

Editorial

Open access and the *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*

There has been an increasing call for peer-reviewed journals that publish scholarly evidence to become 'Open Access' whereby their contents can be freely retrieved with cost incurred to individuals accessing them. Two subtypes of Open Access journals are 'hybrid open access' (some articles are open access and others not), and 'delayed open access' (some articles are open access and other articles have delayed access) (Ohno-Machado, 2011).

Traditionally, journals have been published in two ways. In the first instance, professional associations, government organisations, universities or learned societies published journals that were only available to members as a benefit or subscribers to that journal. The second option included journals that were published by private companies (e.g. Sage and Wiley-Blackwell) and subscriptions were sold to those who wanted access to the journals. In both these contexts, access to journal articles was restricted to individuals who had a paid subscription or access fee.

There are several reasons why journals' becoming Open Access has become a timely topic. An emphasis on evidence-based practice; knowledge translation; journal quality metrics (such as impact factor); increased international visibility; higher citation rates for authors; plus many agencies who fund research requiring grant recipients to publish their findings in journals that are classified as Open Access (Willinsky, 2006) all put pressure on journals to provide this.

Journals can be 'Open Access' in several ways. Firstly, a journal can be completely 'Open Access' using a fee-based approach or a no-fee option. The costs associated with fee-based open access journals is borne either by the journal's sponsoring organisation, the journal's publisher, the authors who submit the articles to the journal, the author's employer, a research grant an author has received, or a combination thereof. The Australian Physiotherapy Association's *Journal of Physiotherapy* is a recent example of a journal that is now no-fee, open access. Alternatively, a journal can have specific articles that are classified as accessible even though there may be other articles that are not. Editors can decide to make an article freely available or authors pay a fee to the journal publisher to enable free access. This is the current arrangement for the *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal* (AOTJ) with Wiley-Blackwell.

One result of passing on the cost of making an article 'Open Access' is the rise of 'vanity publishers' and 'predatory publishers' who produce material that is presented as 'open access', but then charge authors large fees to accept and publish their manuscripts as a means of generating profits. Many of these publishers are corrupt and exist only to make money

off the author processing charges that are billed to authors upon acceptance of their scientific manuscripts' (Beall, 2013, n.p.). These sources of information are considered not credible and are best avoided. A list of these journals and their publishers is available from *Beall's List of Predatory Publishers 2013* (<http://scholarlyoa.com/2012/12/06/bealls-list-of-predatory-publishers-2013/>).

AOTJ currently complies with all relevant research funding requirements by offering a variety of Open Access options. The AOTJ utilises a 'hybrid open access' approach where an author who has an article accepted for publication is able to pay a fee directly to the publishers to make it Open Access. The first issue of the current year and special issues of the AOTJ are also freely accessible for a period of time when they are first published.

If the AOTJ wanted to become completely Open Access, then the cost linked to this would need to be carried either by the individual authors publishing in the AOTJ or by Occupational Therapy Australia Limited (OT AUSTRALIA) who contracts Wiley-Blackwell to publish the AOTJ and provides AOTJ as a member benefit. Both options would have additional cost implications for the parties involved. One primary advantage of making the AOTJ Open Access would be that it would likely increase the journal's Impact Factor by making its articles easier to retrieve and cite (Björk & Solomon, 2012). The question to be considered and debated is the cost-benefit of such a move for the Australian occupational therapy community, OT AUSTRALIA as an organisation, and OT AUSTRALIA's membership, Wiley-Blackwell as the publisher of the AOTJ and the users and consumers of occupational therapy evidence.

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