

Embargos: How long is long enough?

Hazel Norman
Executive Director



British Ecological Society

Talk Summary (1 of 2)

Hazel spoke about Embargo periods; how long is long enough? What embargo period is long enough to ensure a sustainable publishing business.

BES

BES publishes five titles; the oldest is 100 years old, and the most recent launched three years ago. They are all traditional subscriber based journals, one is online-only and the rest are available in print. BES owns the journals but Wiley Blackwell publishes them. They are run in a hybrid model – enabling an option for OA with an APC of \$1,500. Uptake for this is low at the moment. All journal content is made publicly available 24 months after publication.

BES are working in partnership with Wiley Blackwell on a new OA journal called Ecology and Evolution, which will allow BES to explore the OA model more. This will be a cascade journal; these capture sound papers which would normally go to competitors. Rejection rates in BES journals are around 85%, so good papers which have already had a lot of investment through reviewer time but are not good enough for existing journals, will be captured by this new OA journal.

Finch and Funders

Finch says OA should be the default mode of publishing, and promote Gold OA with a 12 month embargo period where APCs aren't available.

The RCUK then produced their policy, which applies to everything submitted for publication from the 1 April 2013 onwards. RCUK say they will pay APCs as long as the CC-BY license applies, or authors can deposit papers in repositories within 6 months of publication.

Wellcome Trust is also an important funder; they mandate that researchers can publish wherever they want, but must be made available through repositories within 6 months. Wellcome will also pay APCs.

International Considerations

The life sciences is a global industry, with a large number of overseas customers. The EU at the moment is looking at Horizon 2020 rules and regulations; if you have access to the EU this is a great time for lobbying. However it seems at the moment that this is very unclear whether a green or gold option will be favoured for Horizon 2020. There is unlikely to be any extra funding available for Gold OA. It is also unclear whether there will be 6 or 12 month embargo period.

What is likely is that the European parliament aren't going to legislate all these details; rather it will go back to the European Commission for a final decision when they start to announce more details around Horizon 2020 next year. Again, there are more opportunities for lobbying the EC here; they are keen to hear about learned societies and how they can contribute.

Spain has just legislated for a 12 month embargo period. This is different to the UK; there is no legislation here, rather funders are demanding it. Spain has made this legally binding and is likely to be a green route. Sweden also seems to be following this route.

NIH in the US has a 12 month embargo period, and NIH will pay for publication. There is not likely to be much movement in policy in the US until at least 6 months after the election. Obama hasn't shown much interest in OA so far.

Talk Summary (2 of 2)

Six months

What does the 6 month embargo period mean for publishers? ALPSP and The Publishers Association produced a report on this question this year, asking libraries if they would continue to subscribe to journals if they would be made publicly available after 6 months. The headline point is that 56% of libraries would continue to subscribe, 10% would cancel, and 34% would reduce subscriptions. This is obviously going to have a significant impact if we move to this model.

The details of this study are interesting; in the UK a high percentage of libraries would continue with their existing subscriptions compared to North America – this is concerning as the North American subscriptions are massively important in terms of income and authorship.

Half Life

Where is the value in a journal article? Is it 6 months, 12 months? How do readers use the content we produce? In ecology, the half-life of a journal is 8.3 years – this means 50% of the use of this journal happens in the first 8 years. Different disciplines will have different half-lives.

Using an example from a BES journal, as the paper is published there will be more use, but there are still 30,000 downloads of articles from the year 2000 – the journal is still very much valued by the community.

Repositories

What is the impact of repositories on downloads of journals? A study from The Physiologist shows there is a 14% decrease in downloads from the journal website, for those articles that are deposited in pub med central. This is concerning if libraries start to use usage figures to determine how to retain subscriptions or not. We need to capture all of this information to demonstrate to libraries the true value of our journals.

Conclusion

Funders are starting to get serious about enforcement of OA, and this will have an impact on our authors. The six month embargo period will have a serious impact on library subscriptions. Different disciplines have different journal half-lives, so if most of the usage happened after the embargo period, why should libraries subscribe at all? There is growing evidence that use of repositories drives down downloads from journal sites; even though this probably drives up usage on individual articles, it makes it more difficult to justify journal subscriptions to libraries.

Is this a perfect storm? If increasing numbers of articles are made openly available straight away or after a short embargo period, the libraries are likely to reduce subscriptions.

