
S2O Online Survey Report

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Date:

February 2021

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Executive Summary

The aims of this research project were ‘to gauge the level of interest, understanding and support for Subscribe to Open (S2O) among librarians at different types of institutions and in different parts of the world.’

The survey ran for three weeks obtaining a total of 179 completed responses from 27 countries, across six continents including Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, North America, and South America. Over 95% of respondents worked in academic institutions such as universities, colleges, and libraries, with 37% categorized as Librarians, the remainder being classified as Heads, Directors, Coordinators and Deans.

Key Insights

- Level of interest in S2O was gauged as average, behind Community / Collective Action (Knowledge Unlatched, SCOAP) and Read and Publish / Publish and Read alternatives. There is a general lack of awareness and confusion surrounding affordability and sustainability for S2O, which requires more effective communication planning and fine tuning of messaging. It may prove helpful to take up the offer from some existing users to act as S2O advocates for case studies, Q&A interviews, blog discussions or webinars.
- Level of understanding of S2O was gauged as good, with 70% of respondents who were either somewhat or very familiar with S2O, stating they had a ‘relatively’ clear understanding of the model.
- Perceptions of open access models in general concentrated upon issues of finance, support, reputation, and subjects i.e., although a ‘noble concept’ publishers should absorb the costs for open access content rather than subscribers whose limited budgets make such cost modelling unsustainable, financial support should be sought from the publishing industry, governments and other funders, the perception continues that open access journals are of a lower status and quality than traditional journals, there is an imbalance in STEM subjects benefitting more than Humanities from open access models (presumably due to their larger research budgets),
- Level of support for S2O from administrations was gauged as average - while 43.80% of respondents said their administrations would allow them to participate in S2O, the majority at 51.70%, stated that they would need more information on the model before deciding. Only 5.10% of respondents indicated that their institutions would like to play a leadership role in the success of the S2O model.
- The level of support for S2O from individuals was gauged to be fair - 56.40% of respondents indicated that they would support their institution in participating in the model, but on filtering this figure increased significantly i.e., respondents who were either *very familiar* or *somewhat familiar* with the S2O model, support levels were 84.80% and 69.90% respectively.

- Publishers looking to encourage institutions to participate in S2O offers should create messaging and plan their communications to focus on: transparent pricing, cost neutrality, ease of implementation and/or transition and commitment to full transition to open access. More information on content, available titles, participating publishers and institutions, usage statistics and the provision of promotional materials to generate support, and better understanding from within institutions i.e., amongst researchers and faculty, were other suggestions.

Although this document is the final deliverable for the project, upon Annual Reviews' request, the survey remains live and continues to collect response data, which Maverick will report to Andrea Lopez on a regular basis until we are instructed to close the survey.

While insight on S2O was sought on a global scale, limited resources at the time meant the survey was built and released in English only, but discussions were held on the option of it also being created in Chinese and Japanese. While this is possible, Annual Reviews will come back to Maverick at a later date should they want to pursue these options.

[Maverick Publishing Specialists](#) would like to thank Annual Reviews, and all those involved in the S2O Community of Practice for giving us the opportunity to work with them on this important piece of research.

Background

In December 2020, Maverick Publishing Specialists were approached by Andrea Lopez (Director of Sales, Partnerships & Initiatives at [Annual Reviews](#)) on behalf of [The S2O Community of Practice](#) in which Annual Reviews is a participant. 'The S2O Community of Practice is comprised of a collection of smaller academic publishers (currently 9), a diverse group of librarians from around the world, and representatives of the funder community. Together, we are pursuing Subscribe to Open (S2O) as a novel approach to convert tolled access journals to open access.'

With presentations booked at [ER&L](#) (8 to 11 March 2021) and [UKSG](#) (12 to 14 April 2021) The S2O Community of Practice wanted to research, collect and share evidence on S2O uptake by running an online survey, for which a question set had already been partially completed.

Before the end of 2020 Maverick's proposal had been accepted and in January 2021 work began to design, execute, analyze, and report on the S2O survey.

Project Objectives

The research objectives for the online survey were ‘to gauge the level of interest, understanding and support for Subscribe to Open (S2O) among librarians at different types of institutions and in different parts of the world.’

Methodology & Execution

An S2O Community of Practice-branded questionnaire of 23 multiple format questions including: single and multiple choice, grid type and open-ended, was designed, built and tested as an adaptive online survey (i.e., accessible by PC/laptop, mobile/cell phone, and tablet) and then distributed by S2O Community of Practice participants via a combination of listservs, appropriate social media channels and email signature blocks, to reach the target audience of librarians.

Having considered the time restrictions (i.e., the project needed to be completed by mid to late-February) and discussed the complex logistical challenges, e.g., checking, and de-duping librarian contact details across all S2O Community of Practice participants’ email lists, plus the significant data privacy risks¹ of emailing the survey link to potential respondents, it had been decided not to distribute the survey link via email on this occasion.

The survey ran for three weeks from Thursday 28 January to Friday 19 February 2021, obtaining a total of 179 completed responses. The analyzed results and corresponding charts from the online survey were provided in the Excel File – S2O Survey 2021 Data Sets, supplied on 22nd February 2021. As previously mentioned, the survey remains live and continues to collect response data.

¹ **Data Privacy:** To ensure compliance with the [GDPR](#) (a legal regulation protecting the data privacy of all EU-based citizens) it would be the responsibility of the designated Data Controller (not Maverick) within each organization participating in emailing out the survey, to ensure that any EU-based names on their emailing lists had provided their consent to their contact details being shared with a third party, i.e., publisher agents. If this had not occurred, then these individuals would need to be removed from each respective emailing list. Should an EU-based contact receive the survey email via an agent with whom they had not consented their data be shared, and then makes a complaint, the respective agent and corresponding publisher (not Maverick) could be liable for a significant financial penalty.

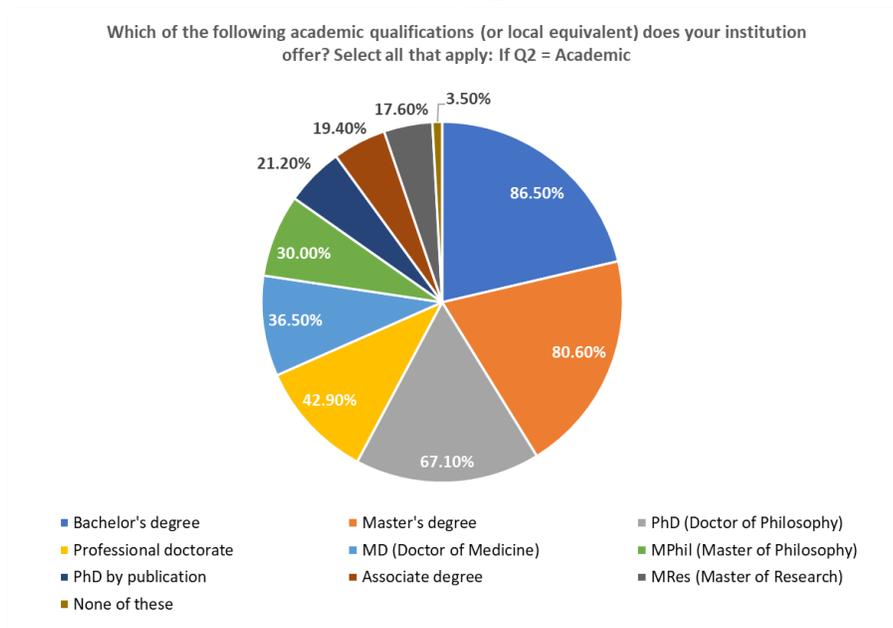
Summary of Results

Of the total 179 completed responses:

DEMOGRAPHICS

- The majority of respondents at 57.50% were located in the United States, followed by Germany 9.50%, then Spain 5.60%, and the United Kingdom at 4.50%. Other countries represented in the responses included: the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, Italy, Belgium, New Zealand, Sweden, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Colombia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Norway, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, and Taiwan (see Q1 of Excel file).
- 95.50% of respondents worked in academic institutions including 63% at universities e.g., Columbia University, Greifswald University, Universidad Complutense de Madrid and The Open University, with 13% working at colleges e.g., Davidson College, Saint Anselm College and Vassar College (see Q2 and Q5 of Excel file).
- Of the 10% of respondents who worked in Libraries, these included: Herzog August Bibliothek, Zentral- und Hochschulbibliothek Luzern and NC State University Libraries (see Q5 of Excel file).
- Qualifications offered by these academic institutions included: Bachelor's degrees 86.50%, Master's degrees 80.60%, PhD's 61.10% and Professional doctorates 42.90% (see Q3 of Excel file and Chart 1 below for more detail).

