keen to exploit the potential of publisher prepayment schemes both to achieve better value for money and to streamline payments, and joined the Wiley, BioMed Central, BMJ, Taylor & Francis, and Elsevier prepayment schemes early on. These deposit arrangements have proved extremely popular with researchers. They avoid many of the complications of invoice payments, including delays while bank transfers are made, publisher errors in allocating batch payments, and payment chasing from publishers' finance departments. In the main, the schemes are easy to use, with no more than a simple online form that the Open Access Funding Team completes on behalf of the researcher, an e-mail from the Team to the publisher, or a few easy steps in the author's account on the publisher's website. UCL has since negotiated a number of new arrangements with publishers, and as of July 2014 has 14 prepayment schemes (including PLOS, Springer, Sage, RSC, and Frontiers) and one membership scheme, with the Royal Society. Negotiations are proceeding with at least five other publishers. Although some institutions have avoided joining prepayment schemes because of concerns about the transparency of discount arrangements, UCL's impression is that most publishers are offering standard tiered reductions, and are at pains not to negotiate different rates with different institutions.

UCL's experience of managing Wellcome Trust block grant funding proved crucial in facilitating a seamless transition to a much larger Gold funding service. A balance needed to be struck between collecting the necessary data (bibliographic and funding, including grant numbers, grant holders, and any split in funding, where both the Wellcome Trust and the Research Councils funded a paper) and achieving a streamlined process for researchers. The Open Access Funding Team began by extending its claim form for Wellcome Trust open access funding to include RCUK open access. It soon became apparent that RCUK researchers, with different options for open access and different embargo periods, needed a more flexible service, and that authors find even a simple form bureaucratic and offputting. The Open Access Funding Team started encouraging authors to initiate contact by e-mail, at acceptance or earlier, and took the opportunity to ask key questions about funding details during the correspondence. This proved extremely effective, and the Team quickly established a reputation for speed and efficiency.

## Workflows and Recording

For much of the first year of the RCUK policy, the Team recorded open access payments and RCUK Green deposits in Excel spreadsheets. With a growing number of staff (detailed in the next section) and the need for more sophisticated recording and reporting, a database was built, with separate tables and forms for Gold payments, RCUK Green deposits, and RCUK publication charges paid. This helps the Team to administer the high volume of open access payments—around 1,770 transactions in 2013–2014—effectively. Procedures are complex and intricate, and rely on the experience and efficiency of all members of the Team. [Table 1](#) shows typical administrative tasks necessary for each payment or deposit. Before this stage, the Team will have advised the author on types of open access and funders' requirements. If a paper is funded by both the Wellcome Trust and one of the Research Councils, UCL splits the payment between its Wellcome and RCUK budgets. Where a paper involves authors from different institutions, UCL is not in favor of splitting individual APCs between the institutions, the payment bureaucracy being too costly. If the paper is RCUK-funded, UCL will pay the charges from its RCUK funds if the corresponding author or RCUK grant holder is based at UCL. The Open Access Funding Manager delivers monthly management reports on open access payments made from the UCL, Wellcome, and RCUK open access funds. This enables the Open Access Funding Team

**TABLE 1** Gold Open Access Workflows

| Gold payments                                                           | Gold prepayments                                                      | Green RCUK deposit                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Collecting bibliographic and funding data from authors                  | Paying initial prepayments and invoices for top-ups                   | Collecting bibliographic and funding data, and final manuscripts, from authors |
| Requesting invoices (with correct VAT)                                  | Collecting bibliographic and funding data from authors and publishers | Checking permissions in Copyright Transfer Agreements                          |
| Raising requisitions on UCL's Financial Information System              | Checking publisher prepayment reports                                 | Uploading final manuscript                                                     |
| Receipting purchase orders and sending invoices to UCL Accounts Payable | Checking open access and licence status                               |                                                                                |
| Checking payment and liaising with publisher/UCL Accounts Payable       | Checking RCUK acknowledgments and data statement                      |                                                                                |
| Checking open access and licence status                                 | Depositing published PDF in UCL Discovery                             |                                                                                |
| Checking RCUK acknowledgments and data statement                        |                                                                       |                                                                                |
| Depositing published PDF in UCL Discovery                               |                                                                       |                                                                                |

to monitor progress in reaching open access targets (particularly for RCUK papers), and to track the efficacy of its advocacy initiatives.

