



*Your guide to Open Access publishing and Open Science*

≡ MENU



Open Science Resources April 20, 2017

# How Much Do Top Publishers Charge for Open Access?

Author: **Pablo Markin**

**13 Comments**



As Open Access is making ever increasing waves in the academic publishing business, top publishers are determined not to lose their bearing.

A Guest Article by [Pablo Markin](#)

Menu

x

---

Open Access News

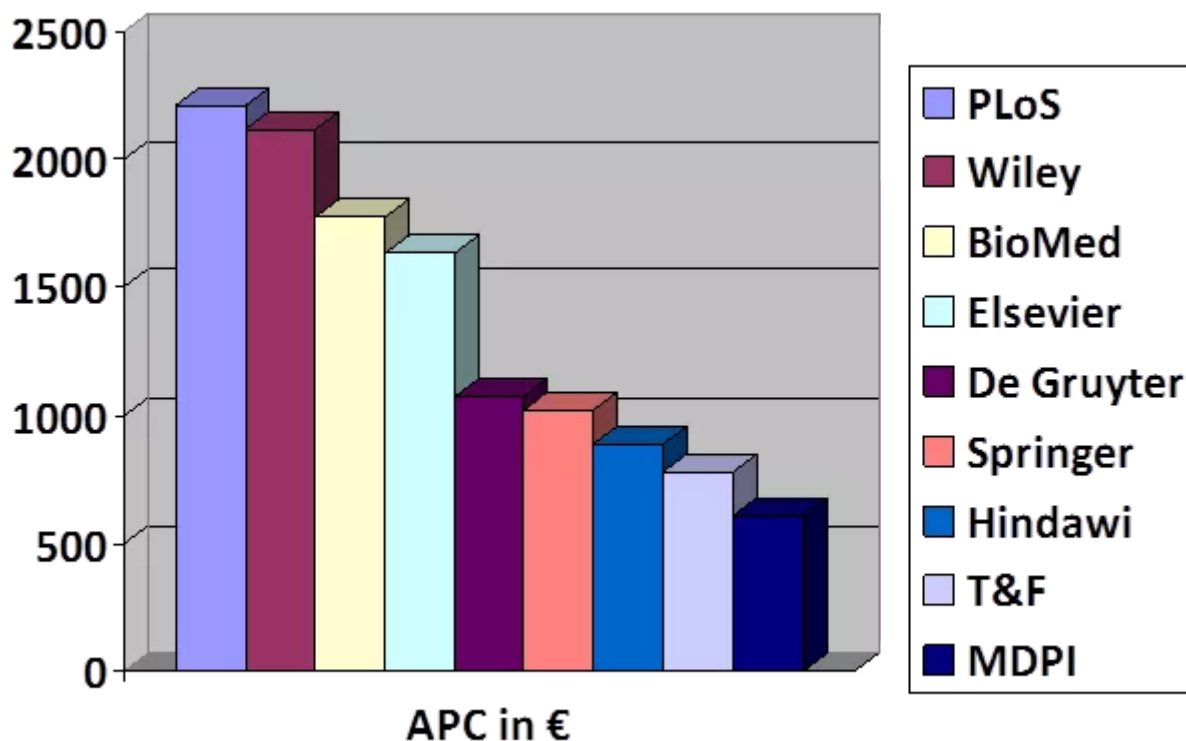
---

Resources

---

Publishing

to publish his or her research in Open Access, it could be useful to know what the publishing market has to offer and what range of prices exists.