Even though this seems negative, I agree with Leighton that OA provides learned societies with a huge range of opportunities; we just need to be quick to take advantage of this.

British Ecological Society publishing

Journal of Ecology



Journal of Animal Ecology



Journal of Applied Ecology



Functional Ecology



**Methods in
Ecology and Evolution**



What does Finch say?

*Where appropriate levels of dedicated funding are provided to meet the costs of open access publishing, it is reasonable to expect that researchers should adopt **open access as the default mode of publishing** their findings. In that case, it may be reasonable for funders to require that embargo periods are shorter than twelve months.*

Accessibility, sustainability, excellence: how to expand access to research publications. *Report of the Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings, 2012*

What funders say - UK



The Research Councils will recognise a journal as being compliant with their policy on Open Access if:

1. The journal provides Open Access to the paper without restriction on re-use (the CC-BY license)

Or

2. The journal must allow deposit of the peer reviewed paper in a repository no more than six months between on-line publication and a research paper becoming Open Access (except AHRC and the ESRC funding where the max embargo period is 12 months)

The policy applies to all research papers whose work was funded by RCUK being submitted for publication from 1 April 2013.

What funders say - UK

welcometrust

- Papers to be made available through PubMed Central (PMC) and UK PubMed Central (UKPMC) as soon as possible and in any event within six months of the journal publisher's official date of final publication
- encourages - and where it pays an open access fee, requires - authors and publishers to license research papers so they may be freely copied and re-used (for example, for text- and data-mining purposes), provided that such uses are fully attributed



What funders say - EU

Europe and Horizon 2020

- rules and regulations currently being decided on so plenty of opportunity for lobbying.
- unclear whether Gold or Green will be favoured
- unlikely that there will be any extra funding for Gold
- Unclear about 6 or 12 month embargo period
- likely that European Commission will decide on details as the wording going through the European Parliament is vague.



What funders say - international

- Spain has legislated for a 12 month embargo period
- Portugal and Sweden moving in the same direction
- NIH has a 12 month embargo period after which all research papers have to be made available in PubMed Central. NIH will pay for publication costs.
- Unlikely to be any further developments in the US for at least 6 months after the election results.



Six months: What's the impact?

The potential effect of making journals free after a six month embargo

A report for the Association of Learned, Professional and Society Publishers [ALPSP] and The Publishers Association, May 2012

Based on 210 replies from libraries around the world to the question:

If the (majority of) content of research journals was freely available within 6 months of publication, would you continue to subscribe?

Separate answers were asked for

- a) Scientific, Technical and Medical journals and
- b) Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences journals

Headline points

STM publishers could expect

- 56% of libraries to retain full subscriptions (35% for AHSS publishers)
- 10% of libraries to cancel subscriptions altogether (23% AHSS)
- 34% of libraries to reduce subscriptions (42% AHSS)



US & UK data from ALPSP

Figure 6a. STM subscriptions: North America

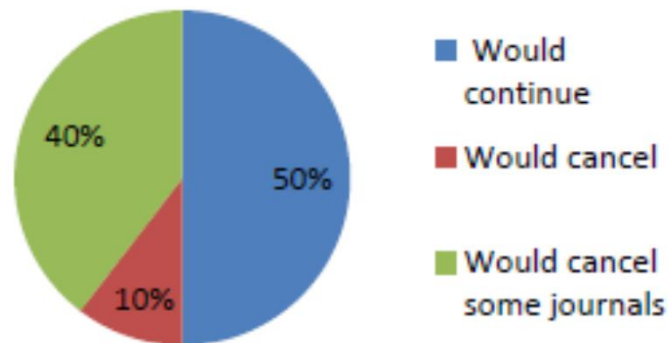
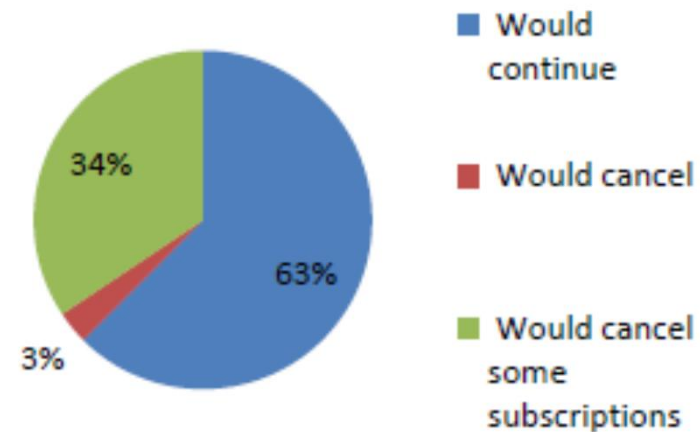


