

# On the road to open scholarship in 2022

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The Biochemical Society and Portland Press are committed to open scholarship. In 2020 we launched our Unlimited Read & Publish programme. This article summarizes the progress that has been made since then and explores the effect that our transitioning sales offerings have had on paywalls to published content. The share of content in our transitioning (hybrid) journals published open access (OA) is the highest it has ever been and continues to increase as more institutions take up transformative agreements with us each year. Open data and clear communication are key parts of the on-going transition, and progress with publishing workflows and data availability have been made. With over 40% of 2021's published content in hybrid journals converted to OA, the Biochemical Society and Portland Press are also actively scoping future models. For this, we are seeking sustainable and collaborative pathways to completing our transition in a way that is globally equitable and inclusive.

The Biochemical Society and its publishing arm Portland Press have been on a steady course towards open scholarship for several years. The Group's open scholarship position statement was arrived at in October 2019, and we are continuing to scope a transition of publishing models in support of a more open future.

An article in 2020 outlined the key principles on which our transition was based. These were:

1. commit to a clear transition strategy,
2. take a proactive approach and learn by doing,
3. repurpose legacy subscriptions income from institutions in favour of transformative deals supporting open access (OA),
4. remove author-facing charges, and
5. focus on data – not deadlines – to drive the transition.

*Over 40% of content in hybrid journals was published OA in 2021. More than half of these articles would have been published behind paywalls without our 'unlimited' R&P agreements.*

Based on these guiding principles we launched our pilot programme of 'unlimited' Read & Publish (R&P) renewals in 2020 – providing uncapped OA publishing and read access across our entire journal portfolio. At the time, we were one of only three (society) publishers in the world to offer such uncapped deals to institutions, and de-coupling our agreements from per-article payments in this way has been an important step in our journey as a transitioning self-publishing society (Figure 1).

## The move to open access two years on

In 2020, OA for 10% of all published content was enabled by piloting unlimited R&P deals, and 9% of our legacy subscription income was converted into revenue via these new R&P agreements (Figure 2).

The number of papers published OA through our transformative agreements in 2021 increased 30% on the previous year and accounted for 23% of all published content in our hybrid journals. Additionally, 13.5% of legacy subscriptions income has been repurposed under R&P sales.

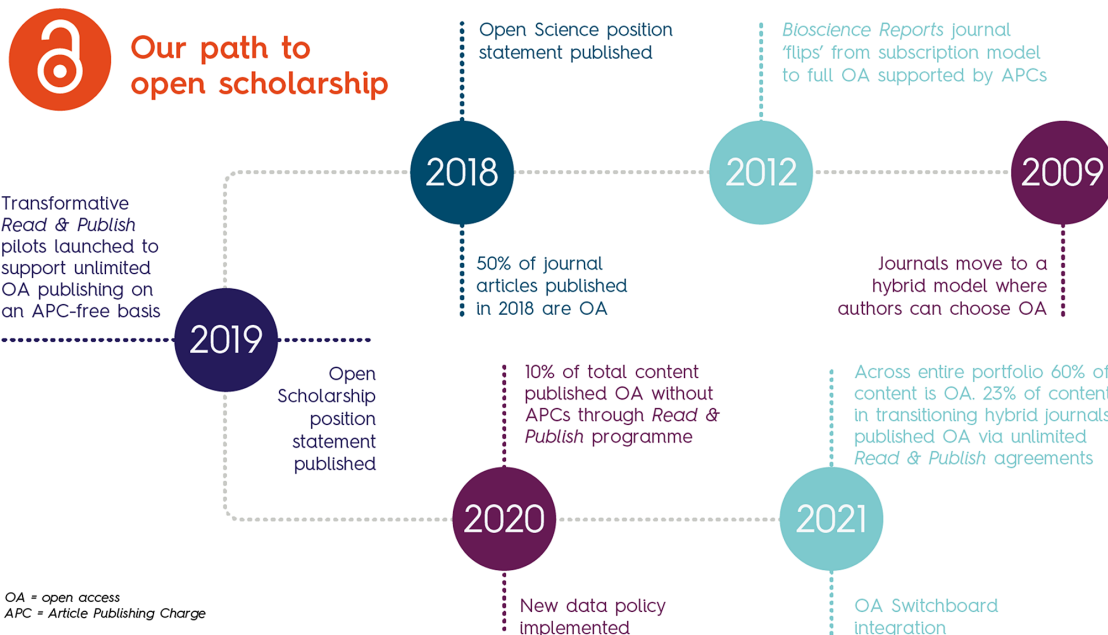
Moving into its third year, our unlimited R&P programme has continued to grow with more institutions joining each year and over 400 articles published OA from authors in 15 countries to date.

## Transitioning 'hybrid' journals that otherwise publish paywalled content

Launched in 2020 our 'unlimited' R&P has been particularly successful in helping to convert more content from our hybrid titles to OA while removing author-facing charges (Figure 3). 'Over 40% of content in hybrid journals was published OA in 2021. More than half of these articles would have been published behind paywalls without our 'unlimited' R&P agreements.'

## The full package

Portland Press also publishes two fully OA journals. Uniquely for most offerings of this type, these titles



**Figure 1.** Timeline to open.

are included in our unlimited R&P package. This means that, in total, almost a fifth of articles across all the Biochemical Society's journals were published OA through transformative agreements in 2021.

