



Open Access Publishing Survey

Executive Summary



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
University Libraries

Introduction

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We conducted a survey concerning Open Access (OA) with Western Michigan University researchers between October and December 2024. The survey aimed to assess faculty and graduate student engagement with OA publishing, including publication habits, financial considerations and perceptions of OA journals.

Participation & demographics

A total of 192 respondents participated, including faculty (board-appointed, part-time), staff and graduate students. The highest response rate was from board-appointed faculty.

Open Access is the **free, immediate, online availability** of research articles coupled with the **rights to use** these articles fully in the digital environment.

■ Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition

Key Findings

OA publishing experience

- 55% of respondents had published OA, with board-appointed faculty showing a higher OA engagement (67%).
- Survey respondents reported higher publication numbers than OA publication figures for WMU affiliates tracked in the Scopus database (27% in 2024).

Article processing charges (APCs):

- 43% of board-appointed faculty paid over \$1,000 per article.
- 32% of board-appointed faculty funded APCs through institutional sources, while 24% used grant funding.

Publishing decisions

- 46% of respondents reported they chose not to publish OA due to APC costs.
- 60% of board-appointed faculty opted out of OA publishing due to APC costs.

Self-archiving (Green OA)

- 42% of respondents reported self-archiving their research on a faculty website or in a repository.
- Forty-two respondents used ScholarWorks for this purpose.
- ResearchGate was the most popular platform for self-archiving (62 users).

Major concerns expressed

- Cost barriers (APCs) deterred participation in OA publishing.
- Some respondents were wary of predatory journals and expressed some confusion between open access and publishers that operate in a predatory fashion.
- Respondents indicated a need for education and guidance on how to avoid predatory publishers and find reputable OA publishers.

Recommendations and next steps

Given the number of respondents who indicated grave concerns with the high APCs for OA publications, as well as that 43% of board-appointed faculty state that they have paid more than \$1,000 on average in APCs per article, it is worth beginning larger discussions at WMU regarding the feasibility of institutional funding for APCs. We plan to host campus-wide discussions on this topic.

The University Libraries must increase outreach and education to WMU researchers about their publication options and how to identify reputable publishers (both traditional and OA).

We must increase researchers' awareness of their options to self-archive their published works in legitimate disciplinary repositories to share their research without cost.

Researchers must find ways to make scholarship in their fields more open and accessible to readers. Starting new Diamond OA journals or serving as editors for existing ones will expand publishing options across disciplines. Diamond OA journals do not charge APCs.

Conclusion

There is a tension between the value of open access to scholarly information and the costs absorbed by publishers and authors to make articles open. OA will not be a feasible publication model if researchers are priced out of being able to utilize it as a publication option. However, funding exorbitant fees is not sustainable for WMU or most institutions. We must find a better way to nurture OA publication and explore other models of sharing research without burdensome costs.

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