Chart 1



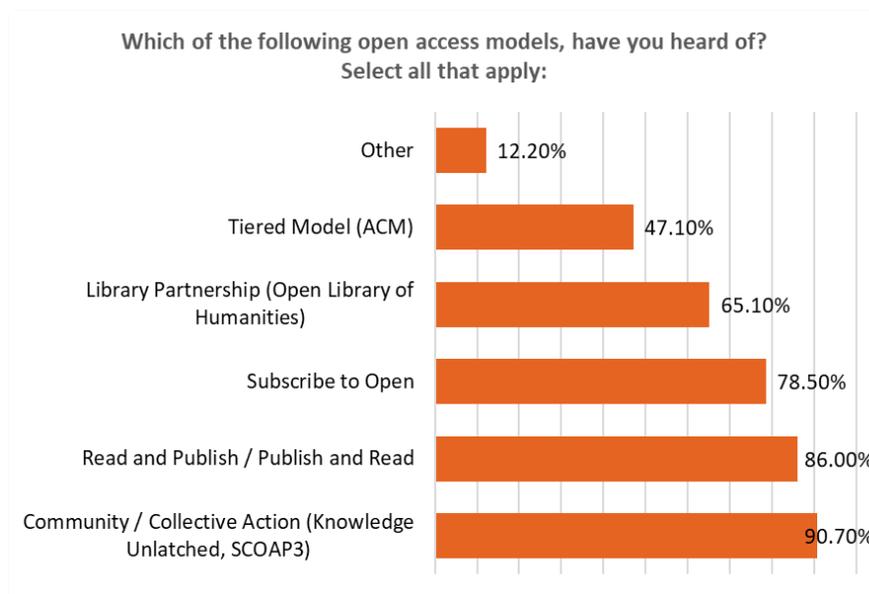
- 2.80% of respondents worked for public and 1.70% for corporate institutions such as the OECD, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) and Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences or the German Aerospace Center (DLR), Guilford Publications and Göttingen University Press respectively (see Q2 and Q5 of Excel file).
- Research sectors in which these public and corporate institutions specialized, included Other at 28.60% e.g., multiple disciplines, with information and computing sciences, physical sciences, political science and international relations, psychology, and social sciences all rating 14.30% each (see Q4 and Q4a of Excel file).
- The majority of job titles at 37% were categorized as Librarians with titles ranging from Acquisitions Librarian and University Librarian to Subject Librarian and Content Management & Research Librarian. Headships scored 18% with job titles of Head of Scholarly Communications, Head of Collection Development and Head of Serials and Electronic Resource Acquisitions.

Followed by Directors at 17% e.g., Library Director, Director of Applied Math Institute and Director Academic Library Services. Coordinators 6% e.g., E-Resources Coordinator, Acquisitions Coordinator and Collection Development Coordinator, with Deans 4% e.g., Associate Dean, Dean of the Library and Associate Dean of Research and Engagement. Other job titles at 18% included Open Science Officer, Team Leader, Licensing Manager and Project Manager (see Q6 of Excel file).

KNOWLEDGE OF OPEN ACCESS

- From a multiple choice of five OA models, Community / Collective Action (Knowledge Unlatched, SCOAP3) was the model most respondents at 90.70% had heard of, followed by Read and Publish / Publish and Read at 86% and Subscribe to Open at 78.50% (see Q7 of Excel file and Chart 2 below for more detail).

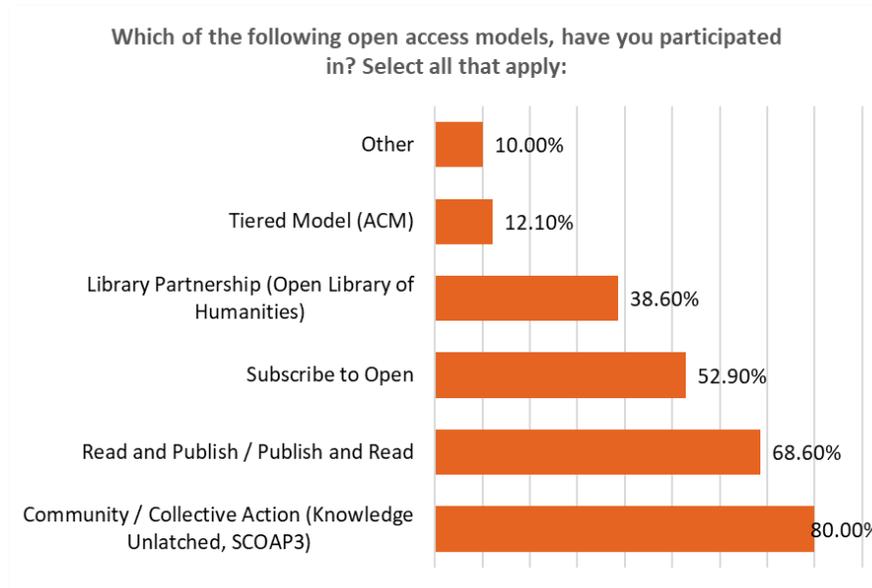
Chart 2



When asked what Other OA models (at 12.20%) respondents had heard of; Funder Platforms scored highest at 20%, followed by Transformative Agreements and Diamond OA both at 15%, then APC, Green and Gold OA all at 10%. Other open access models respondents had heard of (12%) included PLOS community funding, OER, PA Affordable Learning, SPARC, OpenEdition, Projekt DEAL as well as Platinum and Bronze OA (see Q7a of Excel file).

- When asked which of the same list of five OA models respondents had participated in (see Q8 of Excel file and Chart 3 for more detail) a similar pattern emerged although overall the percentages were smaller, in some cases by over 20% (see table below).

Chart 3



| OA Model | Heard of | Participated in | Difference |
|---|----------|-----------------|------------|
| Tiered Model (ACM) | 47.10% | 12.10% | 35.00% |
| Library Partnership (Open Library of Humanities) | 65.10% | 38.60% | 26.50% |
| S2O | 78.50% | 52.90% | 25.60% |
| Read and Publish / Publish and Read | 86.00% | 68.60% | 17.40% |
| Community / Collective Action (Knowledge Unlatched, SCOAP3) | 90.70% | 80.00% | 10.70% |