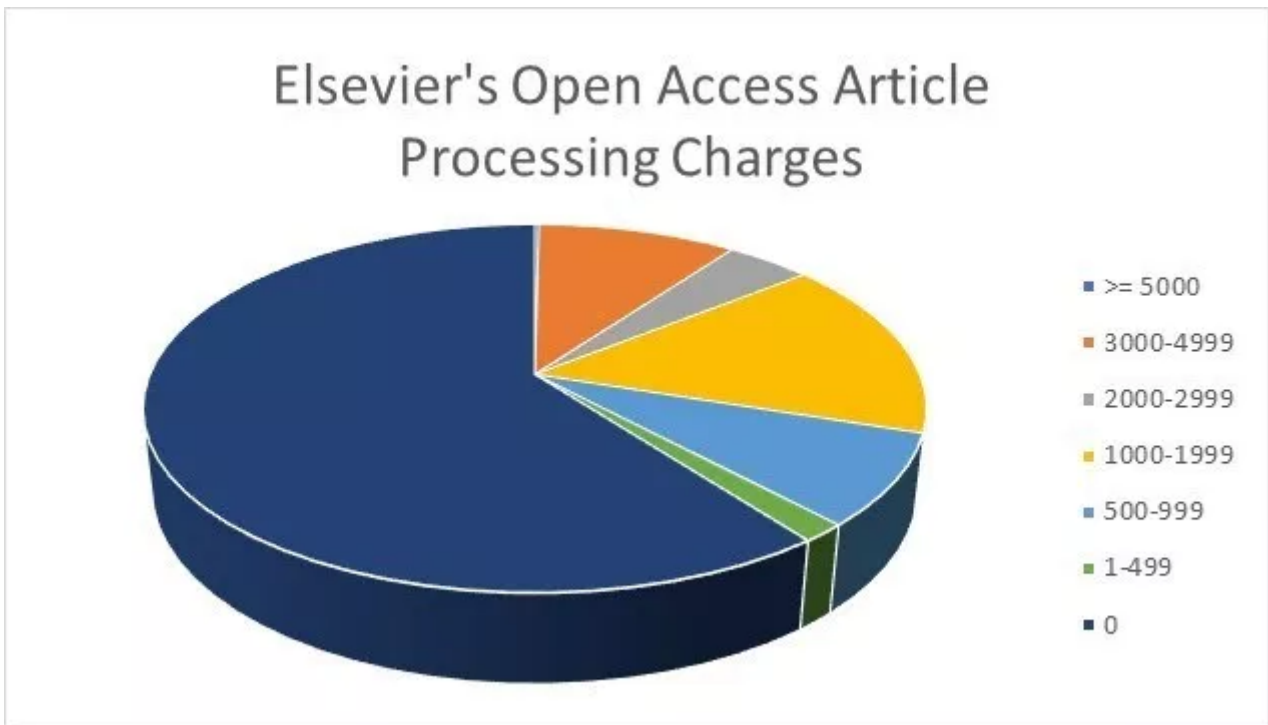


*Average APC Prices converted to € from other currencies for comparison (excluding journals that waive 100% of their charges). Source: Publishers' websites | Beata Socha's Illustration.*

Elsevier and Springer have been making strides in the world of Open Access. Each of them has a sizable portfolio of OA journals. Elsevier has around 500 titles, Springer a little over 530, more than half of which were incorporated into their portfolio through the acquisition of BioMed Central in 2008. For both of these market leaders, OA journals make for nearly 20% of their entire portfolios.

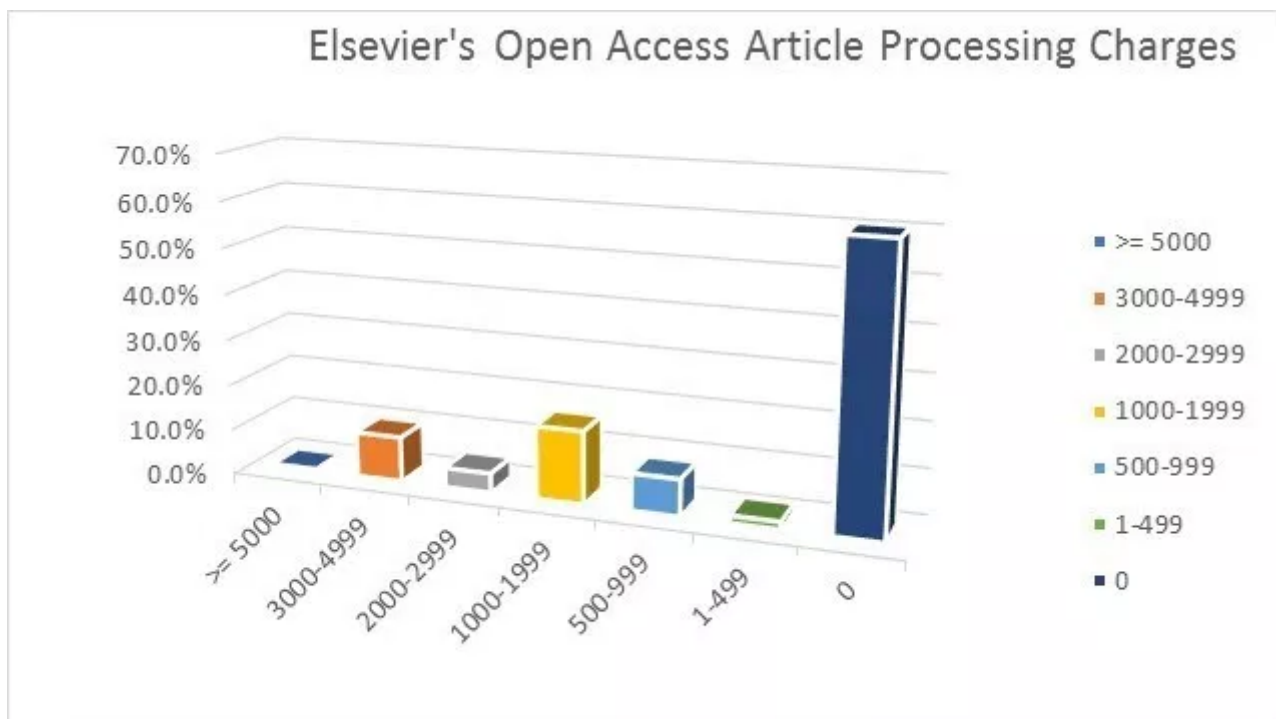
### Know Thy Worth

Similarities end there, however, as the top two players have quite different pricing strategies for their OA journals. Elsevier's article processing charges (APC) span from negligible amounts (\$65) to what one could call "outrageous" sums (\$5,000) for its top OA star journal *The Lancet Global Health*. However, on a closer consideration, the majority of Elsevier's OA journals do not impose any APC on their authors.