UCL believes that third-party APC management processes have the potential to achieve considerable cross-sector efficiencies. UCL was a member of the JISC APC Steering Group, provided the first JISC APC Case Study<sup>9</sup> and is looking forward to contributing to the activities of the JISC Monitor project.<sup>10</sup> At present, though, the speed and unpredictability of developments in Gold open access—encompassing new publisher systems, the forthcoming review of the RCUK policy, the HEFCE policy for the next REF and divergent institutional policies—mitigate against an effective, all-encompassing third-party solution. This is particularly the case since any new system must avoid additional administration for authors, ingest and report all reasonable data requirements easily and efficiently, and be at least as efficient as existing internal payment arrangements. UCL is committed to maintaining its successful internal systems until there is sufficient stability in the system that a third party solution can offer a viable alternative.

## Staffing

Managing open access payments centrally, within the library, is the most effective way to provide a streamlined service in an institution of UCL's size. UCL's Open Access Funding Team is able to advise on different publisher processes (including financial procedures), as well as on funders' policies, and is better placed to handle open access invoices than individual departments. The Team is now four-strong, and comprises the Open Access Funding Manager, Open Access Compliance Officer and two Funding Assistants. The assistants respond to queries from authors about types of open access and methods of arranging Gold payments, process payments (including raising requisitions and managing purchase orders), review prepayment reports and check authors' publication lists to identify articles that fall within the scope of the RCUK open access policy. The Open Access Funding Manager is responsible for managing UCL's three open access budgets on a day-to-day basis, reporting to UCL Publications Board and to funders, negotiating with publishers, promoting compliance with open access mandates throughout UCL, and line-managing all members of the Team. The Open Access Compliance Officer works with the Open Access Funding Manager on advocacy (including giving presentations, using social media and maintaining UCL's open access webpages), and also has particular responsibility for liaising with authors to ensure compliance with UCL's and funders' open access mandates. It is vital that all members of the team have a strong service ethic and the ability to simplify complex processes in jargon-free language, as well as being skilled at manipulating financial systems and gathering data accurately.

## Publisher Engagement

UCL's Open Access Funding Manager has worked closely with publishers to establish efficient payment procedures. More than half of UCL's APC payments are made through prepayment schemes, with publishers providing monthly reports on articles paid for under the scheme, and (in some cases, depending on the agreed procedure) requesting approval, by e-mail or through an institutional code, before papers are added to the account. Prepayment schemes work best where the publisher has a dedicated team to deal with all APC payments, and where that team is able to liaise effectively with those responsible for licensing and production. Difficulties sometimes occur where journal production staff are not aware of prepayment arrangements, especially where there is no central team to coordinate open access procedures—but they pale into insignificance beside the complications that can occur with individual invoice payments. Where UCL pays by invoice, bureaucratic publisher processes—typically forms that authors are expected to print off, complete, sign, and scan—cause frustration and confusion. If possible, the Open Access Funding Team completes order forms on behalf of authors, and tries to encourage publishers to adopt better systems—and to accept orders by e-mail, in the meantime.

To avoid confusion (for example, with authors being sent an invoice when a prepayment scheme is in place), it is essential that publishers are committed to maintaining open lines of communication between themselves, their authors, and those authors' institutions. It is this that enables authors to make full use of their institution's open access funding. Simple webpages giving details of institutions who have membership schemes, with links to institutions' own webpages, have proved extremely effective. *BMJ*,<sup>11</sup> Taylor & Francis,<sup>12</sup> and Wiley,<sup>13</sup> for example, all include this information on their websites. Critically, the institution, rather than the publisher, needs to explain to authors how to comply with funders' policies—because the institution decides how its RCUK open access funds are allocated, and because some institutions, like UCL, have central open access funds in addition to research funders' block grants. Publishers have a crucial role to play in supporting and developing this new tripartite relationship—between themselves, the institution, and the author—that is so vital for meeting funders' open access requirements.

