

Improved Open Access Support through a Popular Open Access Fund

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abstract: This paper describes results of a 2023 survey of authors who applied to University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Open Article Fund, a fund that supports article processing charges (APCs). The survey sought feedback about the fund's impact, value, and award criteria as well as opinions on other open access topics. Results show that the fund has had a positive impact on open access uptake and opinions of open access. Respondents reported that they participate in other open publishing activities and believe that most publications should be made open access. The results suggest opportunities for better strategic connections between the fund and other open access outreach efforts.

Introduction

North American, library-based funds supporting authors in their efforts to publish open access have been evolving since at least 2009.¹ These funds, often referred to as open access funds, article processing charge (APC) funds, or subvention funds, have changed in number and are the subject of debates among librarians. Concerns about these funds include whether and how libraries should pay for funding of APCs alongside already stretched budgets and where or whether APC support fits with calls to support open infrastructure and mandates focusing on "green" (self-archiving) open access.² Some of the most compelling reasons to evaluate APC funds are the barriers introduced by the author funded model of publishing, and the alternatives to APCs, such as diamond open access and repository use.³ Additionally, equity in scholarly publishing is included as a priority for national government and intergovernmental efforts to accelerate open (or public) access to research.⁴

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Understanding the impact of an APC fund on those it is meant to support and also seeking to increase awareness and action with regard to inequities in the APC model would seem to be at odds with one another. Management of the fund can quickly take bandwidth from a broader intent to facilitate local changes or even conversations about “open” on campus. Is the fund’s value and impact to authors worth the effort together with other open access outreach activities? If yes, what can be learned about the potential to expand the impact of the fund beyond supporting an individual’s ability to publish open access?

This paper describes results of a 2023 survey of authors who applied to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Open Article Fund between July 2018 and June 2022. The author sought the respondents’ opinions and experiences in regard to the fund’s impact, value, and award criteria. It builds on the literature by also asking authors about their opinions of funder mandates and their participation in open science practices. This additional information helps increase understanding of the audience the UNLV Fund has reached and generates ideas for improved outreach about open access more broadly.

Local Context

Established in 1957, UNLV is a relatively young, diverse, and urban research university. In 2018, UNLV became one of two Carnegie “R1” or “Very High Research” institutions in Nevada.⁵ As part of the effort to achieve and then maintain R1 status, and continue to grow UNLV’s research reputation, UNLV developed the Top Tier plan. The current plan, “Top Tier 2.0,” identifies eight core areas. One core area, “Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity,” emphasizes “high-quality, widely disseminated, and influential research, scholarship, and creative activities.”⁶ In recent years, UNLV has enrolled around 30,000 students. As of 2023, UNLV has just over 4,000 employees, of which 32 percent are academic faculty.

The Open Article Fund began with support from the University Libraries Advisory Board in 2018, with \$10,000 allocated to a pilot project. The collection budget provided additional funding and now supports the fund entirely. Since 2018, total allocated funds each fiscal year have been close to \$30,000. While the criteria for the UNLV Open Article Fund has changed over time, for most of its history it has supported tenured and tenure-track faculty who are authors on papers in peer reviewed, fully open access journals.⁷ The fund’s intent is to support authors across all disciplines, and particularly those who are unlikely to have corresponding grant funds to pay for open access. Additional criteria include restricting researchers to a single award in a 12-month period and evaluation of the selected journal using the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA) membership criteria.⁸

UNLV has supported two additional open access publishing funds. In partnership with the Minority-Serving Institution (MSI) Student Council, the University Libraries managed awards for funds provided by the Council in 2020, specifically for graduate students. In 2022, the UNLV Kirk Kerkorian School of Medicine Library began a fund for faculty, residents, and fellows at the school. This paper focuses solely on assessment of the UNLV Open Article Fund (“the UNLV Fund”).



Literature Review

The literature on APC funds provides a strong foundation for conducting an assessment on the sustainability of funds as well as author familiarity with open access publishing choices. Few articles tie APC funds to institutional strategy and even fewer seek the experiences of fund applicants to gauge local thinking on broader open access trends.