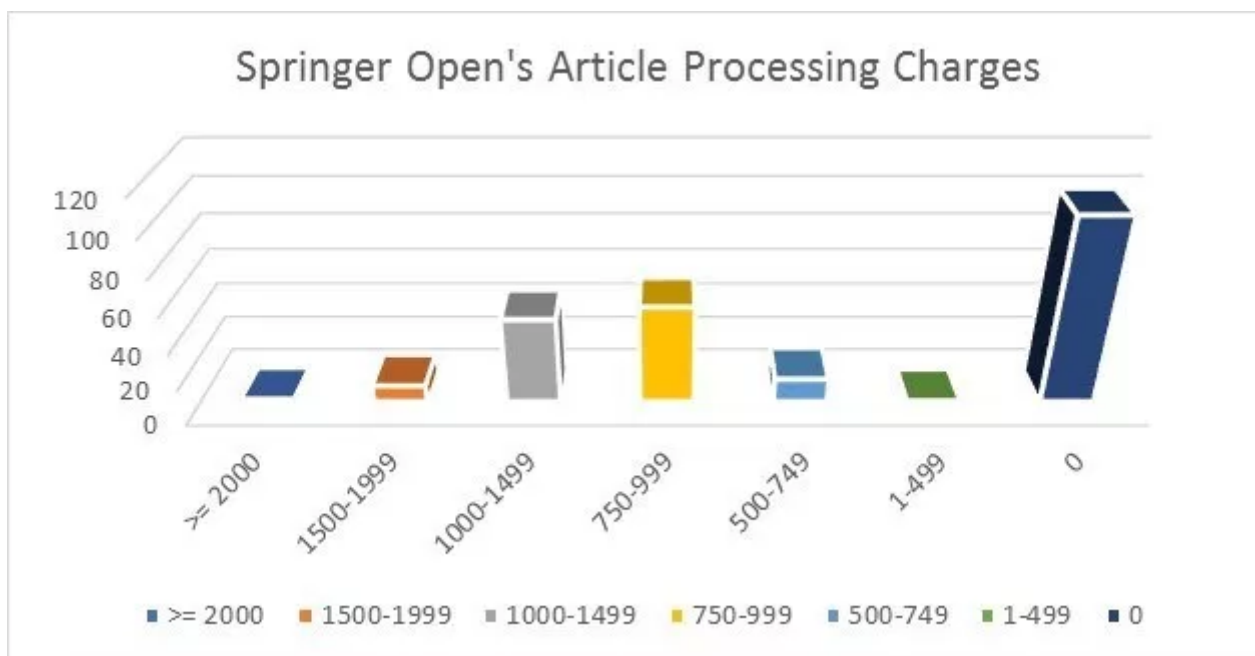
Elsevier's Open Access Article Processing Charges. Source: Publishers' websites | Beata Socha's Illustration.

Those 40% of Elsevier's journals that do have a remarkably symmetric distribution. Less than 10% of Elsevier's OA journals charge from \$1 to \$1,000, while almost the same number charge over \$3,000. Meanwhile, the remaining 20% of its journals are priced somewhere between \$1,000 and \$3,000 in terms of their APC.



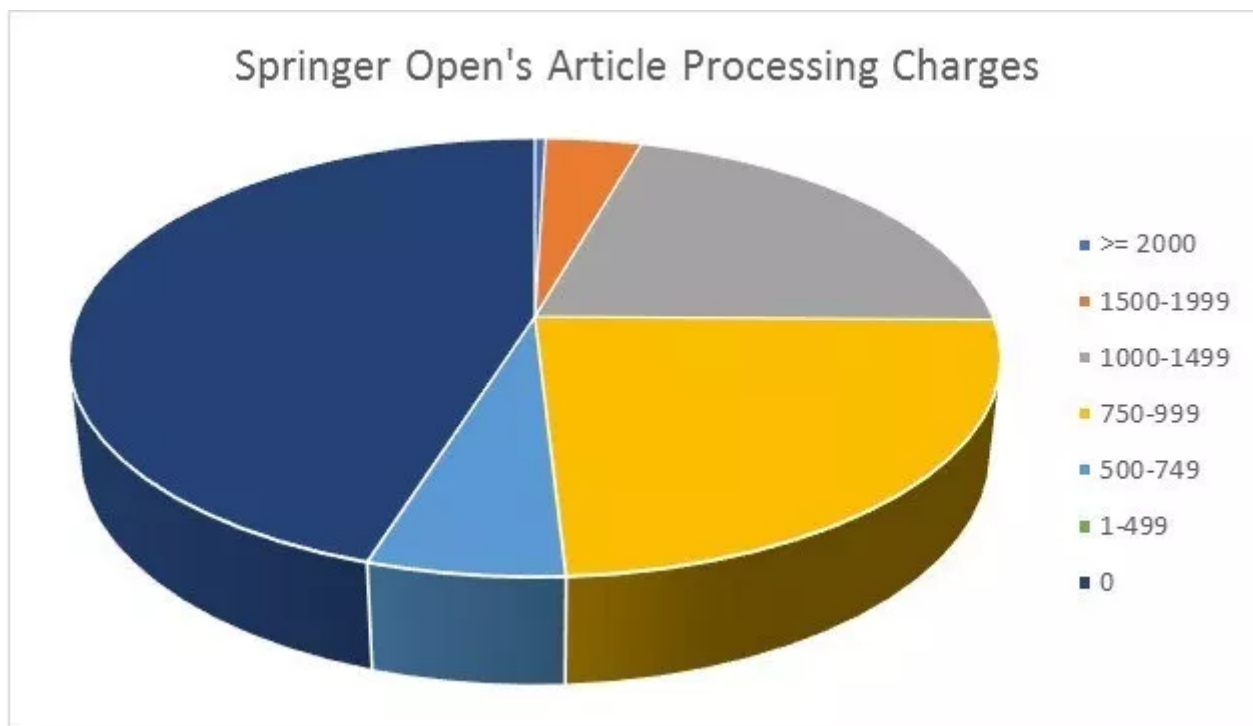
Elsevier's Open Access Article Processing Charges. Source: Publishers' websites | Beata Socha's Illustration.

