

Why (not) to publish Open Access

Coffee Lecture

October 14th, 2025

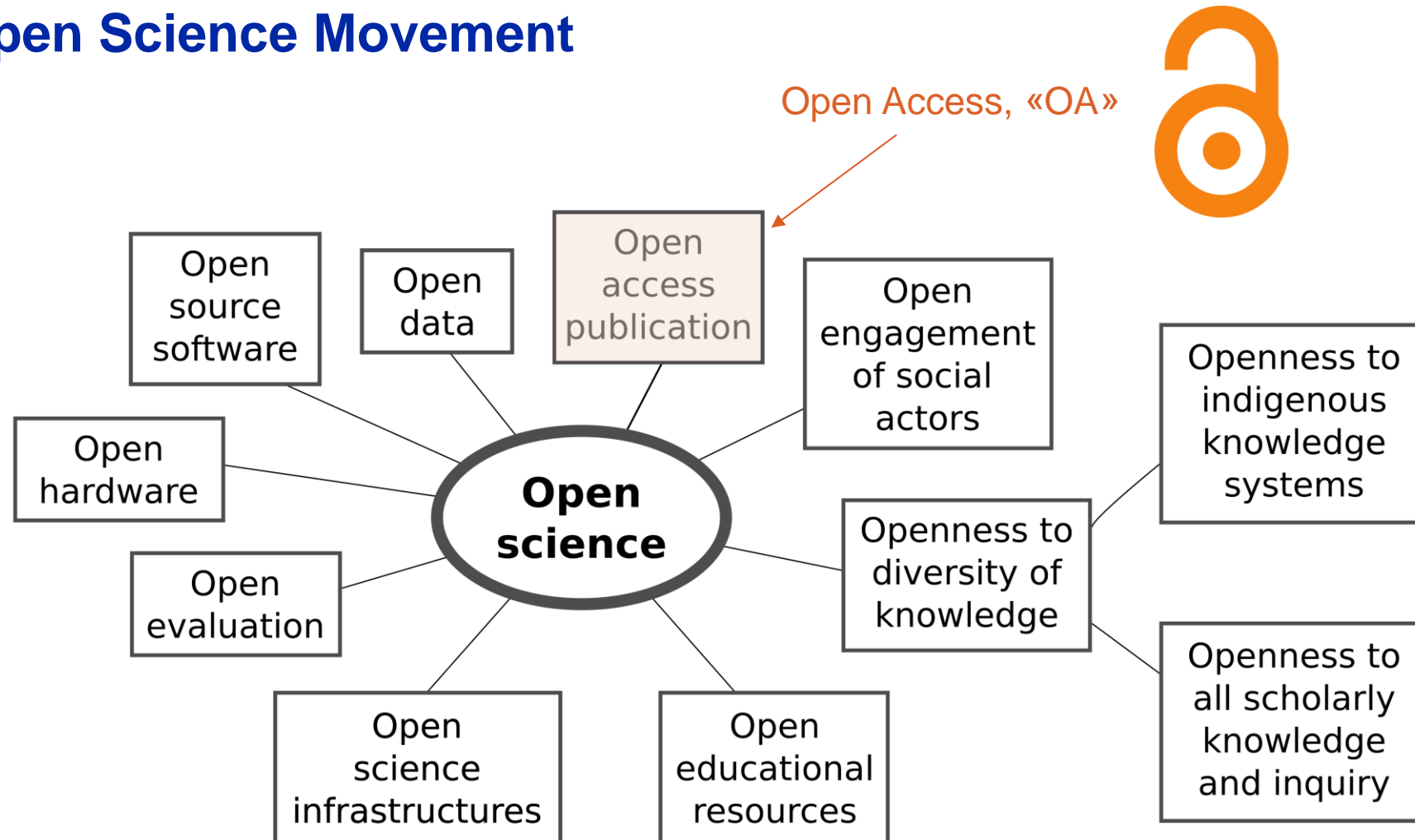
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Liaison Librarian

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- Background: Open Access (OA)
- The OA Rainbow: Ideas and Models for OA
- Transformative Agreements between Libraries and Publishers
- Swiss National Open Access Strategy 2024-2032
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The Open Science Movement



“Imagine your taxes have gone to build a new road in your neighborhood.

Now imagine that the company organizing the road work charged its workers a fee rather than paying them a salary. The overseers in charge of making sure the road was up to standard also weren't paid.

And if you, the taxpayer, want to access the road today, you need to buy a seven-figure annual subscription or pay high fees for one-off trips...”

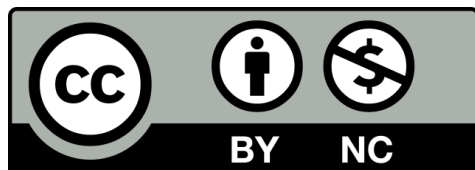
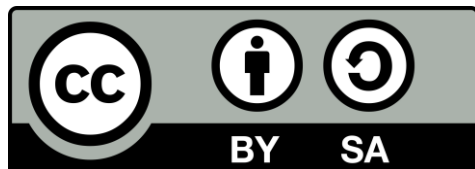


Resnick, B. The war to free science. Vox <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/6/3/18271538/open-access-elsevier-california-sci-hub-academic-paywalls> (2019).