In 2014, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) released a report on the state of article processing charge funds offered at research libraries. The report reviews the growth and status of APC funds and describes successes and challenges observed by fund managers. The challenges reflect a pair of concerns: lack of author engagement and scale issues due to popularity of the funds.⁹ These issues remain the focus of fund assessment activities.

Numerous articles report the results of surveys of authors and others who have interacted with their institution's APC fund, providing ideas and survey tools that encourage fund assessment by other fund managers. Librarians at Grand Valley State University (GVSU) surveyed open access publishing fund recipients to supplement the quantitative data they were already collecting to determine whether the fund was meeting its goals. Three of the survey questions sought author insights about their decision to publish open access, past and future. The fourth question asked about the impact of publishing the funded work in an open access journal. The GVSU authors found that they were increasing the number of OA publications but were uncertain if they were "raising the University's awareness of OA publishing options."¹⁰

Other researchers examine OA publishing in the context of institutional strategy and author perceptions of open access either in addition to, or instead of, assessing fund management and criteria. These efforts include gauging respondents' publishing preferences among closed and open access models, the impact of open access publishing choices, and support for other open access efforts such as a campus OA policy and APC funding beyond the library.¹¹

Surveys of APC fund participants are not the only method used to gain insights into fund successes and challenges. One such study addressed the labor of fund management, which in part sought ways to reduce the work of tracking encumbered funds.¹² Another, using data gleaned from fourteen Canadian libraries, led to suggestions for improving transparency around criteria for awards and the amount of funding available. Other outcomes from that study included recommendations that "funded authors retain full rights to their work," and an improved focus on fund assessment.¹³

Several researchers advocate for critical appraisal of funds in comparison to established metrics and initiatives, particularly those of collection development. One experiment proposed a model for identifying comparable metrics to cost per use data used frequently with subscriptions, since the source of APC funds is often the library's collections budget.¹⁴ Another study compared APC funded publications from 16 libraries against articles not supported by library APC funds, finding

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that articles assisted by the fund “have a slightly lower impact based on their citation counts as compared to similarly published research outside the dataset” and suggested that common fund criteria, such as accepting requests only for articles that are not grant funded, could be an influencing factor.¹⁵ Another case study determined that, locally, the fund seemed to be a lost opportunity to use the money on collections, that APC support did not fit with the library’s mission, and that funding should come from elsewhere on campus.¹⁶

Open access outreach and engagement utilizing the momentum of APC funds is relevant to the current study as well. In a study of small and medium sized libraries with APC funds, fund managers reported that faculty senate resolutions on open access, growing institutional research impact, and change to the promotion and tenure systems were among the ways the fund might support institutional change.¹⁷ Some fund managers incorporated open access advocacy into the work of the fund management from the start. In one study, an open access funding team used newly implemented support for APCs to develop an OA communication plan. The plan included proactive outreach to authors about funder compliance, a website with open access funding information, and numerous outreach events.¹⁸

Methods

This study used Qualtrics to distribute the survey to authors who had engaged with the UNLV Fund.¹⁹ The survey included 28 questions and employed display logic, meaning that different respondents saw different questions (see Appendix). Four questions were based on those asked in Sarah Beaubien, Julie Garrison, and Doug Way’s study, with some slight edits.²⁰ The other 24 questions covered respondent demographics, fund impact, value, and criteria, and ended with questions on open access perceptions. There is a risk in conducting a lengthy survey, but the value of obtaining additional insights from the funded participants was worth the possibility that some respondents would not complete the survey.

In January 2023, the survey was sent to 161 institutional email addresses. This included all UNLV authors that had applied for the fund from July 2018 through June 2022 and their UNLV co-authors, as long as they had current UNLV email addresses. The survey excluded UNLV co-authors with no publicly available UNLV email address and non-UNLV authors.

The survey required that respondents consent to participate and answer whether they or a co-author had received an award from the UNLV Fund. They were routed to the end of the survey if they indicated they or a co-author had not received funding. All other questions were optional. UNLV’s Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved this study as “exempt” (minimal risk to human subjects).