Springer's average APC of €1,024 (not including free-of-charge journals) appear to be surprisingly low as compared to those of its chief competitor. APC for over 44% of all its journals are priced between €750 and €1,500, while its flagship journal, *AAPS Open*, charges an unimpressive sum of €2,035 per article. Granted, its BioMed Central portfolio is slightly more expensive, with APC ranging from €850 to €2,420 with an average article processing charge of €1,771. Nevertheless, all in all, Springer seems to be much more egalitarian in its pricing policies than its Dutch rival.



*Springer Open's Article Processing Charges. Source: Publishers' websites | Beata Socha's Illustration.*

Perhaps there are better ways to cash in on Open Access than charging blood-curdling sums for publishing articles. Springer has been riding the wave of OA popularity and has set its sail to the peripheries of the scientific world, particularly to the East. It has a number of partnerships with Middle Eastern and East Asian institutions, such as Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Tsinghua University, Korea Concrete Institute, Islamic Azad University, Southwest Jiaotong University, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Chinese Academy of Sciences, the University of Malaya and many others. While they fund the publications, authors publish for free, and the publisher is none the poorer for it.

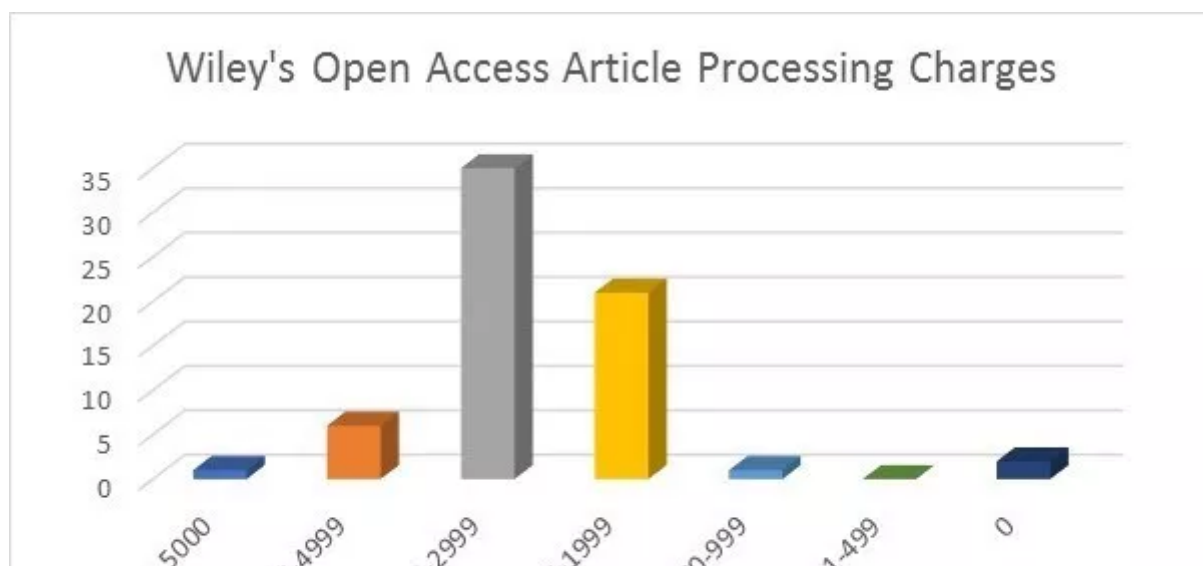


Springer Open's Article Processing Charges. Source: Publishers' websites | Beata Socha's Illustration.

Public relations and promotion are nothing if not central to the Germany-based publisher's strategy. Not only does Springer forgo collecting APC from nearly half of its journals, it has even managed to secure prizes for the best article in each volume. For some of its OA journals, King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) sponsors KACST Medal and \$5,000 for the best paper.

### Stand on Principle

There are also those whose strategies involve few or even no freebies. The case in point is Hindawi (one of the top purely Open Access publishers) that has no journals without publishing charges. Wiley & Sons only has two zero-APC journals in its somewhat modest OA portfolio of 66 titles.