Two Components of Open Access

1. Free to Read
2. Free to Re-Use

Creative Commons Licenses

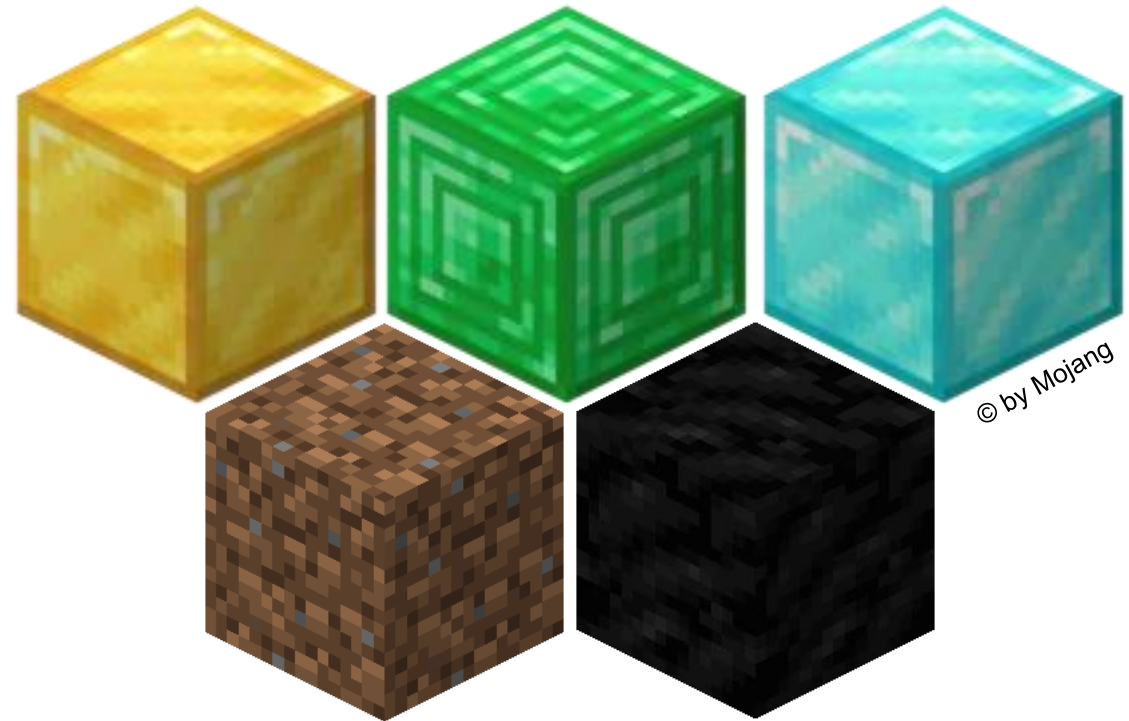


Ideas and Models for OA

The OA Rainbow

There are several ideas and models for achieving Open Access and finding a way out of the publishing crisis.

- **Gold OA**
- **Green OA**
- **Diamond / Platinum OA**
- **Hybrid OA**
- **Black OA (illegal)**



Gold OA – «author-pays» model

- **Free access** to all articles on the journal's website
- Articles are licensed for **sharing and reuse**, e.g. via **creative commons licenses**
- Authors have to pay an **article processing charge (APC)** in order to publish a paper
 - Funders (such as SNSF) typically give financial support or even pay the full APCs
 - Waivers for authors from low-income countries (*theoretically*)



Challenges:

- Expensive, APCs typically around 1000-3000 CHF, sometimes more.
- Journals might be less prestigious, have lower impact factors.
- Business model of making money per accepted article: Conflict of interest with scientific integrity
→ **predatory journals.**
- **“All that glitters is not gold.” – Hybrid journals try to sell you “Gold” publishing routes.**



Green OA – «self-archiving» by the authors

- Paper is published in a traditional, closed-access journal.
- The authors post the accepted version of the paper on a freely accessible website.
 - Institutional repository, e.g. [ZORA](#) at UZH
- **No cost for the authors.**
- Most publishers allow green OA – different rules and conditions → check [Open Policy Finder](#)

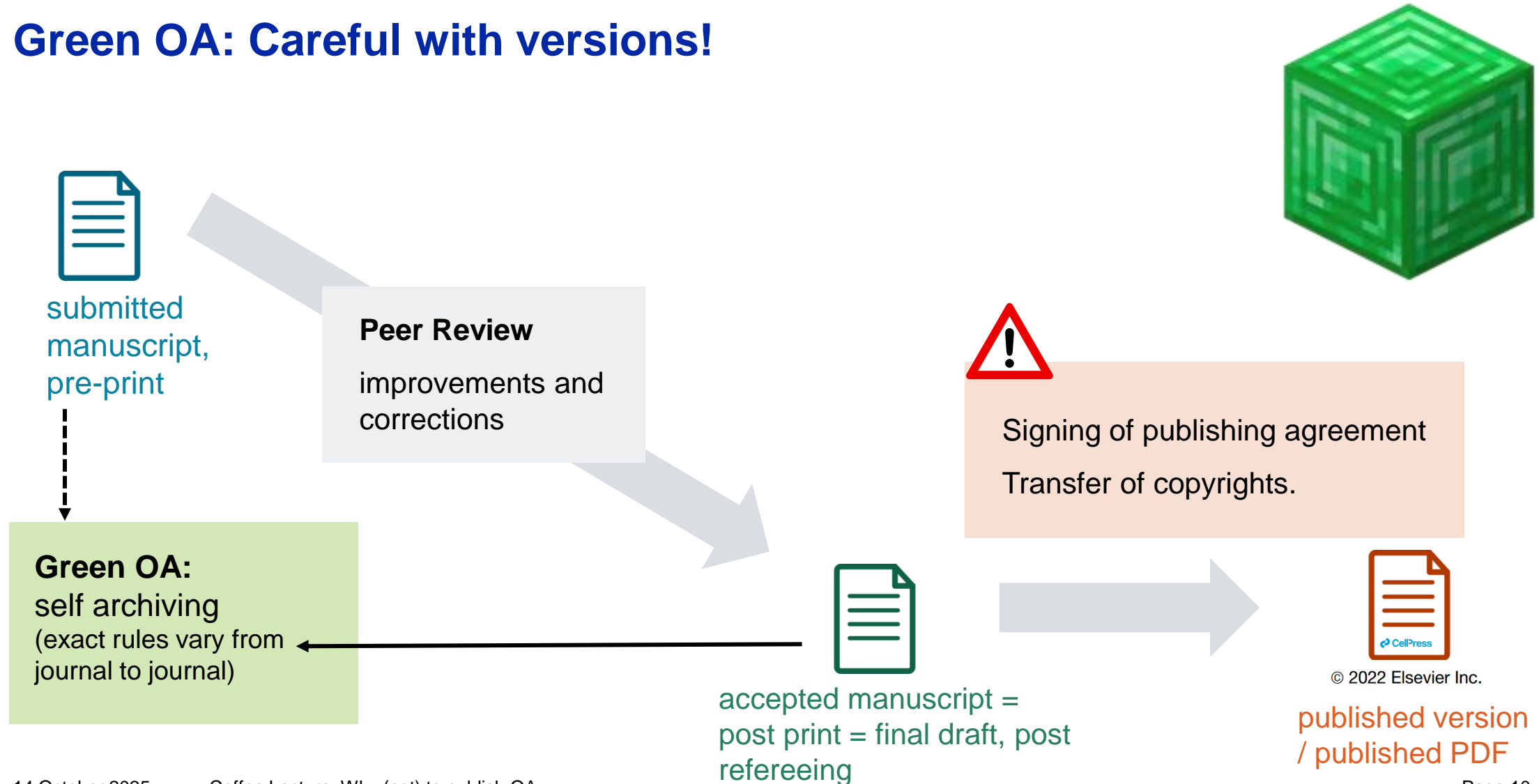


Challenges:

- Publisher maintains the copyright, limited possibilities of sharing and reuse of data
- **Embargo** times: Publishers often allow the self-archiving only after a certain time, e.g. 6, or 12 months, while **fundors require immediate open access after publication.**
- When submitting a manuscript, **you need to choose «Closed» as the publication route**, which seems counter-intuitive.
- Free versions of articles are not easy to find for the readers, **several available versions can cause confusion.**



Green OA: Careful with versions!

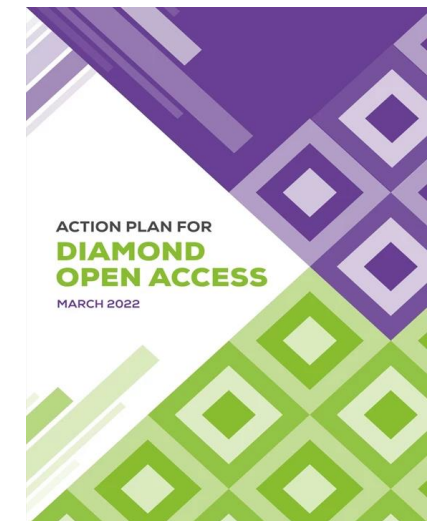


Diamond OA

- Also called **platinum open access**, **non-commercial open access**, **cooperative open access**, **fair open access**
- **Free access** to all articles on the journal's website
- Articles are licensed for **sharing and reuse**, e.g. via creative commons
- No article processing charges (APCs) → **Publishing is free**
- Journals are **financed and maintained by universities**, academic organisations, library networks, etc.
- Science Europe: [Action Plan for Diamond Open Access](#)
- At UZH: <https://www.hope.uzh.ch/>

Challenges:

- In many disciplines there are no reputable diamond OA journals (yet?).
- Commercial initiatives seem to be more attractive choices – better advertisement.



Diamond OA: Find Journals


<https://doaj.org/>

DOAJ SUPPORT  APPLY SEARCH 

SEARCH

Journals

* All fields  


 SHARE OR EMBED

13,617 indexed journals


⚙️ Refine search results

Without any fees  CLEAR ALL 

SEE JOURNALS...

- Without fees
- With a DOAJ Seal 
- Author retains all rights

Sort by
Added to DOAJ (newest first) 

Results per page
10 

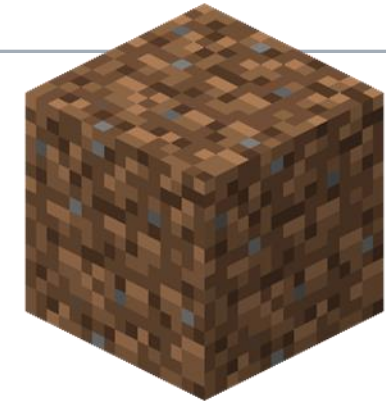
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Hybrid Open Access Journals