UCL's Open Access Funding Team has direct access to UCL's Financial Information System, and close links with UCL Accounts Payable. The Team is able to provide publishers with payment details, and to arrange for new supplier records, amendments to bank details and changes to payment terms. The delays inherent in a system of invoice payments—with payments not taking place daily, and bank transfer clearing delays—can slow down the process of making publications open access. At worst, depending on the publisher's policy, the publication process itself can be delayed. The larger

publishers recognise the importance of speedy production processes, and publish papers on open access according to their normal schedule, in expectation of payment. UCL encourages all publishers to follow this example, particularly where it is obvious that the payment is being arranged centrally, by experienced open access staff. Where publishers demand payment before publication, UCL processes invoices as quickly as possible, with zero payment terms, or reimburses authors who prefer to pay immediately on a credit card.

In general, authors find publishers' licensing procedures very confusing. Publishers are often reluctant or unable to limit authors' licence options, even where CC BY is required. Some have tried to compromise, by identifying CC BY as necessary, while setting out the other options. There are flaws in this approach: unless presented very clearly this can be confusing, and it may require the corresponding author to appreciate the importance of RCUK or Wellcome funding to the choice of licence (and to provide the correct funding information when ordering open access). UCL's Open Access Funding Team is frequently asked to explain different Creative Commons licence options. Although the Team checks the open access status and licences of all articles it funds, mistakes in the licence choice cannot always be rectified: some publishers refuse to change the PDF, the HTML, or both. Publishers need to establish better systems for directing authors toward CC BY, where it is required.

## Advocacy

In the current climate, an energetic advocacy programme is an essential component of any institution's open access services. UCL's success in delivering Gold open access to 45% of RCUK-funded outputs in 2013–2014 is the result of robust administration, a straightforward system for authors and, above all, effective communication about open access at all levels of the institution. This has generated remarkable levels of enthusiasm and goodwill, particularly from those who have used UCL's open access funding services.

UCL's Open Access Communication Plan, and its more recent REF Open Access Communication Plan, informs all open access advocacy. It identifies key stakeholders, including deans, vice-deans (research), school research facilitators, principal investigators (PIs), authors, departmental administrators, UCL Communications & Marketing, UCL Research Services, publishers, and research funders, and sets targets for advocacy activities aimed at those stakeholders. For example, UCL's Open Access Funding Team has worked with UCL Research Services to identify RCUK-funded PIs, and has contacted all RCUK PIs at key points in the year to inform them of the requirements of the RCUK policy. This proved extremely successful in generating interest and eliciting lists of publications needing to be made compliant with the RCUK policy. The Open Access Compliance Officer works with the Open Access

Funding Assistants to check author publication lists in UCL's Institutional Research Information System (IRIS), contacting authors individually with suggestions of how to comply with their funder's policy. Publishers have been able to provide the Team with lists of RCUK-funded articles, though it is sometimes necessary to check individual articles for particular information, including submission dates. The Team is conscious that articles do not always acknowledge funders comprehensively, and encourages authors to be aware of the importance of accurate acknowledgment. Without this, it is impossible to identify all RCUK-funded articles.

UCL's Open Access Funding Team set up a new suite of open access webpages for the start of the RCUK open access policy (see Figure 2). The pages are tailored to particular audiences—authors funded by the RCUK, Wellcome, another funder, or unfunded—and adopt a user-friendly approach without concealing the complexities of open access. With clear contact details, FAQs and a list of UCL's publisher memberships, the pages are practical and straightforward. The Team uses Twitter dynamically, to publicise high-profile open access articles, announce policy initiatives, share our statistics, and of course to retweet positive feedback from UCL authors.

Personal communications with authors, and invitations to department, unit and faculty meetings, are vital elements of UCL's open access advocacy strategy. Very often, an enquiry from a single author has led to a presentation to all their colleagues, and to extremely successful relationship-building. Between them, UCL's Open Access Funding Manager and Open Access Compliance Officer gave more than 50 open access briefings during