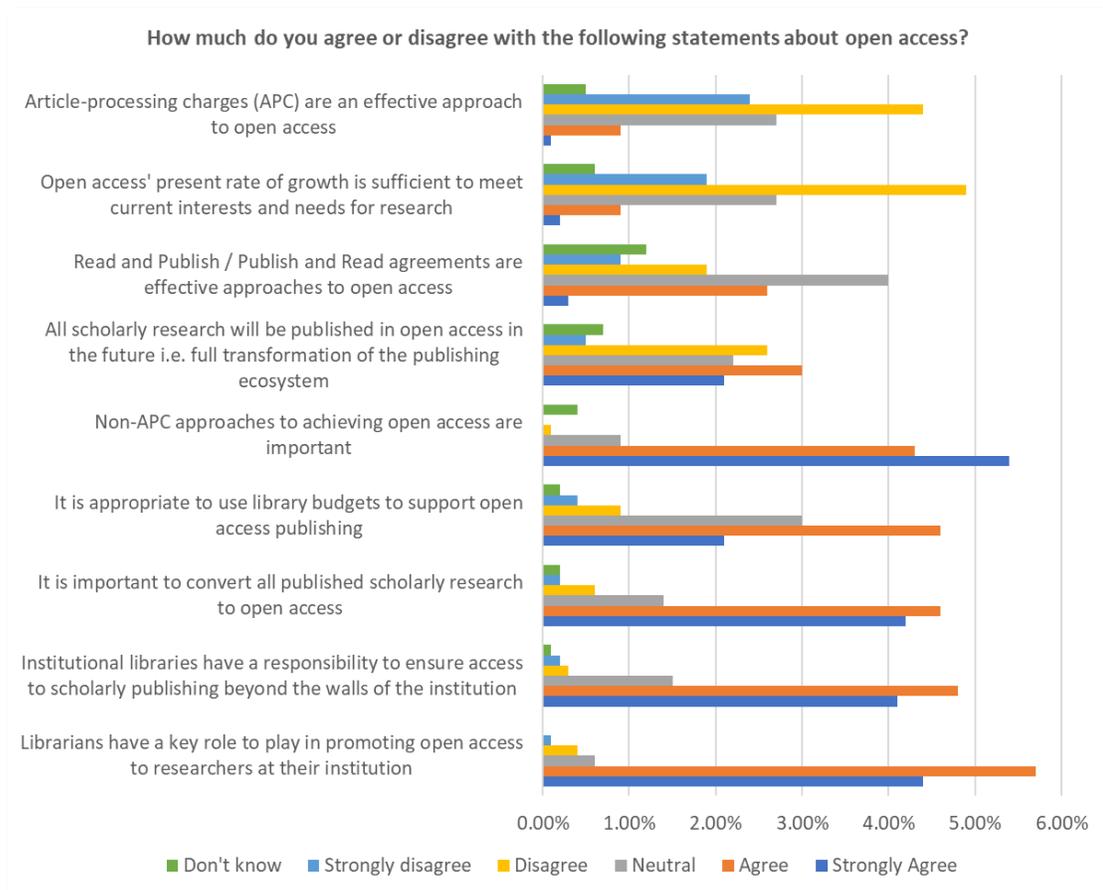
When asked what Other OA models (at 10%) respondents had participated in, these included Direct Funding of OA-journals, Library based publishing, Diamond/Green OA, RSC tokens, Transformative Agreements and institutional repositories (see Q8a of Excel file).

- Asked how much they agreed with a range of statements about open access, respondents indicated that they were in most agreement with ‘Librarians have a key role to play in promoting open access to researchers at their institution’ (Strongly Agree 4.40% / Agree 5.70%). Secondly that ‘Non-APC approaches to achieving open access are important’ (Strongly Agree 5.40% / Agree 4.30%) and thirdly that ‘Institutional libraries have a responsibility to ensure access to scholarly publishing beyond the walls of the institution’ (Strongly Agree 4.10% / Agree 4.80%).

Respondents indicated that they were in least agreement with ‘Open access’ present rate of growth is sufficient to meet current interests and needs for research’ (Disagree 4.90% / Strongly Disagree 1.90%) and that ‘Article-processing charges (APC) are an effective approach to open access’ (Disagree 4.40% / Strongly Disagree 2.40%) and secondly that ‘All scholarly research will be published in open access in the future i.e. full transformation of the publishing ecosystem’ (Disagree 2.60% / Strongly Disagree 0.50%).

‘Read and Publish / Publish and Read agreements are effective approaches to open access’ and ‘It is appropriate to use library budgets to support open access publishing’ both scored high for Neutral at 4% and 3% respectively (see Q9 of Excel file and Chart 4 below for more detail).

Chart 4



- When asked if they would like to share any other views on open access with the survey organizers, the resulting free text responses were sorted across five different themes (see Q10 of Excel file for more responses):

1. Finance (53%)

"I am not opposed to open access, but existing subscribers should not bear the cost of open access. If publishers want to allow open access content, they should absorb the costs not pass them along to others."

"Models that simply shift publishing fees from authors to institutions are unsustainable. Libraries would need significant new funding to support most OA models. Other stakeholders outside libraries (government, commercial entities, funding agencies) need to be tapped to support OA."

"I fear that this process towards OA journals will be supported mainly with library funds, and in time it will not be sustainable."

"I think it is a noble concept and I fully support using OER in the classrooms; however, realistically, the motivation for profit is what keeps the publishers publishing scholarly content. Charges for allowing open access somewhat address this, but it needs to be fully explored. I also sometimes worry what impact open access may have on the arts. Should creative writing, films, music also be open access?"

2. Support (24%)

"Governments, funders, and universities must all be willing to support open access. The onus of paying for OA cannot rest solely on academic libraries."

"It is difficult getting institutional support for Open Access initiatives when you work in an organization that is struggling financially. It is nearly impossible to get funding to support what the university administration sees as "charity."

"The challenge of OA - for those who work in Library Acquisitions - is to balance our ideals with affordability. Also, within the UK context, most of what we do is negotiated through consortia (Jisc) and that breeds a kind of conservatism towards more radical approaches."

"Libraries are supporting Open Access since several years now, but the established publishing system is not likely to change if authors are not rewarded for changing their publishing habits. Research money and reputation is often still linked with publishing options from the "past" which means inside the old system."

3. Reputation (24%)

"Buy-in is becoming more widespread, but until Open Access journals are viewed as having the same (or higher) status as traditional journals in the tenure/promotion process for faculty, it will be difficult to convince some faculty to move to Open Access."

"There are many paths to open access, and some of them (including those based in read-and-publish, publish-and-read agreements) are capitalist and colonialist. They establish an ecosystem in which people may have access to information, but not the channels to produce it themselves."

“The key thing is to ensure that researchers are given adequate incentives beyond mere compliance with policy for making their work open access. There is a perception still among many researchers that openly accessible research is somehow of poorer quality, so they need to be incentivised to pursue open access (for example, institutions might agree to only consider open access publications during recruitment processes or promotion boards).”

“Open Access has become a business model. At one time it was believed to also connect to cost savings, and to equity of access to the scholarly enterprise, but that is no longer true. A complete “victory” by OA as currently unfolding will lead to higher costs, and higher costs lead to a continuation of the haves/have-nots’ problem. OA has been co-opted by “academic capitalism”.

4. Subjects (5%)

“Author-paid APCs benefit the STEM areas more than Humanities, due to grant support for research. Plus the inequity of STEM grants on minority researchers. So yes, there needs to be another financial model for OA, but libraries will begin to have trouble justifying their budgets paying for materials that are free to everyone else.”

“Open access is very discipline specific. Important part of biology, physics already. Less important, prevalent for chemistry and mathematics. Why do librarians think we always have to lead the charge?”

“This issue is particularly relevant to scientific research; but important to forwarding research in all disciplines.”

5. Other (29%)

“For the mission of my institution I am particularly concerned with the equal opportunities to publish and read for researchers in less developed countries.”

“Highly critical of most models but believe in participating even in flawed models rather than taking the moral high ground and not participating at all. All models proposed by publishers (and even libraries) will inherently have their limits.”

