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EDITORIAL

Never forget common sense...



Jannick Ingrin

This editorial continues the discussion on the cost, and ethics, of modern academic publishing. As scientists, we are trained to analyze complex questions. We expect this to render us clever and critically curious. However, it seems that, like other mortals, we sometimes forget to listen to basic common sense. For instance, is it counter-intuitive or against common sense for some publishers to propose a single price for publishing open access papers that is independent of article length? How can the price for a paper of 4 pages length versus 30 pages be the same?

Common sense suggests that costs should be proportional to the size of the product delivered. This is the case for most branches of commerce. If a house painter offered to paint your big mansion for the same price as the small house next door, would you not be a bit suspicious? You would probably wonder about the quality of the paint and possibly the quality and/or remuneration of the painting staff. You could also question the wisdom of your neighbour. Why do we not question the same illogical offers from scientific publishers?

Online publishing has, indeed, reduced the cost of production significantly. But it is doubtful that typesetting costs are independent of the number of article pages. The time spent copyediting the text is also strongly dependent on the length of the article, as well as on the time required by the reviewers. Is it not logical that authors of short papers, who are using less publishing resources, contribute a proportional, rather than an equal, amount to publishing costs? Such costs cover a wide range of activities, such as marketing, but sometimes also (as mentioned in the previous editorial) the stipend contributions to editors or reviewers. In some cases, the asking costs include support for the development of other journals from the same publisher.

It is clear that proposing a price proportional to the length of the article offers more flexibility to authors to organize their paper and limit costs. Additionally, it offers an easy and fair way to share the total costs of the journal among authors. The fact that the final costs of a paper are known only during the last steps before publication should be a minor inconvenience. Some libraries and institutions have specific threshold caps on author page charges (APCs), which makes standard costs welcome. However, such administrative rules should not be the driver for how science is done and/or published. Implementing transparency and limiting the inflation of publication costs has rarely been achieved by

administration rules: it has more readily been achieved by customers, which here means us, the scientific community. Authors, like you and me, must act to correct deviations driven by secondary actors.

For the *European Journal of Mineralogy (EJM)* the price of APCs is simply and transparently calculated per page published. In 2021, the current price to authors is €200 for a 4-page paper and €1,500 euros for a 30-page paper. Rates for members of the associated societies are even lower (€160 and €1,200 euros, respectively, for members of the DMG, EAG, SEM, SFMC, and SIMP). We believe this is the fairest way to provide a publication service to authors, which is what publishers should do because they are service providers. Therefore, authors should pay for what they get, and not for complex and ambitious commercial models. Even if you are not too worried about transparency, you may care about the (mis)use of research funds that are limited and scarce. In this context, you may see the many advantages of submitting your papers to journals such as the *EJM*. Many such academic journals are driven by volunteers (they work for free) and, importantly, they are motivated by a genuine interest in providing a good and honest service to the scientific community.

Jannick Ingrin

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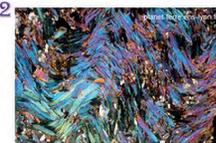
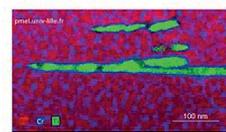
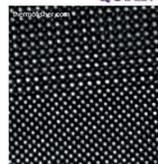
THE SFMC DAYS

Quantitative Imaging from Atoms to Stars

The SFMC Days conference usually take place in France every two years. After a hiatus due to COVID-19 restrictions, a new SFMC Days will take place 21–22 February 2022 in Villeneuve d'Ascq, close to Lille (France).

This conference will be devoted to quantitative imaging from atoms to stars and will be organized as follows:

Morning of 21 February 2022	Museum of natural history
Afternoon of 21 February 2022	Talks and posters
Morning of 22 February 2022	Talks and posters
Afternoon of 22 February 2022	SFMC council meeting



SFMC DAYS
VILLENEUVE D'ASCQ
QUANTITATIVE IMAGING FROM ATOMS TO STARS
21/02/2022 – 22/02/2022