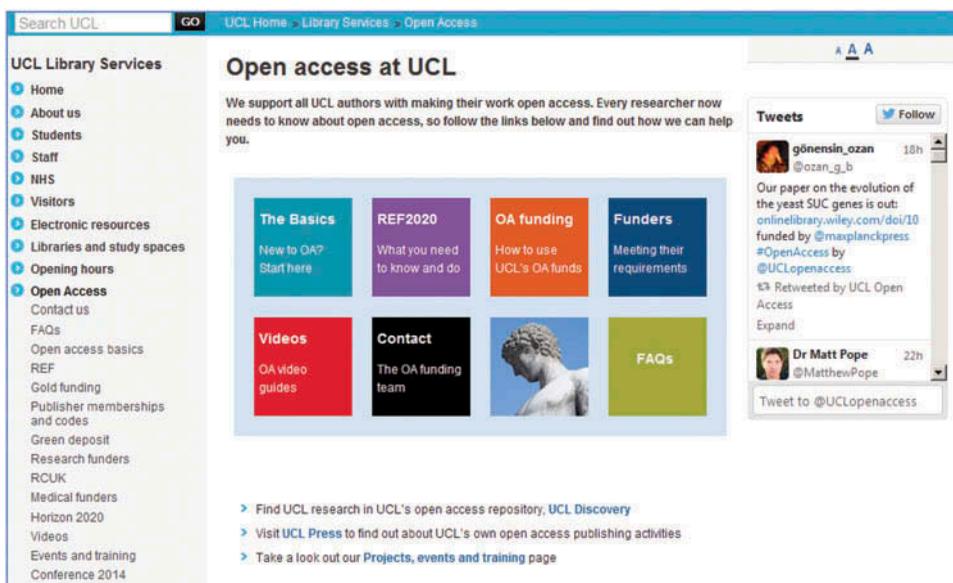


FIGURE 2 Screenshot of <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/open-access>.

the first year of the policy. A highlight of the Team's calendar was UCL's first open access conference in Open Access Week 2013. The conference attracted more than 100 delegates, mostly UCL researchers and support staff. With a programme of four speakers, and a lively debate afterwards, the afternoon was extremely successful. It also saw the launch of UCL's highly praised Open Access Guide,<sup>14</sup> which has been revised in the light of the HEFCE policy.

## RESULTS AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES

UCL's commitment to establishing a flexible, responsive open access funding service to support all researchers has resulted in success at over-reaching the RCUK target, and in considerable momentum toward open access throughout the institution. UCL made 1,217 RCUK-funded papers open access during the RCUK reporting period April 2013–July 2014. Of these, 1,014 followed the Gold open access route. In the same period, around 1,180 papers funded neither by RCUK nor Wellcome have benefited from UCL's open access funds, and approximately 590 Wellcome-funded papers have been made open access using UCL's Wellcome block grant. Effective advocacy, underpinned by efficient administration and a supportive, accommodating approach to researchers' needs, has led to exponential growth in take-up of UCL's open access funding services. Success breeds success, and the work of the Open Access Funding Team continues to expand, and to feed in to UCL's broader open access agenda.

In the coming year, the Open Access Funding Team will continue its advocacy programme, focusing on the RCUK target of 53% compliance (817 papers, according to RCUK's estimate) in 2014–2015, and on encouraging researchers to deposit all outputs in UCL Discovery. This will prepare researchers for the HEFCE open access mandate for REF submissions accepted after April 1, 2016. UCL's 2014–2015 Communication Plan incorporates new strands of activity (in addition to an emphasis on the REF policy), including instructional and promotional videos, joint work with UCL Media Relations to build on existing publicity, and an expanded open access conference in October 2014.

UCL will keep working with publishers to achieve value for money in the present climate, and, for the longer-term, to encourage them to adopt a pricing model that will take into account the JISC's concept of "total cost of ownership." In line with its emphasis on streamlining payment and reducing bureaucracy for researchers, the Team will follow and participate in technical developments to improve all processes relating to open access, from ordering to funder reporting. Practically, UCL's Open Access Funding Team will carry on helping researchers to achieve the most effective and appropriate methods of dissemination for their work.

## CONCLUSION

Changes in funders' open access policies have created a need, in all UK higher education institutions, for new open access funding services to support researchers. Despite being such a straightforward concept, open access can present authors with a minefield of practical problems. Institutions' open access funding services need to adopt a creative approach in order to meet these challenges. UCL's success in exceeding the RCUK target, and in establishing a service that authors recognise as first-class, is the result of a multidimensional approach, encompassing effective advocacy, a clear understanding of researchers' needs, and a firm commitment to problem solving—including working toward more streamlined publisher processes. There are real opportunities for institutions to collaborate in developing their open access provision, and in responding to issues that affect the whole sector. UCL looks forward to working with other institutions, particularly through its JISC Pathfinder Project,<sup>15</sup> to share experience and develop robust systems for the future.

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