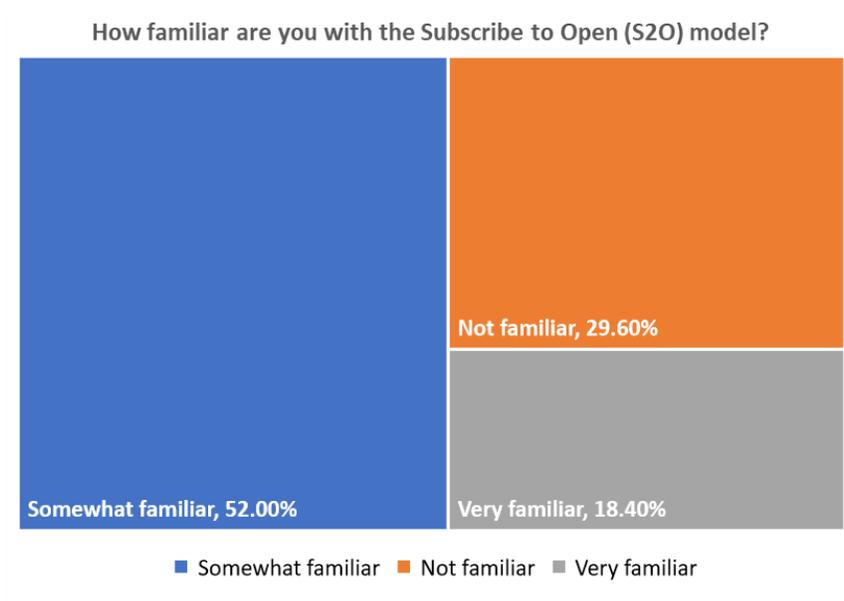
“Management and preservation of open content is something that is often overlooked when discussing the importance of open scholarship.”

“Tenure & promotion is an open access counter lever that needs to be addressed simultaneously alongside open access. Library partnership can only be as valuable as faculty allow it to be.”

AWARENESS OF THE SUBSCRIBE TO OPEN (S2O) MODEL

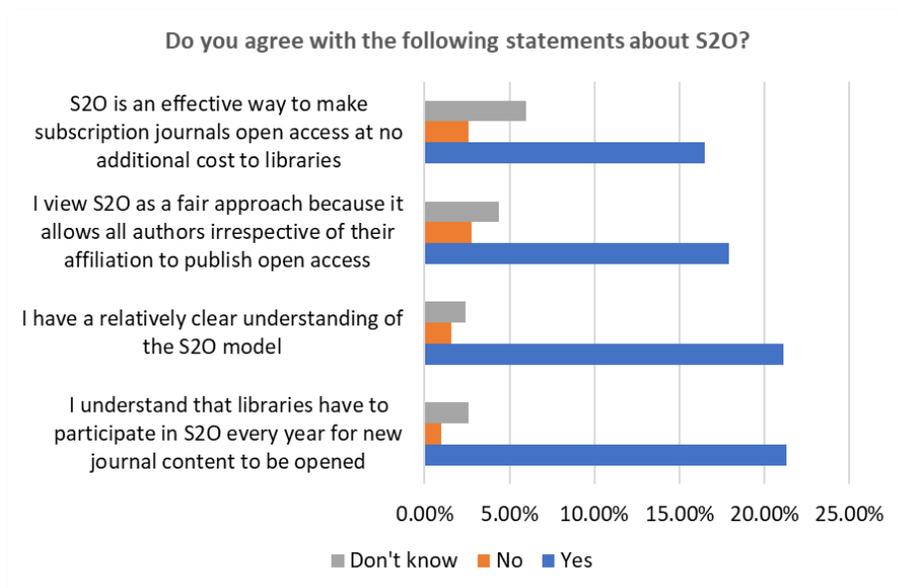
- Most respondents, at 52%, were *somewhat familiar* with the S2O model, followed by 29.60% who were *not familiar* with it, and 18.40% who were *very familiar* with the S2O model (see Q11 of Excel file and Chart 5 overleaf for more detail).

Chart 5



- Those respondents who were either *somewhat familiar* or *very familiar* with the S2O model indicated their level of agreement with four statements relating to S2O as:

Chart 6



The highest percentage of respondents at 21.30% agreed that 'I understand that libraries have to participate in S2O every year for new journal content to be opened', followed by 21.10% who agreed that 'I have a relatively clear understanding of the S2O model' and 17.90% who agreed that 'I view S2O as a fair approach because it allows all authors irrespective of their affiliation to publish open access' (see Q12 of Excel file and Chart 6 above for more detail).

- Respondents who were either *somewhat familiar* or *very familiar* with the S2O model ranked a multiple-choice list of 12 different features which they felt would encourage their institution to participate in S2O offers from publishers as (see Q13 of Excel file and table below for more detail):

| | |
|--|--------|
| Transparent pricing | 92.60% |
| Cost neutral | 91.70% |
| Ease of implementation and/or transition | 72.70% |
| Commitment to full transition to open access | 67.80% |
| Metadata support | 56.20% |
| Progress reports on participation | 52.10% |
| Maintaining the librarian's role in collection development | 50.40% |
| Open access article usage data from the local community | 50.40% |
| OA publishing | 47.90% |
| Additional benefits to S2O subscribers | 47.90% |
| Commitment to a rapid transition to open access | 47.90% |
| More knowledge of the S2O model | 44.60% |

- Asked what other features would encourage their institution to participate in an S2O offer from publishers, the resulting free text responses from those who were *somewhat familiar* or *very familiar* with the model, were sorted across five different themes (see Q14 of Excel file for more responses):

1. Finance (52%)

"Right now it is all about the money. The pandemic is going to impact us for years and we need a solution which doesn't negatively impact our bottom line."

"Flat or modestly increasing subscription charges."

"Flexibility to not get locked into deals that are difficult to get out. Consortial arrangements that would allow for cost savings."

"Tiered pricing structure so that smaller institutions and those that are struggling financially can participate and reap the benefits."

2. Information (30%)

"Information on institutional publishing volumes with the relevant publishers. More certainty around the long-term openness of the journals e.g. a 5-year guarantee so if researchers submit in 2021 they know it will be open even if it's not published until 2022."

"Promotional materials to communicate the S2O model to researchers. Documentation supporting the sustainability of the model."

"Statistics related to usage. Statistics related to participation from institutional authors."

"To have information about the participation of other institutions, so that we can demonstrate to our institution, that the community is participating, not only our institution."

3. Support (21%)

“Support from campus faculty (who are the authors) is crucial to all OA initiatives. Too many faculty remain uninformed. There is some risk that publishers and libraries will construct an elaborate machine, and that faculty will reject it. So all steps to get buy-in from faculty are important.”

“A bit more on ensuring that subscribers get extra value out of contributing, in order to address the problem of free riders. Additionally, professional bodies need to get behind this, both in terms of offering S2O options and in using the funds they receive from personal subscribers to pursue more open access publishing initiatives.”

“I don't consider this a permanent solution. I am also waiting to see how much they plan to increase prices annually. I don't see how higher ed can continue to support escalating publication prices. Gold OA isn't a permanent solution. We need to move to preprint repositories, and eventually open science.”

“S2O seems to be one of the most promising models to transform content from SME publishers, scholarly societies and institutions that have been publishing scientific content for long time but are having trouble to reorganise funding flows to allow for Open Access. Also the model seems fit for purpose to fund publishing as a general service (platform approach) instead of paying for individual articles (single transaction). If we jointly agree that maintaining bibliodiversity by safeguarding smaller journals into the Open Access wilderness should be a core value and publishing goal, jointly making S2O come true can be a very beneficial way to proceed.”

4. Content (12%)

“Support for non-profit and society journals, as well as support for journals in disciplines where funders aren't requiring for or paying for open access.”

“Must include titles that are relevant to our subject areas. E.g. as much as we want to support OA, we can't participate in SCOAP3 because it focuses on physics which is outside of our institution's course range and therefore outside our collection policy.”

“Some certainty about continuation of the model if subscribers decide to stop giving support. When you subscribe to a journal you may decide to cancel a subscription someday, e.g. due to low usage or to new wishes for your collection, which are only possible when you cancel other subscriptions or maybe you have to compensate for more expensive big deals. That flexibility within your collection is important. It must be possible to stop your S2O support (stop your 'subscription') without harming all subscribers, but I understand that you don't want to have many cancellations at one time.”