Menu

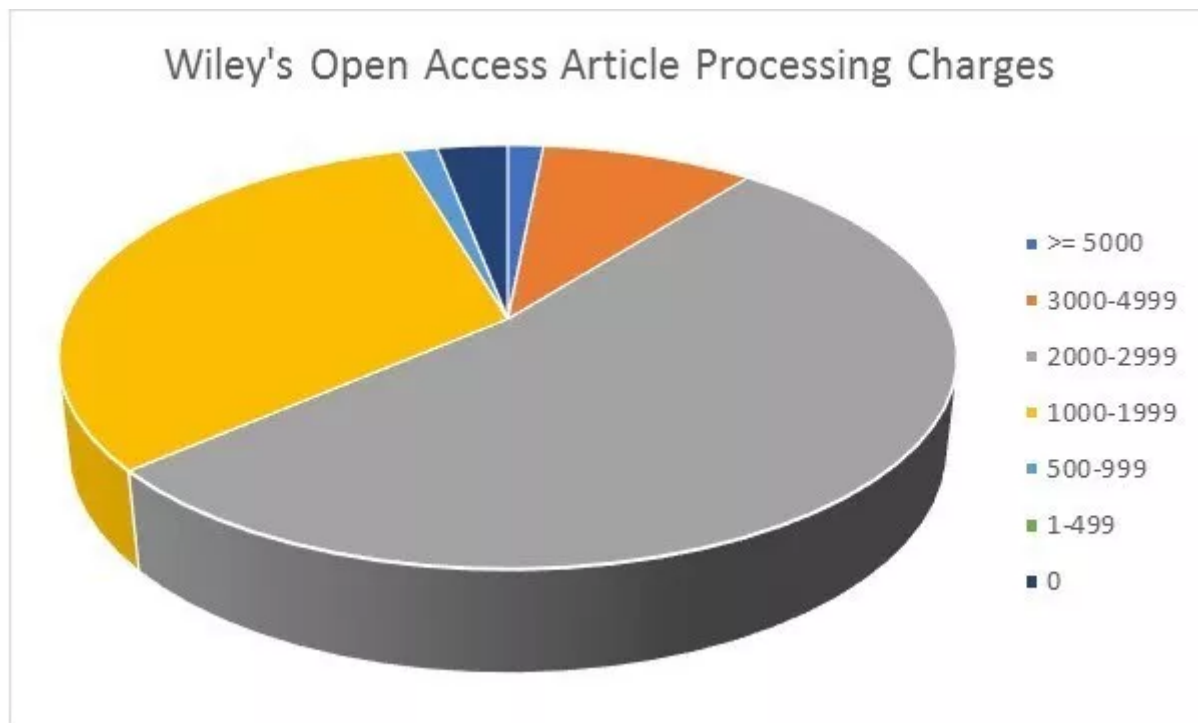
x

Open Access News

Resources

Publishing

by PLoS). Its average APC stands at over \$2,100 per article.

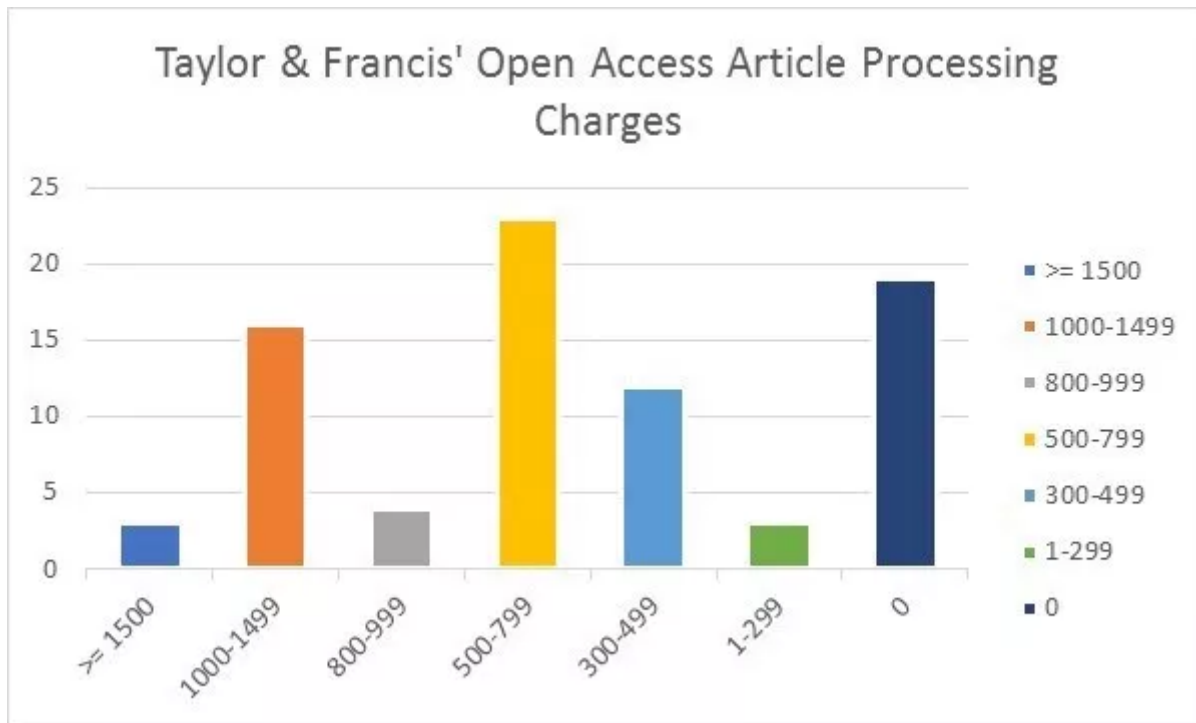


Wiley's Open Access Article Processing Charges. Source: Publishers' websites | Beata Socha's Illustration.