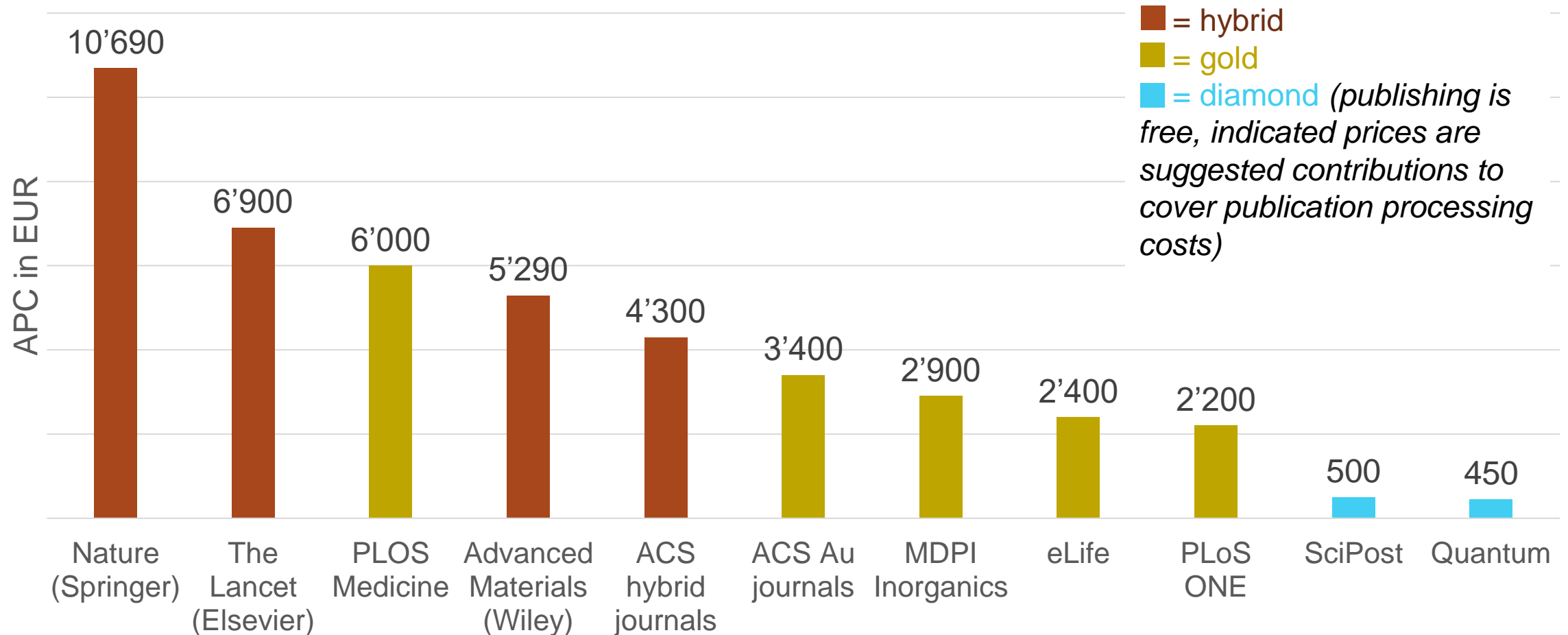


- They started out as traditional subscription journals.
- Hybrid journals provide a **mixture of open and closed articles**.
- Authors can choose to make their article open by **paying article processing charges (APC)**.
- Many of the “prestigious” journals offer hybrid open access, APCs are typically high
e.g. **Nature: APC for one article = 10'290 EUR**
- All other articles are behind paywalls and not accessible without subscription.
Libraries still need to pay subscriptions.

Challenges:

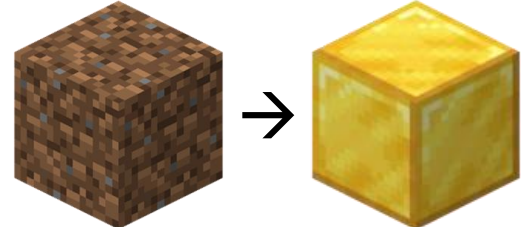
- «**double dipping**» - the journal makes money by charging both authors and readers 
- **Funders do not cover APCs for publications in hybrid OA journals, even if the publication route is advertised as gold!**
- Authors have to pay out of their own pockets 
Especially difficult for young researchers, because they are torn between the requirement and wish to publish OA and publishing in journals that are good for their career (high impact). 

Article processing charges of some journals



Transformative Agreements between Libraries and Publishers

Transformative Agreements – «Subscribe to Open» – «Read & Publish»

- Contracts between publishers and university libraries starting 2015
 - **Goal: to make all publications in all journals gold OA**
→ **No more hybrid journals**
- 
- Libraries pay a **flatrate that includes access to the literature and OA APCs** for all publications handed in by researchers of their institutions.
 - The idea is that these contracts should be **transitional**.
 - After some years, all publications should be gold OA and we only pay for publication.
 - **2019**: First Read & Publish contract in Switzerland between the Swiss Academic Consortium and the Royal Society of Chemistry: <https://www.rsc.org/news-events/articles/2019/feb/swiss-read-and-publish/>
 - Currently **627 active agreements involving 80 countries and 65 publishers**
ESAC initiative: Transformative Agreements Registry <https://esac-initiative.org/about/transformative-agreements/agreement-registry/>
 - Read & Publish Agreements at UZH: <https://www.ub.uzh.ch/en/wissenschaftlich-arbeiten/publizieren/Publikation-finanzieren/Vertraege-mit-Verlagen.html>

	Subscription	APC spent hybrid	Total spent
EPFL	123'032	123'750	205'532
ETH ZURICH	153'648	425'250	437'148
LIB4RI	94'607	153'750	197'107
UNIV OF BASEL	104'495	51'750	138'995
UNIV OF GENEVA	104'490	67'500	149'490
UNIV OF ZURICH	104'495	14'250	113'995
UNIV BERN	93'461	32'250	114'961
	778'228	868'500	1'357'228

Example of Cost Considerations of a Read & Publish Contract

That's what the libraries are paying for a subscription (read only).

That's what authors are spending in APCs (publishing charges)

That's what the publisher expects from the libraries for a Read&Publish-Deal...

...but the libraries don't have this money!
→ We have to meet somewhere in the middle and settle for a number of included OA publications = quota.

