



Tendering the purchase of open access publishing

6th Munin Conference,
22–23 November 2011
University of Tromsø



Flaws in the publishing market

- When libraries subscribe to journals, it is not a competitive market where they may shop for best value for money
- Open Access publishing may introduce a better market solutions
- I want to suggest a tendering process in order to obtain this



The traditional business model

– subscription based journals

- The market for scientific publishing is not efficient
 - Publishers enjoy «quasi monopoly» market power
 - Researchers prefer to submit manuscripts to essential journals
 - Researchers need access to the essential journals
 - The essential journals are not substitutable by alternative journals
 - Libraries have no option but to subscribe to the essential journals, no matter the price
 - ⇒ If you publish a journal in this category, you may dictate the subscription price
 - ⇒ Some journals cost far too much compared to an efficient market



Open access business model

- Pay to publish
 - Authors need to pay per article: Article Processing Charge (APC)
 - Author saves the APC by choosing a subscription based journal (TA)
 - To level out this disadvantage for OA-publishing, institutions may establish funds to cover the APCs
 - ⇒ Authors send their manuscripts to preferred journals, irrespective of how small or big the APCs are
 - And journals preserve their monopoly power, and dictate the price
 - This is used as an argument against OA, especially the so called hybrid journals



How can we do better?

- How may we introduce a competitive and efficient market in open access publishing?
 - And still level out the OA disadvantage of the pay to publish-model?
- Publishing scientific articles may be viewed as services the public sector buys from the private sector
 - Q: How do the public sector buy services?
 - A: Through calls for tenders
- How can this be done for OA publishing?



Tendering OA publishing

- We need a fund with which to purchase
 - It may be a consortium of HE institutions
 - Or within the budget of the Research Council of Norway?
- Lets go tendering!
 - How?



How to tender

- Publishers are invited to submit their bids, including:
 - Which journals are part of the bid
 - Price scheme – APCs and other charges
- Selection criteria:
 - Price level (APCs and other charges)
 - Price (APC) compared to official list price (how much discount)
 - Subject coverage
 - Scientific value of journals (impact factor, DBH level and/or other measures)
 - True OA-publishing (Creative Commons-license)
 - Enhancing services

It's a deal

- The fund ends up with a set of deals with publishers entering the best bids:
 - An overall consideration of quality of journals, price as well as price/list price-ratio
 - In the sum of all deals, a good subject coverage should be sought
- The number of publishers and journals included in deals, are determined by the size of the fund
 - An estimation of how far the fund will reach
- The tender may be run annually or at other intervals



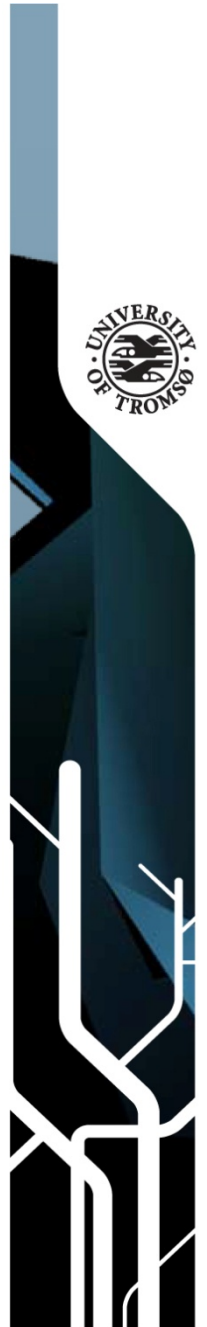
Authors

- Authors' APCs may be covered by the fund, if and only if they publish in journals within these deals
- Authors are free to publish where they wish
 - This is not a limitation of authors' academic freedom (no more than today's model)
 - OA-publishing is in the public's interests – the right thing to do is to bargain (tender) for the best value for money



APCs

- Examples of APCs:
- Springer Open: EUR 500 – 1500
- Springer Open Choice : EUR 2000
- BioMedCentral: EUR 420 – 1840
- Wiley Open Access: EUR 1400 – 2500
- Wiley OnlineOpen: EUR 2200 (USD 3000)
- Oxford Open: EUR 2550
- Hindawi: EUR 250 - 1100



Limitation options

- The fund may cover only part of the APC
 - A maximum amount per article, or a predetermined portion of the APC
 - But still only from journals within deals
- Limitations will ensure that the fund will last longer
 - It is important that the fund is not emptied long before the fiscal year has ended
 - But limitations will mean that the disadvantage compared to subscription journals are not fully levelled out



