

What led to the failure of the Swiss negotiations for a transformative Open Access agreement with Oxford University Press (OUP)?

On behalf of its members, the [Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries](#) negotiates for transformative Open Access agreements with publishers, including OUP. Transformative Open Access agreements combine access rights to a publisher's full journal portfolio with Open Access (OA) publishing rights for researchers within that same portfolio. For these Big Deal negotiations, the members of swissuniversities and further Swiss research libraries associated with the Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries have agreed to adhere to a set of [core negotiation aims](#). There is further agreement among all participating libraries and university leaderships that these aims apply to all other OA negotiations as well.

The most important goal is to achieve 100% OA for publications by Swiss researchers at no additional cost with so-called cost-neutral transformative agreements. While cost-neutral transformative agreements were concluded with several publishers, OUP asks Swiss academic libraries for an additional 60%–65% on top of their current license spend for the next agreement period. This left the libraries with no other choice than to cancel the existing reading license agreement¹, leaving Swiss researchers without access to current publications in OUP journals.

Following, we address the three main reasons why we have reached this point: Historical price increases, the overestimation of projected publication output and double-dipping practice.

1. **Historical price increases:** Over the last nine years, the price for licensing the OUP Full Collection has increased by approximately 65% (6.5% per year)². As point of comparison, the inflation rate in Europe has resulted in a price increase of 18% for products and services over the same period. Both inflation and price increases in this range – which is a general trend across publishers – put a lot of pressure on library budgets. The steady and significant price increase for e-journal collections is not feasible for libraries in the long term. Continuing to subscribe to journal licenses without adding OA publishing rights can thus no longer be an option.
2. **Overestimation of publication output:** Among other factors, OUP's offers for transformative Open Access agreements assume that publications from Swiss authors will increase by 3% per year. Data from [Swiss Journal Monitor](#) suggests, however, that the number of journal publications in subscription journals has stagnated between 2018 and 2021.³
3. **Double-dipping:** Publishers charge libraries for subscriptions and authors for Hybrid Article Processing Charges (APCs) to publish their articles OA in these journals. This practice is commonly referred to as double-dipping and it has hitherto failed to have an impact on subscription prices.

¹ The decision to discontinue the OUP consortium reading license was unanimous.

² This is an approximate figure which attempts to calculate an annual increase not impacted by the addition of new journal titles. The actual price difference is higher for each participating institution and varies depending on the subscriptions before the Consortium was formed.

³ The analysis considered publications by authors affiliated with members of swissuniversities and institutions of the ETH Domain between 2018 and 2021. In 2021, there were the exact same number of publications in subscription titles with OUP as in 2018. The [Swiss Journal Monitor](#) is based on data provided by Unpaywall, Crossref, the Directory of Open Access Journals, the Research Organization Registry, and Dimensions.

swissuniversities⁴ and Swiss Academic Libraries do not condone this double-dipping practice. OUP's last two offers still add hybrid APCs paid by researchers on top of the price for the current Consortium license (cf. Figure 1). If accepted, unjustifiable double-dipping would thus be included in the future pricing and would result in a 50%–65% increase on current Consortium spend.

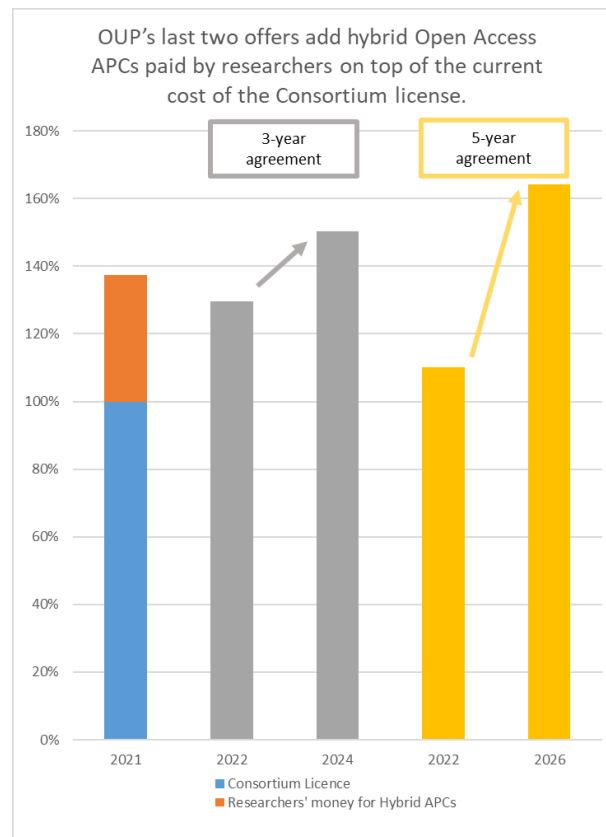


Figure 1: OUP's last two offers add hybrid Open Access APCs paid by researchers on top of the current cost of the Consortium license.

The Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries and its members remain committed to discussing a new agreement with OUP, but without a serious reconsideration of their position, the existing No Deal situation may last longer than just a few months as previously assumed. Furthermore, we recommend to Swiss researchers to refrain from paying for APCs in OUP hybrid journals until we find an agreement. Instead, consider depositing the accepted manuscript on the repository of your institution or on another non-commercial repository (Green Open Access). The Swiss library community is committed to providing its researchers with transformative Open Access agreements and hopes that this unfortunate situation can be resolved soon.

⁴ [National Open Access Policy Guidelines](#)