Article Quota: Only a certain number of publications are included

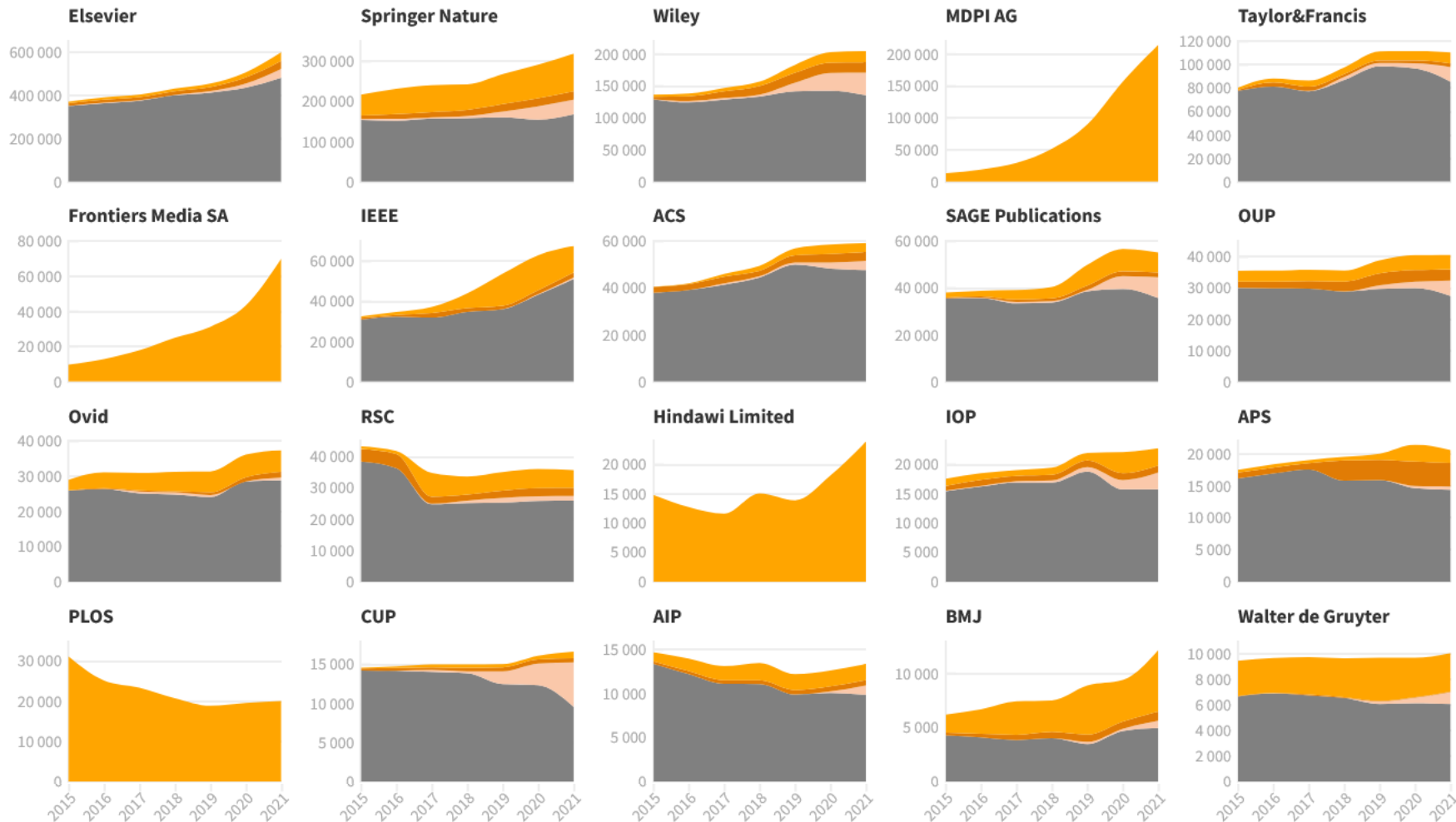
Example Springer Nature 2023

- **78 free OA publications for 2023 are included** in the contract (for all universities in the Swiss Consortium of Academic Libraries!)
- **This cap was reached in May 2023.**
- Now Authors have to pay the hybrid APC themselves, or choose the «green route» to meet the funder's demands.
- Zero Embargo requirements by funders demand immediate open access, thus **closing the «green route» for many journals**
- Because of the general «pro Open Access» narrative, many **researchers feel pressured to purchase the hybrid OA** out of their own pockets
- **People paying APCs out of their own pockets will increase the publisher's income and their price expectations on future contract negotiations...**



How is it going with the Transformation?

Closed
 Transformative agreement
 Hybrid
 Fully OA journal

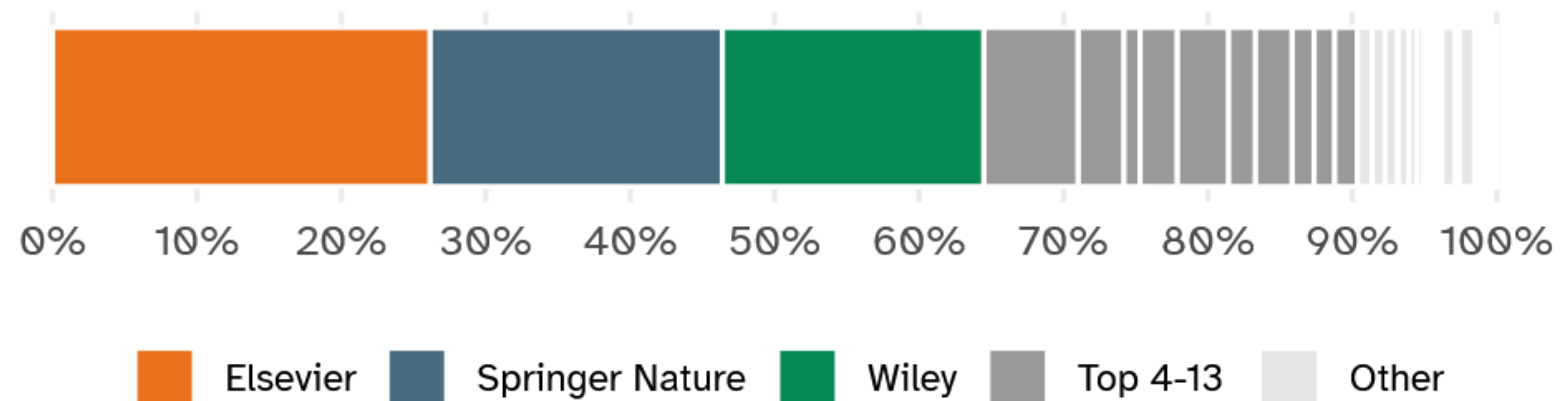


estimated share
 of articles
 published by
 publisher
[https://esac-
initiative.org/mark
et-watch/](https://esac-initiative.org/mark-et-watch/)

Updated
 22-12-2022

Publisher market shares as measured by articles published between 2017 and 2025 in hybrid journals included in transformative agreements.