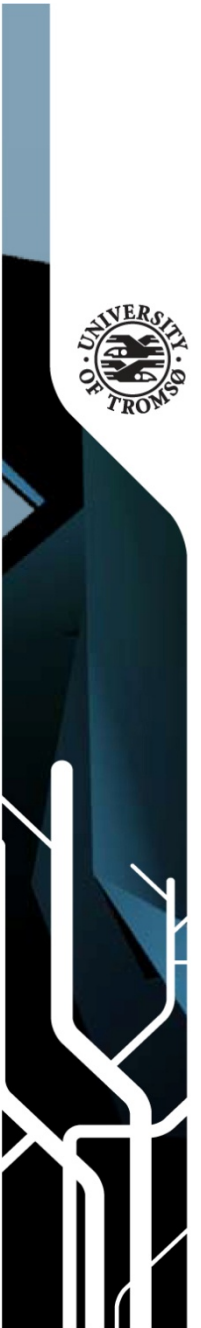
Practicalities

- A consortium of institutions:
 - How to balance each consortial member contribution to the fund, and the payouts from the fund?
 - How to join the fund?
 - Fixed relative contributions, based on institution size or publishing activity?
 - Best suited for institutions with fairly equal subject coverage
 - The subject coverage in the sum of deals must be fairly equally (dis-)satisfactory to all institutions



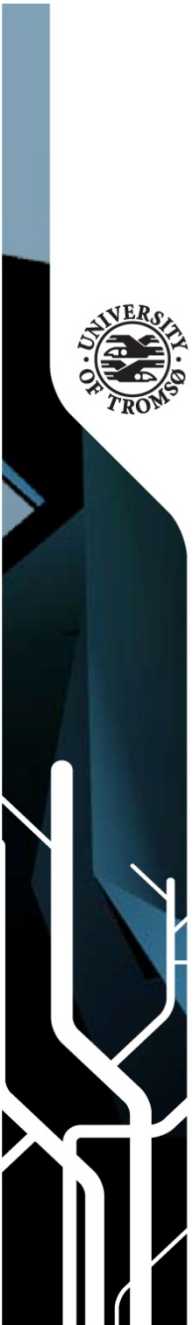
Budgeting

- Where should the money come from?
- Publishing need to be paid for one way or the other
- It is not a question of new services to be paid for
- Just a question of route by which to pay it



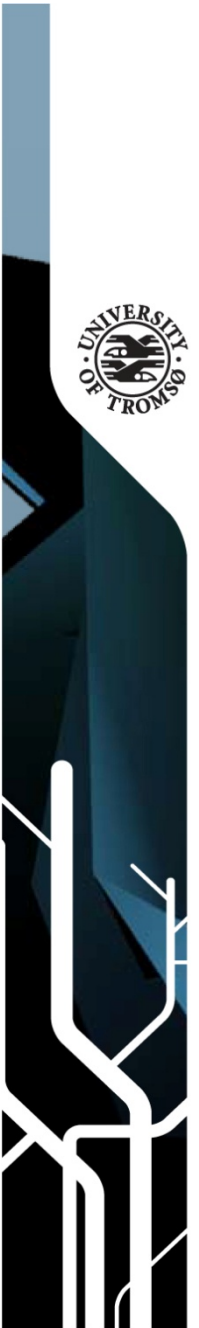
Research Council of Norway

- The Research Council of Norway to finance the fund?
 - We avoid the problem of balancing contribution and payouts
 - Institutions biased towards subjects with high article publishing intensity will benefit most
 - Already, the Research Council pays APCs through project funding
 - Pull these out and leave all APC financing to the tender fund?



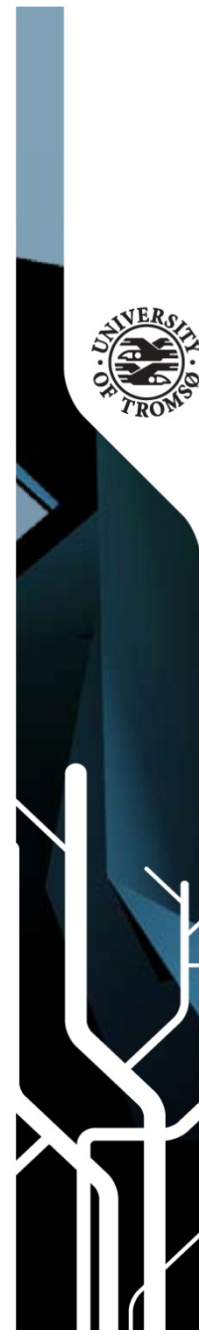
Go for it!

- Consortial model:
 - We need institutions willing to commit funding to a fund
 - The fund needs to be sufficiently big to be worth the bother
- What do we need?
 - Univ of Tromsø-researchers publish approx. 1000 journal articles annually
 - NOK 1 million (~ EUR 130 000) could cover APC for something like 12-15% of UoT's journal articles
 - A consortial fund of 5-10 million NOK annually?
 - Would make it possible to run a tender



Little experience to build on

- To my knowledge, no one has run such a tender for the APCs
- SCOAP3 is one example of tendering for OA publishing
 - But it is a different model – OA-publishing of all high energy physics-articles
 - SCOAP3-experiences are anyway interesting to follow
- Why have tendering not been tried out more in OA?
 - Libraries are too preoccupied purchasing (access to) books and journals?
 - The OA-literature is there anyway – we do not need to bother?
 - Where the money goes in our budget is where our attention is?
- I think we should try it!



Thank you!