Admittedly, Wiley's journals are predominantly from the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM) family, where APC are generally much higher than in Social Sciences or Humanities. It is also noteworthy, that Wiley's star player, *Advanced Science*, charges the same amount as Elsevier's The Lancet Global Health – \$5,000.

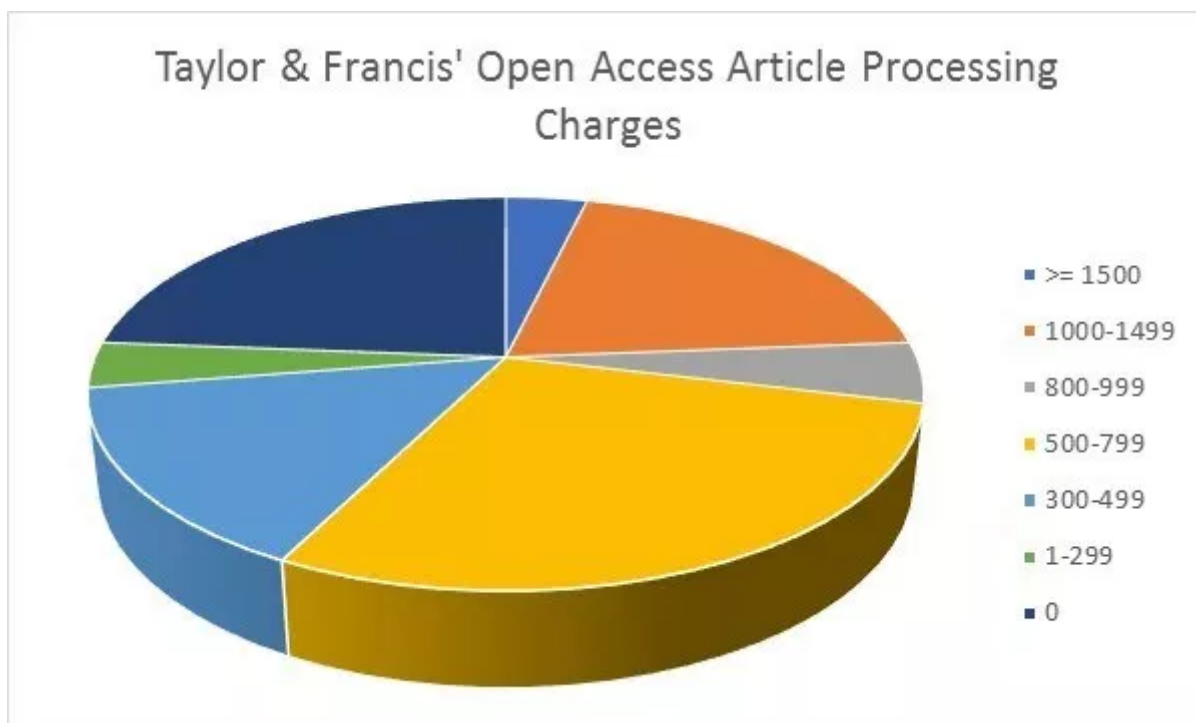
### Pay What You Want

Compared to Elsevier and Springer, Wiley and Taylor & Francis have modest exposure to Open Access (each has a mere 4% share of OA journals in their portfolios). Yet, they are definitely playing the field, although apparently with different strategies. While Wiley is playing the "hard to get" game of exclusivity and high APC, the final member of the Big 4 club, Taylor & Francis (T&F), has quite the opposite approach to Open Access pricing.



Taylor & Francis' Open Access Article Processing Charges. Source: Publishers' websites | Beata Socha's Illustration.

Though relatively new to the Open Access game, T&F is absolutely determined to develop its portfolio fast. It has approximately 100 OA journals, including 15 under the *Cogent* brand. Its APC (quoted in euro, the US dollar or the pound, but here all converted to euros for comparison) range from €190 to €1,550, with nearly 50% priced between €300 and €1,000, 20% in the €1,000-€1,500 range and only three journals priced above €1,500. Nearly a quarter of its OA journals are free of charge at the moment.



Taylor & Francis' Open Access Article Processing Charges. Source: Publishers' websites | Beata Socha's Illustration

Menu

X

Open Access News

Resources

Publishing

financial circumstances,” Cogent’s website reads. It also indicates that in case an author has access to external funding for their publication, they are politely encouraged to pay the full charge.

Germany-based [De Gruyter](#), which also has a sizable [Open Access portfolio](#), has a remarkably uniform pricing structure. For its own journals, it [charges three rates](#): €1,500 for Medical and Life Sciences journals, €500 for Humanities and €1,000 for remaining disciplines.

There remains another issue when examining publishers’ pricing policies: the number of articles for which APC are charged in effect. Many publishers use discounts and waivers as a standard practice, in order to attract authors. But short of asking every author who publishes in their journals, there is no way of knowing how generous the discount policies of these venues are. In this analysis, the primary data derives from the publishers’ official price lists made available on their websites.