Figure 8a. STM subscriptions: United Kingdom



Half life of journal articles

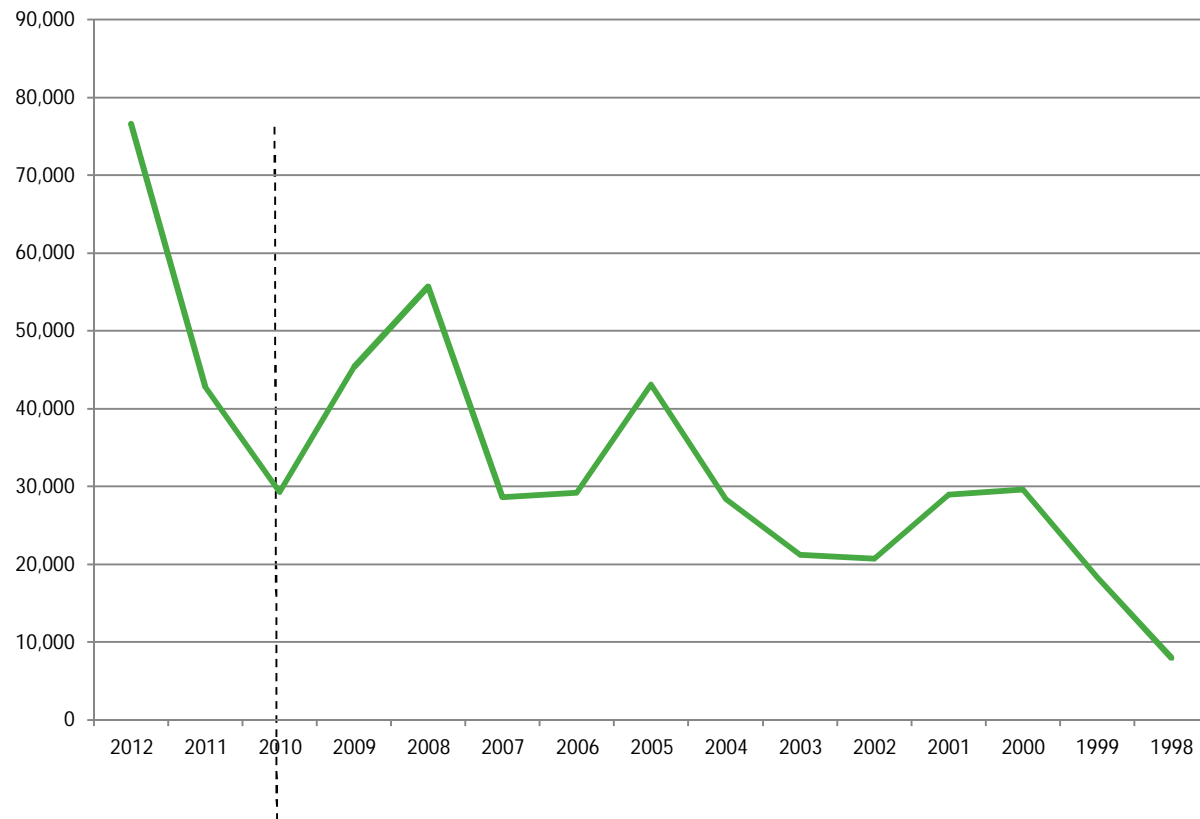
(from Web of Knowledge)

- Ecology – 8.3 (28% of journals listed >10 years)
- Biochemistry and molecular biology – 7.7 (12% of journals listed >10 years)
- Pharmacology and pharmacy – 6.7 (7% of journals listed >10 years)
- Physics, Applied – 5.7 (8% of journals listed >10 years)