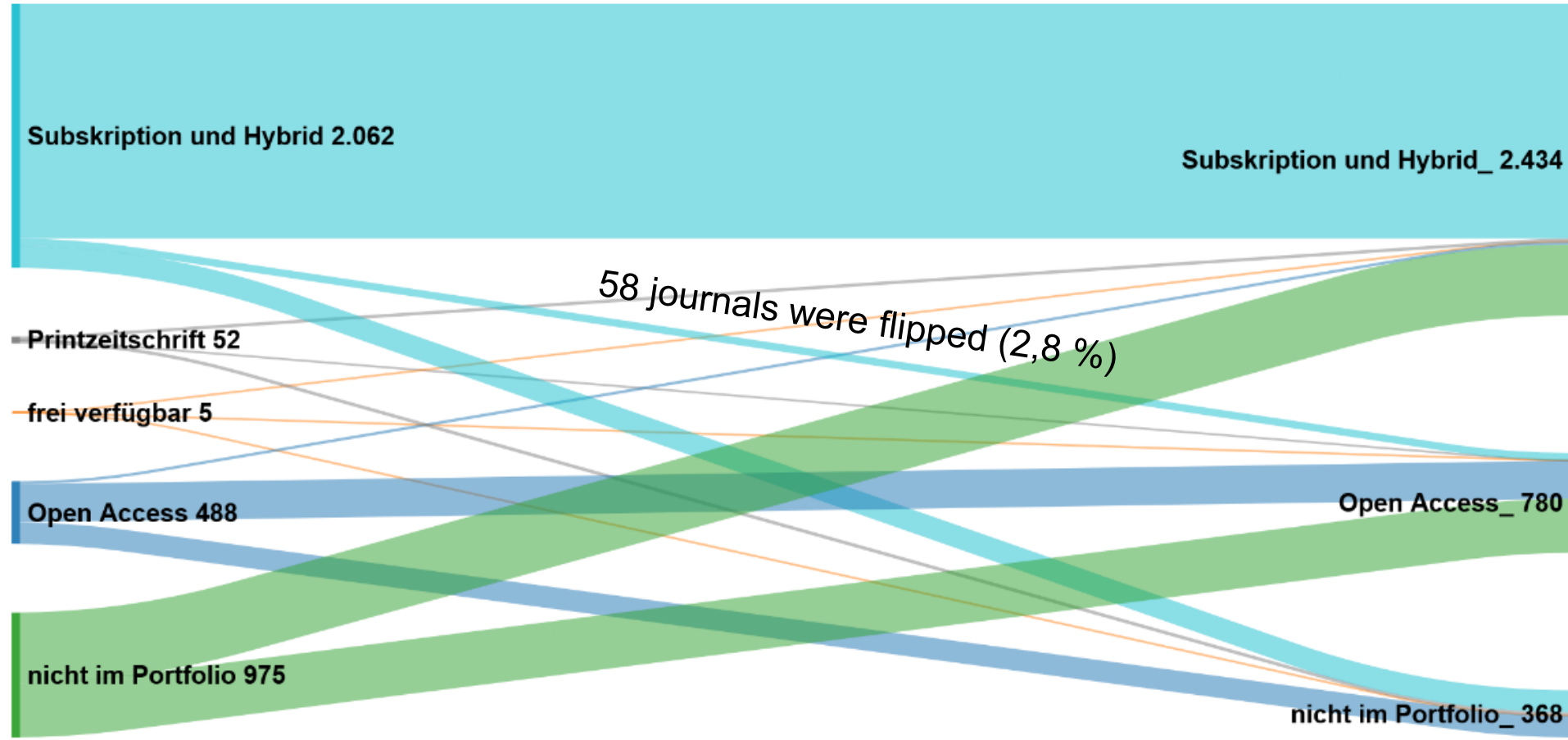
Open Access Articles with Creative Commons License



Elsevier, Springer Nature and Wiley account for **64%** of total article volume published under transformative agreements between 2017-2025.

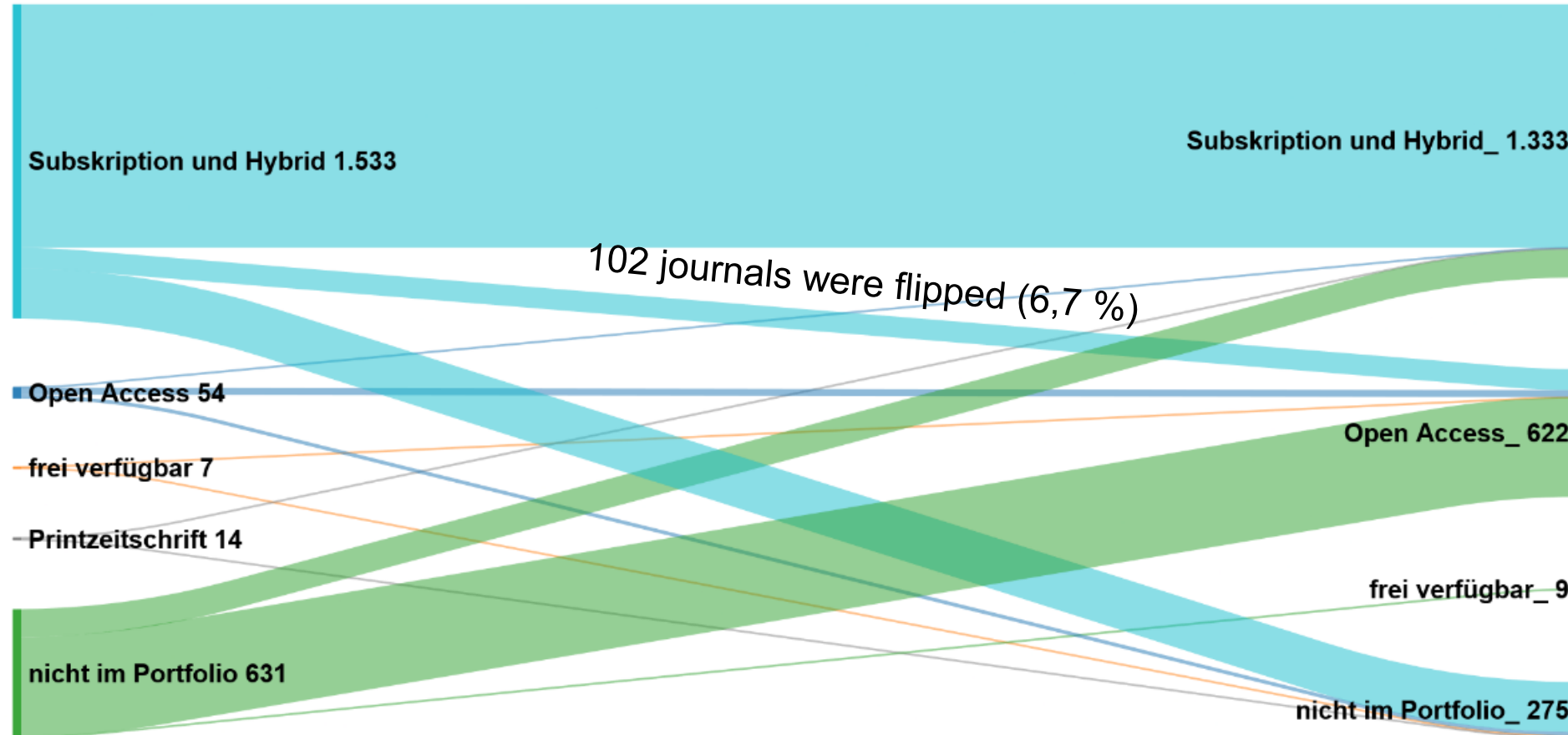
Achterberg, I., Haupka, N., Hobert, A., Jahn, N. & Schmidt, B. Hybrid Open Access Dashboard. *HOAD*
<https://subugoe.github.io/hoaddash/>.