Top publishers are highly aware that Open Access will continue to grow and comprise an ever-growing source of their revenue. The publishing market will eventually bear out which pricing policies are set to turn out to be the winning strategies. For now, all bets are off.

*By Beata Socha*

---

Featured Image Credits: MIT+150: FAST (Festival of Art + Science + Technology): FAST LIGHT — Man studying alone on his Macbook at the library, May 8, 2011 | © Chris Devers.

Tags: **APC, article processing charges, BioMed, De Gruyter, Elsevier, Hindawi, journals, Open Access, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley**

---

< [PREVIOUS ARTICLE](#)

**A Special Issue of Open Archaeology Shines a Light on Developments in the Arctic North**

[NEXT ARTICLE](#) >

**De Gruyter Finds a Free-Access Journal for Strategic Analyses in German and English**

---

**Pablo Markin** [View all posts](#)



Menu

x

---

Open Access News

---

Resources

---

Publishing





February 1, 2013

## Japan takes first steps towards Open Access



August 10, 2018

## Open Access May Involve Hidden Costs for Journal Publishers, as Conflicts over Subscription Agreements Indicate

### 13 Comments

---

**Tom Mowlam** says:

April 20, 2017 at 8:49 am

Interesting article on pricing strategies Beata. Would be interesting to know what proportion of the 60% of OA Elsevier journals that do not charge APC are funded.

Also is your data available as CSV? Would be fun to play around with.

Menu

x

---

Open Access News

---

Resources

---

Publishing

APCs. As a publisher with 7 titles that all employ an APC model, our average APC when based on a title view is \$2,328. However that fails to account for the volumes that each of those titles publishes. When looked at on a weighted average basis, the average APC is much lower at \$1,590. This is before we account for the support we provide to authors how are unable to afford an APC. Other publishers publish open access journals that carry \$0 APCs because they employ other non-APC business models for their sustainability. Including such titles in the calculation of an overall APC average fails to account for the fact that Open Access and the business model of APCs are two separate topics. Data made available from the Wellcome Trust shows that in fact PLOS has the lowest average APC any of the large publishers that Wellcome funds via their grants.”

<https://blog.wellcome.ac.uk/2016/03/23/wellcome-trust-and-coaf-open-access-spend-2014-15/>

[Log in to Reply](#)

★ **Pablo Markin** says:

April 26, 2017 at 4:33 pm

On behalf of Beata Socha:

Thank you for the comments. In order to respond to the queries about methodology, I would like to explain why we applied a non-weighted arithmetic mean instead of a weighted average.

Applying a weighted mean would require us to track the number of the articles published in each journal. On the one hand it poses a major challenge as to how to assess the number of articles in each of the thousands of journals analyzed. On the other hand, it also raises a question of the time frame in which we analyze the number of articles. Should we just take into consideration the articles published within the past year or perhaps over the past 5 years? After all, in many journals the number of articles fluctuates, sometimes significantly. If we decided to calculate articles over a longer period of time, it would pose a problem of changing pricing policies: some journals have adjusted their APC levels over the past years. All in all, using a weighted average would make more sense in such cases as PLoS, where the number of journals is small but their sizes differ drastically. In other cases, it would be inapplicable, though. That is why we opted for a non-weighted mean.

A weighted mean would also give rise to another challenge: how do we know how many of the articles in the journal were actually paid for and how many APCs have in fact been waived? All publishers employ waivers, and they have different policies for them, sometimes very generous. Without this information (which is for obvious reasons unobtainable), a weighted average could be even less representative in most cases.

As explained at the end of my post, I excluded from my calculation the journals that carried nominal \$0 APCs, which – I assumed – meant that they had different business models for these journals. Of course, sometimes publishers’ business models rely both on APCs and on third-party funding at the same time. This data is equally inaccessible, as it is a trade secret of each publisher.

Given the constrains of available data, we decided to choose the simplest solution – a non-weighted APC. Transparent and unambiguous APC costs (as listed on publishers’ websites) are a good benchmark, and we believe – the most reliable metric to assess the costs of publishing with any given imprint. Often enough – they will serve authors as the sole orientation point for establishing the costs of publishing. After all, the majority of authors pay full APCs and the bulk of articles will be charged full price, or this is at least, what the publishers

Menu

x

---

Open Access News

---

Resources

---

Publishing

[Log in to Reply](#)

★ **Pablo Markin** says:

April 29, 2017 at 4:48 pm

It also bears mentioning that the data published at the Wellcome blog website only refer to the APC it helped to cover. PLOS publication fees vary from 1,495 USD to 2,900 USD (<https://www.plos.org/publication-fees>). As the last available financial report of PLOS indicates, publication fee assistance only costs it 2,329,000 USD in contrast to its gross publication fee revenues of 44,604,000 USD for the fiscal year 2015 (<https://www.plos.org/financial-overview>). Average per article PLOS revenues can be estimated to be approximately 1,438 USD in 2015.