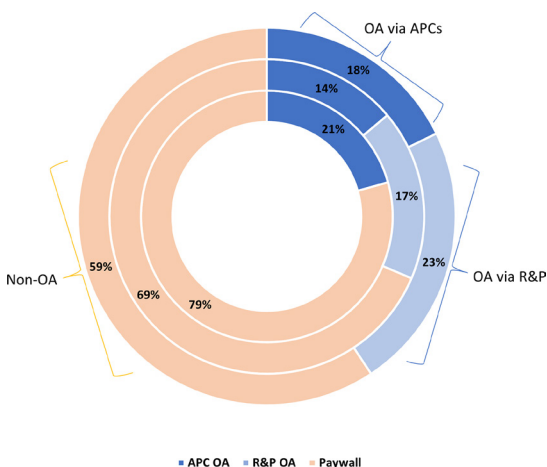
2021 also saw the launch of our dedicated, streamlined R&P submission workflow. "The goal of our R&P agreements is not just to remove article publishing charges (APCs) but to make it as simple as possible for authors to publish OA. We believe that publishing should mean OA publishing by default." Our workflow ensures authors are immediately notified during submission when they are eligible for APC-free OA publishing and are kept up to date throughout the process. Papers are

automatically published OA upon acceptance, unless the author chooses to opt out.

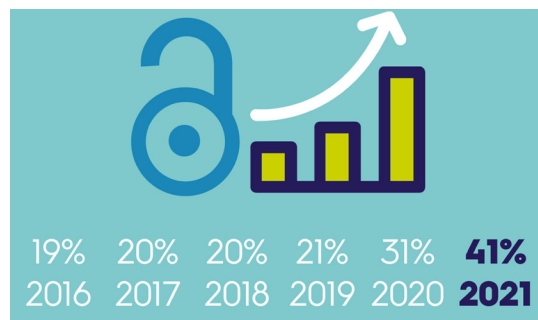
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### Our institutional partners

It is not just authors and researchers who are benefitting through greater openness and streamlined workflows. Institutions are getting value out of their agreements through increased publish activity and expanded access to subscription content. If we compare the published



**Figure 2.** Effect of R&P on Portland Press hybrid journal articles published from 2019 to 2021.



**Figure 3.** Increasing open access in hybrid journals. As of July the proportion of OA content published in the hybrid journals for 2022 has increased to 50%.

output from institutions that signed up to our R&P in the first two years, we see that on average around 40% more articles from affiliated scholars were being published annually, and the number of OA articles from these institutions has more than doubled. In addition, around 30% of R&P customers have benefitted from expanded read access to previously paywalled content.

Our unlimited R&P offering was developed in consultation with libraries and consortia. The early support of Jisc and CAUL was vital to our success in the first year. We have since partnered with many other consortia and institutions, including Max Planck Digital Library and the Spanish National Research Council. It is the support from such organizations and many other individual institutions that enables and drives our ability to transition to OA.

Another important milestone was the recent launch of a transformative OA agreement with University of California (UC). In the words of Ellen Finnie, director of Shared Collections at California Digital Library, this agreement “expands access to the Biochemical Society’s journals at UC” and “makes it easier and more affordable for UC researchers to publish open access with the Society”. We now have over 280 institutions participating in agreements supporting unlimited OA publishing across 15 different countries worldwide (Figure 4).

### The independent Society–publisher perspective

Portland Press is the publishing arm of (and is wholly owned by) the Biochemical Society. It is important that

we remain financially viable and that Portland Press continues to be able to support the Biochemical Society through this transition and beyond. The Biochemical Society is a founding member of the Society Publishers’ Coalition (SocPC). In 2021 we collaborated with others in the SocPC to arrive at common principles of ‘Unlimited Open Access’ in our existing R&P offerings (Figure 5). With the proliferation of many different types of transformative arrangements, it is hoped the Unlimited OA model can provide simplicity and portability, becoming a blueprint for other transitioning society publishers.

### OA Switchboard

Portland Press is one of the launch customers of the OA Switchboard – a community, not-for-profit initiative and neutral information-exchange hub for OA publications. Uptake of the new switchboard service amongst research funders, institutions and consortia is growing steadily, with over 40 confirmed institutions/consortia and 7 research funders (including UK Research and Innovation, Howard Hughes Medical Institute and Wellcome) signed up as of March 2022. Since the end of December 2021, ~20% of Portland Press’ OA publications have been reported directly to institutions through the Switchboard.

### Open data

Availability and shareability of research data is a key aspect of open scholarship. In 2020 Portland Press implemented



**Figure 4.** Portland Press Read & Publish institutions. Microsoft product screen shot reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation



Unlimited Open Access

#### Publishers / Society Publishers that are:

- Not for profit and mission driven
- Actively transitioning away from legacy subscription models and/or piloting transformative approaches

#### Agreements:

- Offer unlimited OA for all eligible publications plus read access to paywall content
- Any paper eligible under the deal from a corresponding author at a participating institution is included
- Authors and readers are notified of institutional participation to facilitate OA
- Meta-data driven annual reporting for librarians
- Creative Commons licensing
- No NDAs – terms are transparent and publicly available (e.g. agreements deposited on ESAC)

*This is one of several routes to sustainable OA in use by SocPC members.*

**Figure 5.** Portland Press is a member of the Society Publishers' Coalition.

a new data policy, requiring a data availability statement for all research submissions. Since then, over 500 research papers have been published with completed data availability statements. In 2021 we enabled data deposition as part of the author-facing workflow. This ensures our authors can be compliant with funder mandates as well as providing greater data integrity and transparency.

### In conclusion

Our R&P programme is enabling more research and reviews to be published without paywalls than ever before – transformative agreements are removing the need for per-article billing while also facilitating closer collaboration with institutions and library consortia.

If you want to learn more about our unlimited R&P for 2023, please visit our website for more details. If you are unsure whether your institution is signed up or are interested in signing up, please speak to your librarian or contact our sales team ([sales@portlandpress.com](mailto:sales@portlandpress.com)) for more information.

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If you have questions or feedback about our approach so far, please get in touch with our content team: [editorial@portlandpress.com](mailto:editorial@portlandpress.com).