Journal Portfolio of Springer Nature 2014 vs. 2025



Mittermaier, B. Transformationsverträge sind eine Sackgasse. *o-bib. Das offene Bibliotheksjournal / Herausgeber VDB* 12, 1–22 (2025).

Journal Portfolio of Wiley 2014 vs. 2025



Mittermaier, B. [Transformationsverträge sind eine Sackgasse.](#) *o-bib. Das offene Bibliotheksjournal / Herausgeber VDB* 12, 1–22 (2025).

Swiss National Open Access Strategy 2024-2032

Swiss National Strategy on Open Access 2017-2024

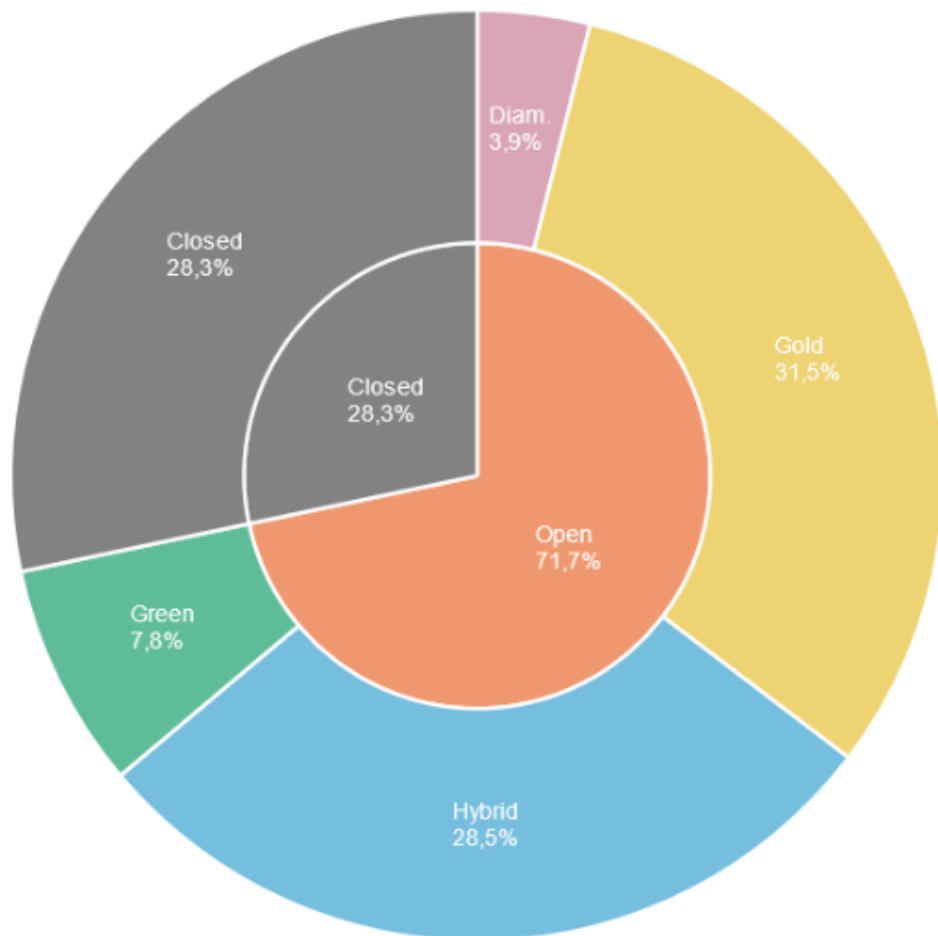
In 2017, the first Swiss national OA strategy was designed and implemented by swissuniversities. It envisioned that...

«by **2024**, all scholarly publication activity in Switzerland should be **OA**, all scholarly publications funded by public money must be freely accessible on the internet. The OA landscape will consist of a **mix of OA models**.»

https://www.swissuniversities.ch/fileadmin/swissuniversities/Dokumente/Hochschulpolitik/Open_Access/Open_Access_strategy_final_e.pdf

Open / Closed ratio on national level (accumulated)

This graph shows the Open / Closed ratio of the collected journal articles published in Switzerland over the last five years (2021-2025).



Annual development of Open / Closed ratio

This graph shows the annual development of Open / Closed ratio on national level. You can filter by institution category.



Revised Swiss National Open Access Strategy 2024-2023

- Objective 1** The frameworks for scholarly publishing set by institutions and service providers advance the paradigm shift towards open access.
-
- Objective 2** The scholarly publishing practices of research communities are characterised by a fully open access culture.
-
- Objective 3** The scholarly publishing system is financially sustainable.
-
- Objective 4** Authors affiliated with a Swiss institution have open access publishing options at reasonable conditions that align with the global context.
-
- Objective 5** Scholarly publishing in Diamond OA is financially viable and a robust alternative for authors.
-
- Objective 6** Open access for scholarly long-form publications and additional publication formats is supported.

These objectives are pursued via various pathways, including the development, coordination, and connection of infrastructure and services (especially for Diamond and Green OA), the retention of authors' rights, and a common framework for negotiating with service providers as long as the principles of the revised Strategy are observed.



<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/open-science/open-access/national-strategy>

The definition of «Diamond Open Access» according to the revised Swiss National Open Access Strategy

III Definition of OA models

The following OA models are in use in the current landscape, which might further evolve. In the context of the revised OA Strategy, the different OA models are defined as follows:

Diamond Open Access: Resources are open access first publications with an open licence.⁶⁶ In Diamond OA neither authors nor readers are required to pay fees. Costs for Diamond OA are covered by institutional funding or other funding mechanisms.

<https://www.swissuniversities.ch/en/topics/open-science/open-access/national-strategy>

But who sets publication costs?

FAIR Open Access

- **Scholar-led:** The publisher/journal has a transparent ownership structure, is not profit-oriented and is controlled by and responsive to the scholarly community.
- Authors retain copyright: In traditional publishing models, authors often transfer the rights to their works to publishers. As a result, they are sometimes restricted in sharing or re-using their own work without further effort. Fair Open Access aims to ensure that all rights remain with the authors.
- Open Access: The publications are made freely accessible in full text and immediately. Re-use is ensured by using free licences.
- No charges for authors: Submission and publication is not conditional in any way on the payment of a fee from the author or their employing institution, or on membership of an institution or society. Publications should be funded by universities or research funders if possible.
- **Cost transparency:** All fees paid to publishers are transparent and low, i.e. they are appropriate in relation to the work carried out. Publishers are transparent about their financing structure.