Pablo Markin, Blogger, OpenScience.com

[Log in to Reply](#)

**Stefan Schmeja** says:

April 26, 2017 at 3:34 pm

Also the OpenAPC project shows the APCs actually paid by a large number of universities and research institutions. The average APCs are e.g. €3,138 for Nature Publishing Group, €2,518 for Elsevier and €1,357 for PLOS:

<https://treemaps.intact-project.org/apcdata/openapc/#publisher/>

[Log in to Reply](#)

**Richard Poynder** says:

April 26, 2017 at 4:56 pm

Does Beata Socha not think she should have disclosed the fact that she is a De Gruyter Product Manager on the original post? And why was her post described as a “guest article”, as if she were independent of De Gruyter rather than an employee?

[...]

At least the About Page now shows that the blog belongs to De Gruyter, but anyone following a link to the post would not have known that without clicking the About link. [...]

[Log in to Reply](#)

**Wendy** says:

September 22, 2017 at 9:30 pm

Would anyone have any resources to suggest for a list of peer-reviewed Open Access journals?

[Log in to Reply](#)

Advertisement

Menu

x

---

Open Access News

---

Resources

---

Publishing

**Bernhard Mittermaier (@BMittermaier)** says:

April 28, 2017 at 1:58 am

In 2015, Elsevier launched “33 new fully open access titles (..) bringing our total to approximately 170”

<https://www.elsevier.com/connect/elsevier-publishing-a-look-at-the-numbers-and-more>

Did they really launch more than 300 OA journals in 2016 so that they have “around 500 titles” now? What kind of journals are these? Are these (to a large extent) the zero-Euro-titles?

[Log in to Reply](#)

**simonbatterbury** says:

May 8, 2017 at 2:43 pm

The de Gruyter website says APCs are only charged for 20 journals. <https://www.degruyter.com/dg/page/article-processing-charges>. This means the vast majority of its journals (some 406) are free. This is not really made clear in the article above.

[Log in to Reply](#)

Pingback: [Irrwitzig hohe Open-Access-Artikelgebühren | Archivalia](#)

Pingback: [Shifting Power Relations between Journal Publishers and University Libraries as Open Access Models Take Hold | Open Science](#)

Pingback: [How Much Do Top Publishers Charge for Open Access? – De Gruyter Open](#)

## Leave a Reply

---

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.

This site uses Akismet to reduce spam. [Learn how your comment data is processed.](#)

## Trending Posts

---



Should you care about your h-index, and if so, how to improve it?



How To Get Impact Factor

[Menu](#)

[x](#)

---

[Open Access News](#)

---

[Resources](#)

---

[Publishing](#)



How to get indexed by Google Scholar?



French Academic and Research Institutions Refuse to Pay Climbing Journal Subscription Fees, Opt for De Facto Open Access



Using JURN to find open access journals in arts and humanities



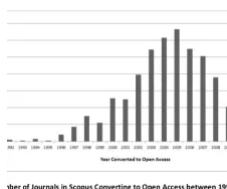
In Response to Criticism the Plan S Adopts a Flexible Stance Toward Paywall-Based Journals and Hybrid Open Access

## Most Commented



June 3, 2015

**Green OA vs. Gold OA. Which one to choose?**



January 2, 2015

**Is converting journals to open access less popular than 10 years ago?**



July 24, 2012

**How To Get Impact Factor**



April 11, 2014

**How to get indexed by Google Scholar?**



April 20, 2017

Menu

X

Open Access News

Resources

Publishing

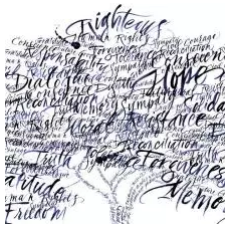
November 15, 2013

### What is Gold Open Access – useful links



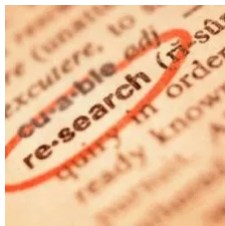
April 9, 2014

### Why and how should you optimize academic articles for search engines?



March 14, 2013

### Open Access increases citation? A brief overview of two reports



## Categories

---

[Open Access Articles](#)

---

[Open Access Implementation](#)

---

[Open Access Models](#)

---

[Open Access News](#)

---

[Open Science Resources](#)

---

[Publishing in Open Access](#)

---

[Transitions to Open Access](#)

---

## Guides & How To

---

Menu

x

[Open Access News](#)

---

[Resources](#)

---

[Publishing](#)

How To Promote  
an Open Access Journal

---

How To Get  
Impact Factor

---

How to promote  
a book

---

## Tags

---

popularization **Open Access** article processing charges authors survey journals peer review De Gruyter Open De Gruyter Key Challenges Elsevier **Gold Open Access** OA guides academia in data Open Science Green Open Access Open Access in Sciences models **Funding APCs** Hybrid Open Access Open Access to Books **opinion news** journal

## Archives

---

Select Month ▾

## Subscribe to OpenScience

---

Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog.

Email Address

**SUBSCRIBE**

## De Gruyter Open Access

---



**DE GRUYTER**

Menu

x

---

Open Access News

---

Resources

---

Publishing



ISSN (Online) 2570-1479. Except where otherwise noted, content on Open Science dot com is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution, Non Commercial, Share Alike 4.0. International license.