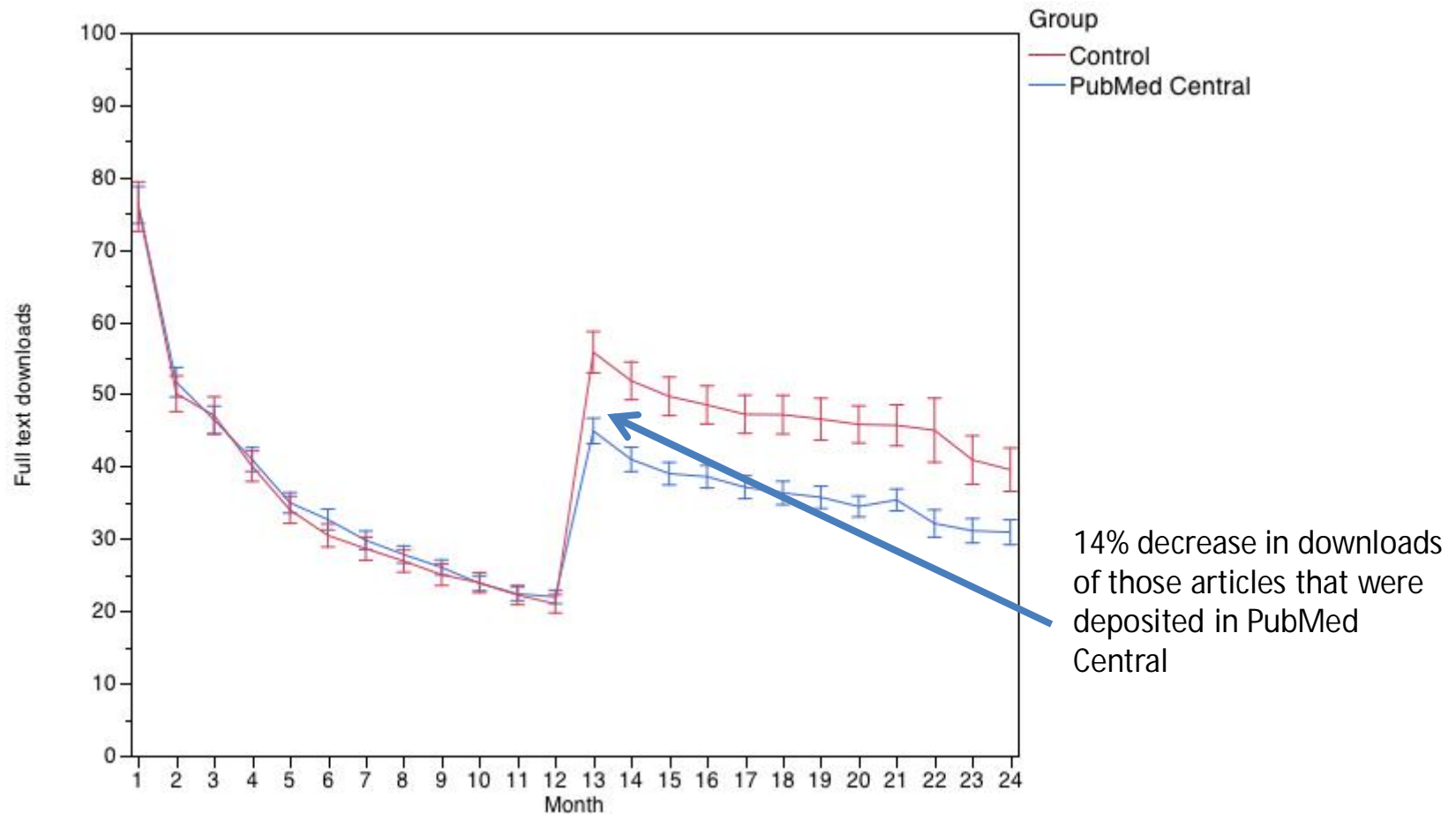


Journal usage over time

Usage by Volume/Year during Jan-Sep 2012



The impact of repositories on downloads



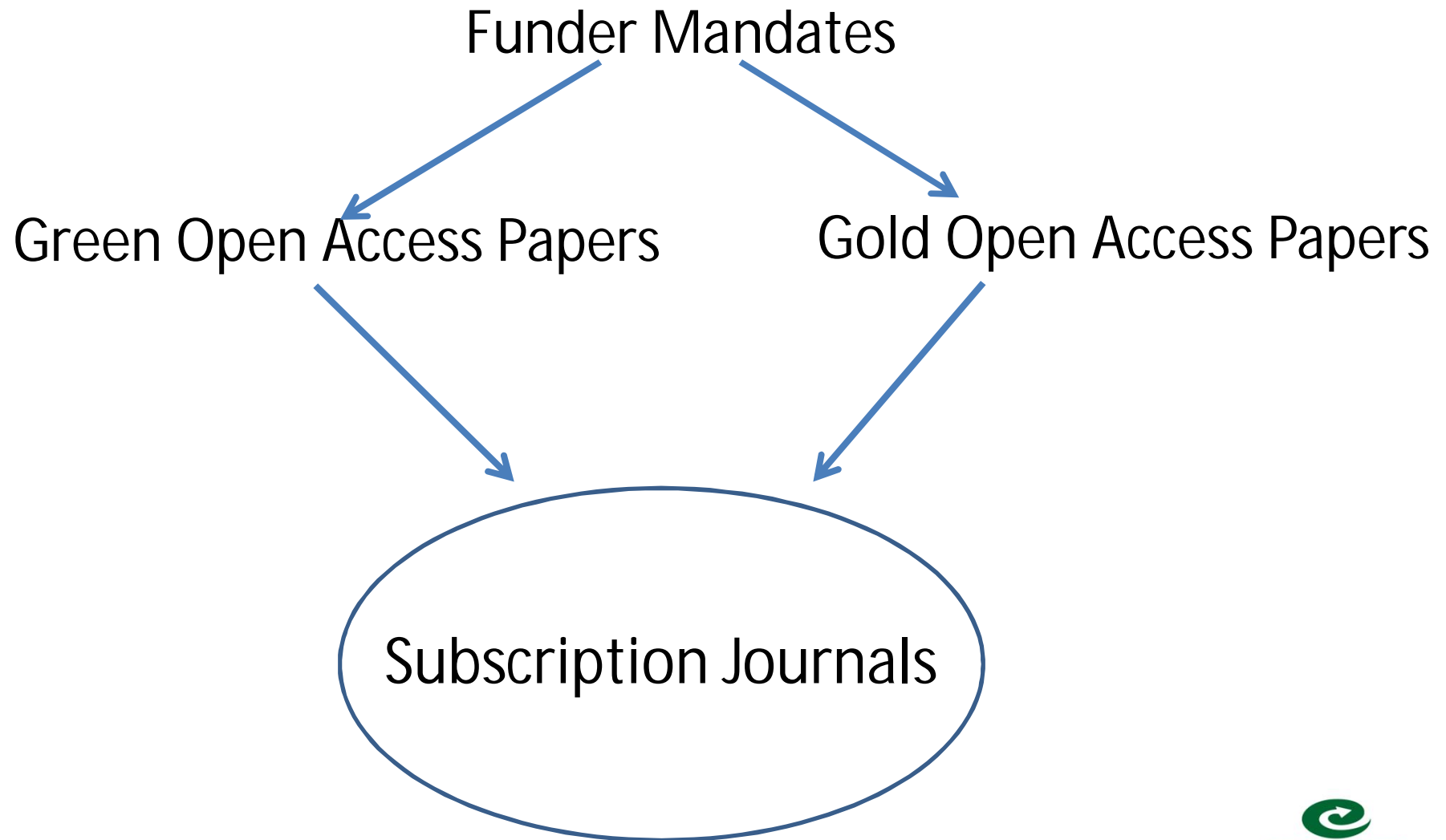
Mean full text downloads ($\pm 95\%$ C.I.) for the first 24 months after final publication, American Physiological Society

The Effect of Public Deposit of Scientific Articles on Readership
Philip M. Davis, *The Physiologist*, Vol 55, Oct 2012

Conclusions

- Funders are mandating open access policies (6mths for UK, more commonly 12 mths elsewhere), and are now starting to get serious about enforcement
- 6mth embargos mean libraries seriously reconsider their subscription holdings
- Different disciplines have different half lives – if most usage is after embargo periods why should libraries subscribe?
- Repositories drive down usage from journal sites

The perfect storm?



Consequences

If increasing numbers of papers in subscription journals are open access on publication or freely available after short embargos and journal site downloads are dropping, libraries will cancel subscriptions