<https://www.tu.berlin/en/ub/research-publishing/publishing/financing-for-open-access/fair-open-access>

Summary

How not to publish Open Access

- Avoid paying (excessive) publication charges to commercial publishers.
- Avoid paying publication charges to subscription (hybrid) journals.
 - Be aware of the difference between hybrid and gold journals!
- Avoid routes where you transfer all the rights on your manuscript to the publisher.

What to do instead

- Check the policies of your journal before submission ([Open Policy Finder](#)).
 - Adapt the publishing contract, if necessary ([Publishing Contract and Author Rights](#)).
- Use the «Closed» option if you plan on publishing OA via the Green Route.
- Whenever possible, use FAIR OA routes, choose Diamond journals.
- Actively contribute to a change in publication and evaluation culture in your research community.

**Any
questions?**

Feedback



<https://forms.office.com/e/dCjyuGTjVX>

Contact

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Extra Slides

Embargo

- Until 2022: Embargo periods were typically 6 months.
<https://oa100.snf.ch/en/news-en/embargo-periods-open-letter-to-publishers/>
- Researchers could publish in hybrid journals and make the Accepted Manuscript available after 6 months via repository.
- Since January 1st 2023 at the SNSF (and many other funders):
“We no longer accept embargo periods.”
Articles resulting from SNSF-funded research projects must be freely available immediately.
<https://oa100.snf.ch/en/news-en/immediate-open-access-without-restrictions-changes-as-of-1-january-2023/>

- **Most publishers do not allow zero embargo...**
- **Check OA options and embargo times via Open Policy Finder**
<https://openpolicyfinder.jisc.ac.uk/>

Search across open policy finder

Search for a journal, publisher or funder. For open access book policies, search for a publisher below.



Search

Retain Essential Author Rights

- Rights Retention Strategy: <https://www.coalition-s.org/rights-retention-strategy/>
- In alignment with «Zero Embargo» Green OA strategy.
- **Authors should not sign publishing agreements in which they hand over their copyrights to the publisher**, but negotiate to keep their rights for publishing their work on a repository
- **Rights Retention should be free of any fees and charges.**

Three options:

1. Adapt the publishing contract - [some recommendations on how to proceed in publishing negotiations](#)
2. Attach an Open Access Addendum - [generate an addendum online](#)
3. Apply the [Rights Retention Strategy of the SNSF](#)

Predatory Journals

“Predatory journals and publishers are entities that **prioritize self-interest at the expense of scholarship** and are characterized by

- false or misleading information,
- deviation from best editorial and publication practices,
- a lack of transparency,
- and/or the use of aggressive and indiscriminate solicitation practices.”



Grudniewicz, A. et al. [Predatory journals: no definition, no defence](#). *Nature* **576**, 210–212 (2019).

Illustration of the problem...

- A Professor at MNF submitted a paper to a hybrid journal in November 2023, which is included in a Read&Publish contract.
- The quota of included publications is already used up for this year. New quota will be available in January 2024.
(The date of acceptance determines which year the paper is counted towards.)
- The funder demands immediate Open Access upon publication (but only pays for APCs in pure Gold OA journals, not hybrid).

Which options do they have?

- Pay out of their own pocket
- Delay the review process so that the date of acceptance will be in January 2024
- Choose a different journal
- Negotiate with the publisher for a retention of copyright (Zero Embargo)

The ideas on how to make money are infinite...

Article development charge (ADC) for zero-embargo green open access

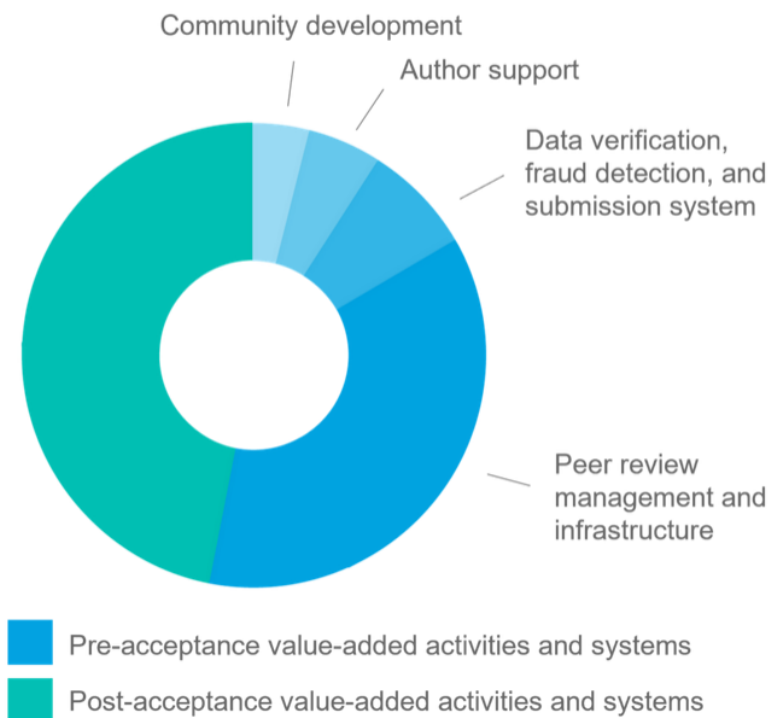
This option expands the choices beyond the free 12-month embargo route for those authors who do not already benefit from a [read and publish agreement](#) to comply with zero-embargo green open access mandates by posting their accepted manuscript to a repository without delay from acceptance.

The article development charge (ADC) is a flat fee of \$2,500 USD and is payable once the manuscript is sent for peer review. The ADC covers the cost of ACS' pre-acceptance publishing services, from initial submission through to the final editorial decision.

To continue enhancing opportunities for researchers and students from under-resourced regions, ADC waivers or discounts will be automatically applied to papers from corresponding authors from [all countries that currently receive special country pricing for article publishing charges \(APCs\)](#).

For more information about this option, please see our [zero-embargo green open access page](#).

Cost breakdown



<https://acsopscience.org/researchers/zero-green-oa/>