5. Other (33%)

“Automatically send all affiliated articles to the institution's repository using the SWORD protocol.”

“Copyright retention by the author.”

“Full commitment to open content, eliminate the possible contingencies over the years.”

“Help in solving legal issue connected with the commercial procedure.”

- Asked what other views on S2O they would like to share, the resulting free text responses from those who were *somewhat familiar* or *very familiar* with the model, were sorted across four different themes (see Q15 of Excel file for more responses):

1. Budgets (41%)

"S2O has been the easiest way for our institution to participate in transformative models, especially since they are cost neutral. Most of the R&P models we've seen are too expensive for us to take on."

"What profit margin has been built into the subscription prices that suddenly become S2O fees? It's not reasonable to expect commercial publishers to be the ongoing solution to scholarly publishing. There isn't enough money--and students can't afford to pay for it. Nor should they be expected to support it."

"We consider S2O to be a transitional model, which means that it should be temporary. Although we are happy to support S2O now, we need to have flexibility on our budgets and portfolios in the long run."

"The main disincentive to participate is extreme pressure on library budgets - it's hard to justify spending money to make things accessible for other people. When we can't afford all the subscriptions we need to start with, and are looking at cuts, open access initiatives get cut."

2. Promotion/Messaging (19%)

"A stronger link among S2O subscribers should be crucial. Advertise Learned Societies such as EMSPress. Make public the lists of consortia/institutes/Universities that subscribe S2O."

"While I wholeheartedly agree that S2O offers a more viable transition to OA than read and publish agreements which only add additional costs on top of existing subscription costs and only benefit that subscribing institutions authors and users, one challenge for S2O again is the ability of the library to move its collections budgets into new models vis a vis sustainable resourcing from its parent organization. OA is still not seen by many campus administrators or campus faculty as the public good libraries understand it to be, and for those libraries struggling with budget reductions, participating in S2O is equally as unattainable as read and publish agreements. That said, the promise of sustainable pricing and the commitment of libraries to moving their collections budgets into funding open is vital if we are to see change in the marketplace."

"Think it's a great alternative to APCs but not understood by many librarians. Much more marketing needs to happen to get more folks on board."

"I am not deeply familiar with the details of either S2O or SCOAP3, but I can't help but feel that SCOAP3 presents potential participants with a carrot while S2O is more of a stick: "continue to participate...or else." Most libraries are in terrible budgetary straits and simply can't commit to ongoing participation in just about anything."

3. Free rider problem (15%)

"I am 100% pro-S2O. I'd be interested in working to spread the good news about the model. When I've seen it explained to other librarians some seem to completely not understand. They are often concerned about the "free-rider problem", which breaks my heart!"

"As a research-intensive institution, with many faculty authors, I assume that our role continues to include dollar support for scholarly publishing. However, many smaller institutions (with few authors and lean budgets) will justifiably choose to become free riders. That is an ethical position for them, given their mission. The model must take this into account, including some loss of subscription revenue."

"Great idea, in theory. It's not sustainable, in the long term - budgets keep getting cut. It will be really difficult to explain to administration why we are paying for something that is essentially free."

"What I find not clear enough is the multiyear commitment and what happens if the institution decides (for any reason) to cancel participation in the model. It is difficult to get support from Administration to pay for contents that may be free."

4. Other (13%)

"Great initiative!"

"I like the model of a fail-safe for S2O akin to OLH; that is, revert back to subscription if not enough S2O subscribers in any given year."

"Seems like one of the more understandable / sustainable / implementable OA models I have seen so far."

"I don't believe it's fair that publishers can choose to close up journals again if the target is not met. There should be some other way to ensure that OA contents remains OA (even if it's just the content published during the time of the S2O model was in place). The uncertainty is not nice."

- When those respondents who were *not familiar* with the S2O model (see previous Chart 5 on page 12) were asked what they wanted to understand about S2O to help them become more familiar with the model, the resulting free text responses were sorted across five different themes (see Q16 of Excel file for more responses):

1. Everything (41%)

"How it works, how it affects existing subscriptions, how it affects research published by the college."

"How does it work?"

"How it works and how much does it cost?"

2. Pricing model (22%)

"It sounds like we just pay what we've been paying, and everyone gets access - so ultimately it still suffers from the free rider problem."

"The difference between subscribing to a journal (and not paying what it is said to have become OA) and financing."

"The role of libraries, how much of the content will be open, the role of commercial publishers, will researchers be able to publish without paying APC?"

3. Benefits (11%)

"How it works.... What are the benefits to the libraries? How it can be sustained?"

"Why I or my institution are giving you money."

"I know nothing at all about it. Don't know what it is, does, why we would want it. Need to know everything."

4. Content (7%)

"How to keep up-to-date with which titles/years are open access under the scheme?"

"What journals are available through this model and what are the requisites for subscription?"

5. Other (44%)

"An intro paper or webinar. Nothing more than 30 minutes."

"How the model balances fairness to publishers, institutional researchers, institutional contributors, and responsibility to disseminate to general public for the common good."

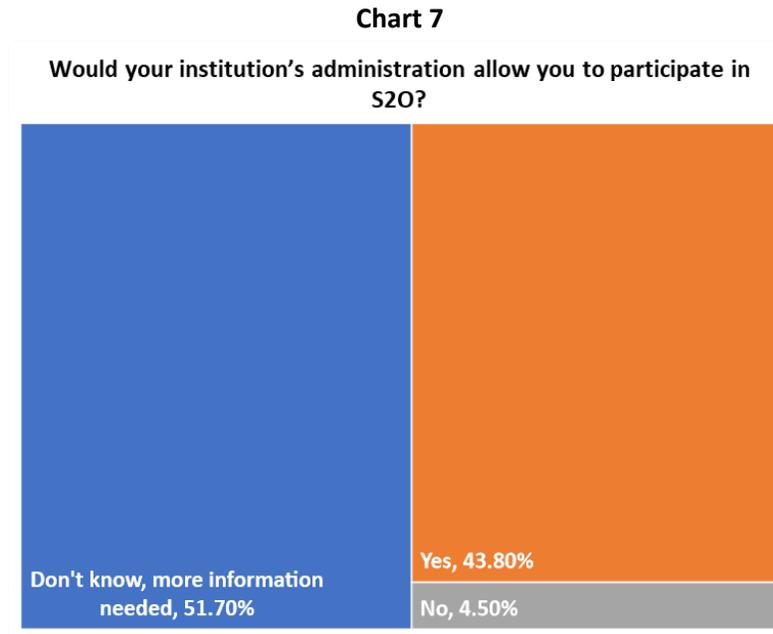
"I'd like to know more about how the model works and how institutions like mine can support it. We represent academic institutions of all types and sizes and are generally what would be considered more of a "read" consortium. Overall we are not a high research output org so we aren't sure how we fit into the current OA landscape."

"I'd like to see some examples of it in practice. I need to attend some webinars about this model since it's brand new to me."

"What distinguished S2O from the myriad other established and emerging open access publishing initiatives?"

