

Journal team adds reviewer pay to open-access model

January 18 2015, by Nancy Owano



A new open-access journal called Collabra plans to pay reviewers, and that's a twist in the world of scientific publishing. The reviewers get to exercise some options. They can keep the cash (generally a modest sum) or give it back to the research world by donating the money to a waiver fund, for poor scientists who cannot pay the \$875 publication fee. The third option is to contribute it to their own institution's open-access activities.

"Open Access [journal](#) publishing reimagined"—that is the catchline for Collabra, from the University of California Open Press, the Open Access publishing arm of the University of California Press. The journal focus will be life and biomedical sciences; ecology and environmental science; and social and behavioral sciences. Why the decision to pay [reviewers](#)? It has to do with a conviction of enhancing the concept of "open" to one in which not only content is shared but also distributed throughout a value chain, from publisher to reviewer and to the entire [research community](#). That's why they created Collabra. "When you volunteer your time and expertise as an editor or reviewer, your efforts should be recognized with more than a thank-you. We do that by giving you the option of either being paid for the work you do or paying that value forward to the research community."

They are doing something about past criticism in scholarly publishing that all value and revenue flows only to publishers. In their setup, the Article Processing Charge (APC) is \$875. Of that sum, \$625 goes toward the publishing platform, the submission and review platform, editorial assistance from UC Press, marketing, and other operational costs. The remaining \$250 goes to editors and reviewers, who keep the money or send it to a waiver fund set up for authors who do not have the money for the APCs, or to their library's fund.

As such, the journal team believes they are addressing two hurdles in research circles, the high charge of article processing and the lack of deserved recognition for editors and reviewers. Dalmeet Singh Chawla, in *Science Insider*, [said](#), "Most scientific journals rely on volunteer editors and [peer reviewers](#) to operate. But when it comes to business models, journals fall into two general camps: subscription journals, which charge readers and libraries to read content that is kept behind paywalls; and [open-access journals](#), which charge authors an upfront fee to make their accepted papers immediately available to anyone with an Internet connection."

The Collabra team wanted to make a difference. "As not-for-profit publishers, we were free to create an OA journal that removes expensive barriers, rewards participation, and pays value forward so research becomes the focus," they said.

Matthew Gunther in *Chemistry World* said the journal will give contributors value [points](#) that are based on their level of journal engagement. This will determine the amount of money they can get from the fund. Even if the paper is rejected, reviewers can still accrue points.

More information: www.collabraoa.org/

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