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**Open Access publishing puts important university
funding stream at risk**

Increases in Open Access publishing could have a detrimental effect on funding streams to UK universities, a survey commissioned by the Biosciences Federation has found. UK learned societies, many of whom receive much of their income through journal publication, make an important financial contribution to UK universities. Unless author-side payments are adequately funded, any increase in Open Access publishing could threaten the funding streams of UK learned societies and thus UK universities. The Biosciences Federation now calls for urgent action by UK universities and Research Councils to make Open Access publishing funds more easily and readily accessible to researchers.

The Biosciences Federation commissioned a survey of its member learned societies and individual society members to ascertain the effect that Open Access might have on the publishing community and the funding structure of the learned societies themselves. Seventeen societies provided substantial useable data for the survey. The survey examined three areas:

1. Financial flow between the UK research community and learned societies

Learned societies make an important financial contribution to UK universities. While only 10% of societies' journal income comes from UK institutions, UK institutions receive almost 80% of benefit from society grants and events. In financial terms, learned societies contribute more than twice the amount to UK universities than they receive back through journal subscriptions and licensing income.

2. Societies' publishing policies and experience with Open Access

As publishers, all UK learned societies polled offer some form of free access to most journal material and 88% allow authors to self-archive in some way. Half felt that only a few authors were aware of their funders' policies with regards to Open Access, and only 14% found authors were aware of potential resources available from funders for Open Access charges.

3. Authors' own experience and opinions on Open Access and self-archiving

Individual researchers showed substantial confusion over the meaning and implications of Open Access. Of the 1368 authors surveyed, although 94% said they knew what Open Access was, 45% of the Open Access journals they named are not in fact full Open

Access journals. This confusion appears to centre on the distinction between Open Access and online journals. Although three quarters said they support the principle of Open Access, we cannot estimate how many really understood the issues involved.

Only 15% of respondents had tried to access Open Access publication funds; of these, more than half experienced difficulty in doing so. While many researchers are in favour of increased access to research data, concerns were expressed over the cost to authors, possible reductions in quality and the negative impact on existing publishers and societies.

The survey also found that, where Open Access publication is compulsory, researchers still prefer to use the final version published in peer-reviewed journals rather than institutional or subject repositories.

Sue Thorn, Chair of the Biosciences Federation Journals Committee, said:

"The results of the Biosciences Federation's survey on Open Access clearly show that UK universities benefit hugely from their relationship with learned societies, receiving 116% more income from societies than they pay for journal access. However, unless steps are taken to secure journal funding streams to UK learned societies, the current business model could collapse. Feedback indicates researchers need better information to explain the meaning and implications of Open Access. Our survey strongly supports earlier calls by the Biosciences Federation for universities and funding bodies to set up ring-fenced funds for Open Access and to provide researchers with simple information on how to access these. This will help to prevent the collapse of journals currently published by learned societies, which would have a significant negative effect on funding streams to the UK's science base."

Richard Dyer, Chief Executive Officer of the Biosciences Federation, said:

"This survey quantifies for the first time the important role that the UK's bioscience learned societies play in the science and research life of the UK. The societies make a key contribution to supporting scientists and universities, as well as contributing to the UK's economic success."

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Notes for editors

For a full copy of this report, please email: jennie.evans@endocrinology.org

The Biosciences Federation is a group of UK-based biological learned societies/professional associations, which aims to promote dialogue within the community

of bioscientists, to provide input to the formulation of public policy, and to promote debate. For more information, please visit <http://www.bsf.ac.uk>

In 2007, the BSF issued a position statement on Open Access, making clear its support for maximising access, but stressing the importance of funders working with society and other publishers to ensure that Open Access self-archiving mandates were adequately funded and that the processes for researchers to obtain funds for Open Access were straightforward and transparent. A full copy of this statement is available at: http://www.bsf.ac.uk/journals/BSF_position_statement1_open_accesss.pdf

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