SUPPORT FOR THE S2O MODEL

- In response to the question “Would your institution’s administration allow you to participate in S2O?” the overall responses broke down as follows: (see Q17 of Excel file and Chart 7 below for more detail)

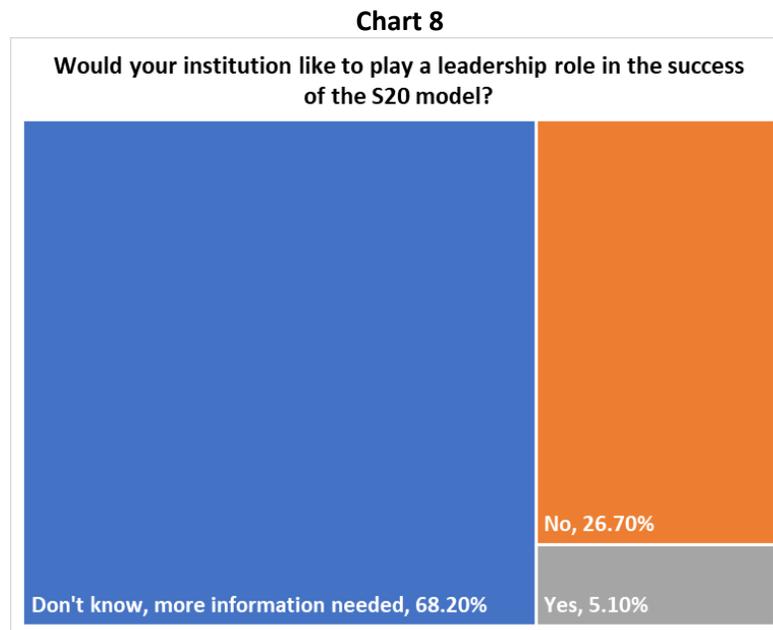


On filtering by levels of familiarity with the S2O model (see table below), responses indicated that all levels required more information before confirming that their institution’s administration would allow them to participate in the S2O model. Unsurprisingly, those respondents who were *not familiar* with S2O scored the highest percentage of 83% for needing more information and for the ‘No’ option at 9.40%.

| Level of familiarity with S2O model | Yes | No | Don’t know more information needed |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Very familiar | 69.70% | 6.10% | 24.20% |
| Somewhat familiar | 55.40% | 1.10% | 43.50% |
| Not familiar | 7.50% | 9.40% | 83.00% |

However, those respondents who were *very* or *somewhat familiar*, did believe that their institution’s administration would allow them participation in the S2O model at 69.70% and 55.40% respectively, while the lowest percentage of those who were *somewhat familiar* with the S2O model, dismissed the possibility at 1.10%.

- When asked “Would your institution like to play a leadership role in the success of the S2O model?” the overall responses broke down as follows: (see Q18 of Excel file and Chart 8 below)



On filtering by levels of familiarity with the S2O model (see table below), responses indicated that all levels required more information before confirming that their institution’s administration would like to play a leadership role in the success of the S2O model. This was noticeably high at 70% for those respondents who were already *somewhat familiar* with S2O.

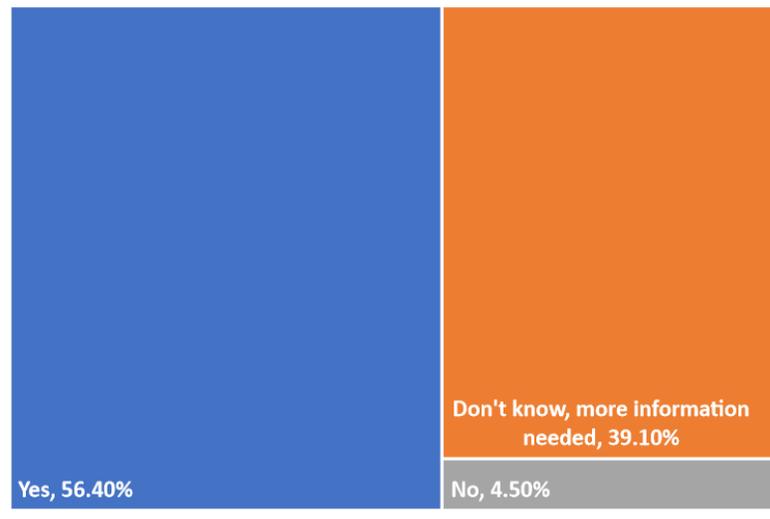
| Level of familiarity with S2O model | Yes | No | Don't know more information needed |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------|------------------------------------|
| Very familiar | 9.10% | 36.40% | 54.50% |
| Somewhat familiar | 5.60% | 24.40% | 70.00% |
| Not familiar | 1.90% | 24.50% | 73.60% |

All levels scored significantly higher for the ‘No’ option over the ‘Yes’ option – in some instances by over 20%.

- When asked “Based in what you know about S2O, would you support your institution in participating in this model?”, the overall responses were more positive: (see Q19 and Chart 9 overleaf for more detail)

Chart 9

Based in what you know about S2O, would you support your institution in participating in this model?



On filtering by levels of familiarity with the S2O model (see table below), responses indicated that there was significant support from respondents who were either *very familiar* or *somewhat familiar* with S2O (at 84.80% and 69.90% respectively) for their institution participating in the model. Those respondents who were *not familiar* with S2O indicated at 79.20%, that they were the group most in need of more information before being able to provide their support for their institution participating in the model.

| Level of familiarity with S2O model | Yes | No | Don't know more information needed |
|-------------------------------------|--------|-------|------------------------------------|
| Very familiar | 84.80% | 6.10% | 9.10% |
| Somewhat familiar | 69.90% | 3.20% | 26.90% |
| Not familiar | 15.10% | 5.70% | 79.20% |

All levels scored encouragingly low for the 'No' option, at no higher than 6.10%.

- Of the 56.40% of respondents who answered 'Yes' to the question "Based in what you know about S2O, would you support your institution in participating in this model?", the resulting free text responses to the next question, "How would your institution benefit from participating in an S2O model?", were sorted across five different themes (see Q20 of Excel file for more responses):

1. Support (56%)

Filtered = 34% very familiar / 59% somewhat familiar / 7% not familiar with the S2O model

"We have a stated support for OA; this would back it up with action. We're making content more available at no additional cost, that's a good thing. Also, all access barriers get in the way. OA would increase access to content that we would have subscribed to anyway, just by removing paywalls and making it easier to connect to." – Respondent very familiar with the S2O model

“Demonstrates our interest in supporting OA with library funds, to show support for the faculty OA policy. Gives us a way to support smaller, niche, specialty journals in their move to OA.” – Respondent very familiar with the S2O model

“Contributes toward shifts to an open model of scholarly publishing, which we are committed to here. We feel that one of our missions is to ensure long term sustainability to the scholarly publishing record, to all readers and to all authors.” – Respondent somewhat familiar with the S2O model

“Provide opportunity to publish open access which is part of our policy. As an institution, our goal is set for 100% OA by the end of 2023. We want to help in providing access to scholarly publishing results to the public.” – Respondent somewhat familiar with the S2O model

“Showing support for OA publishing models and enabling content to become OA.” – Respondent not familiar with the S2O model

2. Finance (48%)

Filtered = 28% very familiar / 64% somewhat familiar / 8% not familiar with the S2O model

“Achieving a sustainable pricing model would help with our eternal budget challenge and annual request for collections budget increases.” – Respondent very familiar with the S2O model

“We are a high-publishing, public (read: facing major budgetary issues) institution. We can't afford to pay for the entire transition to full OA, the way that R&P/P&R models are designed.” – Respondent very familiar with the S2O model

“It is the simplest transition to OA, it falls within the existing model for subscription budget therefore there is a saving on analysis and consultation with S2O and we are comfortable to join when the price is essentially at existing spend.” – Respondent somewhat familiar with the S2O model

“Transparent & predictable pricing and modest price increases (other things being equal, like peer review and other scholarly quality standards).” – Respondent somewhat familiar with the S2O model

“More open content and possibly authors who will be able to publish for free.” – Respondent not familiar with the S2O model

“Reducing in library expenditures.” – Respondent not familiar with the S2O model

3. Opportunity (40%)

Filtered = 19% very familiar / 67% somewhat familiar / 14% not familiar with the S2O model

“The benefit is ensuring access to the content needed even if it isn't open.” – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

“Providing OA publication option to campus authors without APC charges.” – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

“Reputation and leadership in the sector - being seen as an institution that values its impact on the world far beyond the “impact” of getting published in Nature, for example. It would show an institution being a pro-active and positive player in the overall academic ecosystem.” - Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

“We would take part in a movement to more open access, which is our goal. If our researchers publish in a specific S2O model they benefit from more options to publish OA and would not be forced to think of moving to other journals/platforms in order to fulfill our OA expectations.” – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

4. Communication (10%)

Filtered = 40% very familiar / 40% somewhat familiar / 20% not familiar with the S2O model

“Another way to demonstrate the libraries supporting open access; outreach to faculty around these journals if our faculty frequently publish in them.” – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

“Advance scholarly communication writ large (good for everyone), but also potentially broader access to our authors' research.” – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

“Related to funding for OA, we have a robust undergraduate research program that results in student co-authors of articles accepted for publication in prestigious journals that have expensive APCs. The institution benefits when the product of student work can be widely shared.” – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

“We do wish to support the transition to Open Access, however convincing administrators to pay for content that is open access is tricky. That said, S2O would be a feather in our cap, so to speak.” – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

“Supporting publication of research from faculty, supporting scholarly activities of students & researchers, greater publicity for faculty and university.” – Respondent not familiar with the S2O model

5. Other (13%)

Filtered = 43% very familiar / 57% somewhat familiar / 0% not familiar with the S2O model

“We already participate for Annual Reviews and have found it to be a good model that takes advantage of existing library workflows and expenditures. I don't have to train people to do different kinds of work, and it's not costing us extra to support publication fees.” – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

“We are a research-intensive institution, and committed to supporting open access, but it has to be sustainable, and increasing open access costs while increasing subscription costs is not sustainable. S2O has clear benefits in supporting smaller not-for-profit publishers, maintaining access to non-subscribers and spreading costs across institutions equitably, as well as meeting initiatives such as Plan S and funder desires for more open access to their research.” – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

"I'm really not sure of how we would benefit, except by being altruistic (and that won't last long)." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

"Participating in a fair OA model where costs are transparent and all authors can publish (not the richest). It would be nice to know, however, how many articles from our country/University were published each year." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

- Of the 4.50% of respondents who answered 'No' to the question "Based in what you know about S2O, would you support your institution in participating in this model?", the resulting six free text responses to the next question, "Why do you think your institution would not be willing to participate in an S2O model?", were as follows (taken from Q21 of Excel file):

"Much too expensive for a state funded university."

"No money. Little interest from leadership in looking for money via donors."

"The institution's subscription should not help fund open access publishing."

"University Administration told us we had to withdraw support for these types of models."

"We consider each deal on merit and when there is demand."

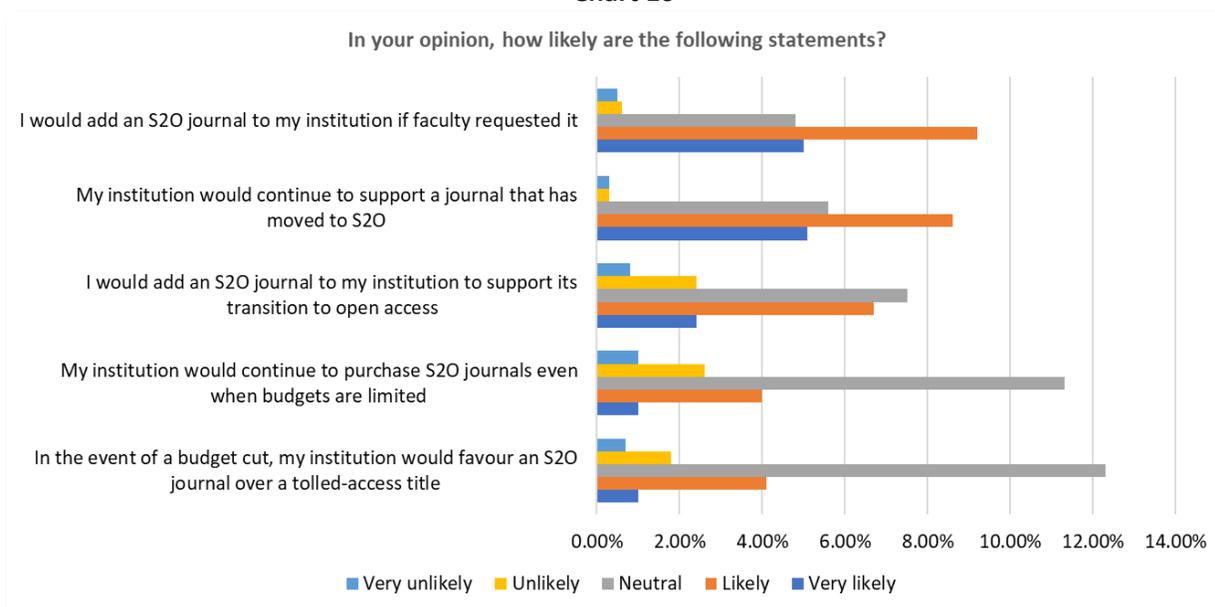
"We don't know enough about it and our researchers' needs at this time."

- Asked how likely a range of statements concerning journals available through S2O would be, the highest overall score was achieved by 'In the event of a budget cut, my institution would favour an S2O journal over a tolled-access title' (Neutral 12.30%), followed by 'My institution would continue to purchase S2O journals even when budgets are limited' (Neutral 11.30%).

Third highest score was obtained by 'I would add an S2O journal to my institution if faculty requested it' (Likely 9.20%), and fourth 'My institution would continue to support a journal that has moved to S2O' (Very likely 5.10% and Likely 8.60%).

Respondents indicated that it was most unlikely that 'My institution would continue to purchase S2O journals even when budgets are limited' (Unlikely 2.60% and Very unlikely 1.00%), followed by 'I would add an S2O journal to my institution to support its transition to open access' (Unlikely 2.40% and Very unlikely 0.80%) – (see Q22 of Excel file and Chart 10 overleaf for more detail).

Chart 10



On filtering these answers by levels of respondents' familiarity with the S2O model, the results broke down further in the tables below as (see Q22 of Excel file for more detail):

Very familiar with the S2O model:

| Statement | Rank | Score |
|---|-------------|--------|
| In the event of a budget cut, my institution would favour an S2O journal over a tolled-access title | Neutral | 10.90% |
| My institution would continue to support a journal that has moved to S2O | Very likely | 9.70% |
| My institution would continue to purchase S2O journals even when budgets are limited | Neutral | 9.70% |
| I would add an S2O journal to my institution if faculty requested it | Very likely | 8.50% |

Somewhat familiar with the S2O model:

| Statement | Rank | Score |
|---|---------|--------|
| In the event of a budget cut, my institution would favour an S2O journal over a tolled-access title | Neutral | 12.40% |
| My institution would continue to purchase S2O journals even when budgets are limited | Neutral | 10.40% |
| I would add an S2O journal to my institution if faculty requested it | Likely | 10.20% |
| My institution would continue to support a journal that has moved to S2O | Likely | 10.20% |

Not familiar with the S2O model:

| Statement | Rank | Score |
|---|---------|--------|
| My institution would continue to purchase S2O journals even when budgets are limited | Neutral | 14.00% |
| In the event of a budget cut, my institution would favour an S2O journal over a tolled-access title | Neutral | 13.20% |
| My institution would continue to support a journal that has moved to S2O | Neutral | 11.90% |

These results indicate that overall support for S2O journals over tolled-access titles is neutral or uncertain when institutional budgets are limited, or cuts are threatened. The likelihood of adding an S2O journal to an institution's collection simply to support its transition to open access was also neutral.

However, it is more likely or very likely that an existing journal which had moved to S2O would continue to be supported by an institution, as would adding a new S2O title to a collection if requested by faculty. Much of the support for these activities was evidenced by respondents who were either *very familiar* or *somewhat familiar* with the S2O model.

- Asked to share any other comments on supporting S2O, the resulting free text responses were sorted across four different themes (see Q23 of Excel file for more responses):

1. Budgets (47%)

Filtered = 36% very familiar / 57% somewhat familiar / 7% not familiar with the S2O model

"I haven't seen anything to indicate what the long-term plan is for S2O. Do they expect us to keep paying forever, or are they working toward a more sustainable funding model? Will the costs continue to increase faster than inflation, like all other publishers?" – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

"Ranking the last set of statements is tricky because there are more factors at play... It depends on the subject/discipline of the journal in question, in many cases, and I believe that each would be a case-by-case basis, for example, if we had to make budget cuts and choose between a S2O title and a subscription title. I will say that we haven't pulled out of any of our current open access commitments - they do constitute a fairly small amount of our budget in terms of potential cost savings." – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

"I do think that there is a risk that a S2O model is not sustainable in the long run. Research areas are likely to change over the years and there will always be a need to control or be able to modify where the budget is spend. If some libraries decide to quit the S2O model in one year their part of the financing is missing and will/must/should be finance by ..." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

"This is a strange time to respond to this survey. I would have answered much differently 14 months ago. However, receiving a 20% materials budget due to COVID-19 has somewhat changed my perspective. I do know that each title would have to be considered on a case-by-case budget and in the end, it depends on need vs available funds. In a perfect world we would support without reservation." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

"Per the prior set of questions, if there is no money, S2O doesn't really matter - cause there is no money." – Respondent not familiar with S2O model

2. Content (37%)

Filtered = 45% very familiar / 54% somewhat familiar with the S2O model

"One thing that helps S2O is that high quality publishers have done it so far. If the quality of content was more marginal with this model, or contained very large packages with a substantial cost, maintaining support in tight budget times might be more difficult." – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

"Ultimately, the content of the journal itself trumps all else, but we are very supportive of the S2O model above all others." – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

"In theory, I like the model. In practice, it all depends on the details: which titles; how much; how many libraries have to subscribe; etc." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

"How we use our budgets are more likely to depend on relevance for our university rather than the business model. We will continue to support S2O journals as long as they are relevant for our faculties." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

3. Communication (20%)

Filtered = 100% somewhat familiar with the S2O model

"It's often hard to explain to administrators why one needs to continue paying for a subscription to something they know to be open access. That's the biggest hurdle, in my opinion, to this model." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

"Impact factor and faculty demands drive our purchasing unfortunately. We do our best to educate faculty, but when promotion and tenure requirements are ruled by impact factor it is difficult to get more movement on open access." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

"More information on S2O is needed, multilingual documentation would be advisable." – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

4. Other (47%)

Filtered = 29% very familiar / 36% somewhat familiar / 36% not familiar with the S2O model

"We would still have to make decisions based on usage (downloads, views, citations, authorships) but if our institution is using an S2O title, it's definitely not at the top of the cut list." – Respondent very familiar with S2O model

“You need to have a surgery like this for publishers of journals-- not only institutions which purchase journals.” – Respondent somewhat familiar with S2O model

“Do libraries maintain perpetual access to content that they have paid for/received in OA? I think this would be important.” – Respondent not familiar with S2O model

Conclusions

The research objective for the online survey was ‘to gauge the level of interest, understanding and support for Subscribe to Open (S2O) among librarians at different types of institutions and in different parts of the world.’

Quality of Survey Data

- Based on the evidence below, the objective of obtaining responses from a target audience of ‘librarians at different types of institutions and in different parts of the world’ has been achieved, so the survey data can be confirmed as fit for purpose:

Supporting evidence:

- The 179 survey respondents came from 27 countries, across six continents including Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, North America, and South America.
- Over 95% of respondents worked in academic institutions such as universities, colleges, and libraries, with 37% categorized as Librarians, the remainder being classified as Heads, Directors, Coordinators and Deans.

Level of interest in S2O model

- Average – S2O came third behind Community / Collective Action (Knowledge Unlatched, SCOAP) and Read and Publish / Publish and Read in terms of respondents who had heard of or participated in the model.
- There is a general lack of awareness and confusion surrounding affordability and sustainability for S2O which requires more effective communication planning and fine tuning of messaging. It may prove effective to take up the offer from some existing users to act as advocates for case studies, Q&A interviews, blog discussions or webinars.

Level of understanding for the S2O model

- Good – 70% of respondents were either somewhat or very familiar with the S2O, and stated they had a ‘relatively’ clear understanding of the model, that is they understood the necessity for libraries to participate in it every year for new journal content to be opened and saw it as a fair approach by enabling authors to publish open access.

- Those respondents who were not familiar with S2O needed more explanatory information on how the model worked in general, and more specifically how it affects subscriptions, published research, ongoing costs, content plus the benefits and reasons for their institutions to invest in the model. All strong subjects to build into a long-term targeted communications plan.

Perceptions of open access models in general

- Respondents' main areas of support for open access models in general focused upon librarians having a key role to play in promoting open access to researchers, non-APC approaches to achieving open access were important, and libraries have a responsibility to ensure access to scholarly publishing beyond the wall of their institution.
- They were least in support for open access' present rate of growth is sufficient to meet current interests and needs for research, article-processing charges (APC) are an effective approach to open access, and that all scholarly research will be published in open access in the future i.e., full transformation of the publishing ecosystem.
- Views on open access models in general concentrated upon issues of finance, support, reputation, and subjects i.e., although a 'noble concept' publishers should absorb the costs for open access content rather than subscribers whose limited budgets make such cost modelling unsustainable, financial support should be sought from the publishing industry, governments and other funders, the perception continues that open access journals are of a lower status and quality than traditional journals, there is an imbalance in STEM subjects benefitting more than Humanities from open access models (presumably due to their larger research budgets).

Level of support for the S2O model

- Average - 43.80% of respondents (mainly those who were already either somewhat or very familiar with S2O) said their administrations would allow them to participate in S2O, but the majority at 51.70%, stated that they would need more information on the model before deciding.
- Fair – Based on what they knew of the S2O model, 56.40% of respondents indicated that they would support their institution in participating in the model, however on filtering this figure increased significantly i.e., respondents who were either *very familiar* or *somewhat familiar* with the S2O model, support levels were 84.80% and 69.90% respectively. Reasons for this support included: as existing users of the S2O model they were happy to actively demonstrate their interest in, and support for, open access as a shift in policy and institutional commitment. Other reasons to support S2O included: transparent, predictable, and transparent pricing, more access to free open content, free publishing for authors, enhancing reputations and taking a leadership role in adopting the S2O model e.g., *"That said, S2O would be a feather in our cap, so to speak."*

- Conversely, 26.70% of respondents (again mainly those who were already either somewhat or very familiar with S2O) said their institutions would not like to play a leadership role in the success of the S2O model, although 68.20% stated that they would need more information before deciding.
- Respondents who would not support their institution in participating in the S2O model, explained this as lack of interest from leadership, deliberate policy decision, limited budget, and absence of information.
- To address this imbalance in support, publishers looking to encourage institutions to participate in S2O offers should include the following features: transparent pricing, cost neutrality, ease of implementation and/or transition and commitment to full transition to open access. Other features respondents suggested were more information on content, available titles, participating publishers and institutions, usage statistics and the provision of promotional materials to generate support and better understanding, from within institutions i.e., amongst researchers and faculty.
- Average – Generally, support for S2O journals over tolled-access titles was neutral or uncertain when institutional budgets are limited, or cuts are threatened. The likelihood of adding an S2O journal to an institution’s collection simply to support its transition to open access was also neutral.

However, it is more likely or very likely that an existing journal which had moved to S2O would continue to be supported by an institution, as would adding a new S2O title to a collection if requested by faculty.

- Closing comments on support for S2O focused on budgets, content, and communication i.e., concern for a long-term sustainable funding model, approval for the high quality of content resulting from participating publishers, difficulties in advocating the model internally when leadership decisions are based on impact factors, the necessity of paying for ‘free’ content and desire for multilingual documentation.

APPENDIX A: Online Survey Full Results

See separate Excel file: S2O Survey 2021 Data Sets, supplied on 22 February 2021 – Password S2O_2021.