Results

Of the 161 survey invitations sent, 13 emails bounced. Of those, 55 people started the survey, and ten either stated the survey did not apply to them or they did not participate beyond the demographic questions. This left 45 responses—a 28 percent response



rate—for this analysis. That said, due to skip logic and all questions beyond the first two being set to optional, some questions received fewer than 45 responses.

Demographics and Application Status

Nearly all of the 45 respondents were academic faculty (89 percent). Tenured and tenure-track faculty accounted for 80 percent of all survey respondents and 90 percent of the academic faculty participating (see Table 1).

Most respondents were well established in their fields. The average career span was 17.8 years, with a minimum of four and a maximum of 50 years.

Thirty-seven of the 45 respondents had directly applied for an award and eight were a co-author with someone who applied. Thirty-nine of 44 respondents indicated their award was already paid. Four said the article was not yet paid (including invoice not received), and one reported that their grant was not awarded.

APC Impact, Value, and Criteria

The next sections of the survey focused on the impact, value of, and criteria for use of the fund. Because tenured and tenure-track faculty represent the majority of the survey respondents and are also the audience for the UNLV Fund, selected questions have been analyzed further against tenure status.

Impact

Twenty-five of 41 respondents indicated the award was for their first open access publication and 16 said it was not. Fifteen tenured faculty and 5 tenure-track faculty said it was their first OA article.

The next four questions were based on Beaubien, Garrison, and Way's survey as noted in the Methods section.²⁴ Twenty-seven of 39 respondents noted that "choosing an open access venue had a positive impact on the exposure" of their article, nine were unsure of the impact, and three stated there was no impact, including two who said their article was published too recently to tell.

The survey asked authors why they chose OA publishing. "Increasing the visibility of the research" was selected 30 times, with the reasons "Best journal for disseminating this research" and "Support for open sharing of research results" each selected 24 times, whereas the other categories generated many fewer responses (see Figure 1).

Thirty-eight of 45 respondents indicated the availability of the fund had significant influence on their decision to publish open access. Six said it had some influence, and one reported it had no influence.

Across a five-point Likert scale ranging from extremely likely to extremely unlikely, 30 of 45 respondents said they are extremely likely to publish open access in the future. Of those, nearly three quarters of tenured faculty selected extremely likely to consider open access in the future, while only a little more than half of tenure-track faculty were as confident in their OA publishing plans (see Table 2).

Twenty-three of 41 respondents said their opinion of open access improved, and 18 stated that their opinion about OA did not change due to receiving funds. None said their opinion worsened, or that they did not have enough information to answer the question.



Table 1.

Survey respondents by role and research area

Role at UNLV	Humanities & Arts	Social Sciences	Sciences & Engineering	Medicine & Health Sciences	Other	Total
Academic: Tenured	1	7	9	7	1	25
Academic: Tenure-track	1	4	3	3	0	11
Academic: Not tenured or tenure-track	0	1	1	1	1	4
Administrative faculty	0	1	2	0	0	3
Graduate student	0	2	0	0	0	2
Total	2	15	15	11	2	45

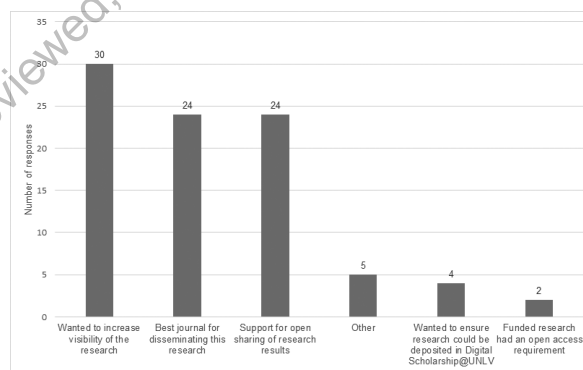


Figure 1. Reasons given for why respondents chose to publish their articles open access.



Table 2.

Likelihood of considering publishing an OA article in the future

Future OA publishing?	Academic: Tenured	Academic: Tenure-track	Academic: Not tenured or tenure-track	Administrative faculty	Graduate student	Total
Extremely likely	18	6	2	2	2	30
Somewhat likely	7	5	1	1	0	14
Neither likely or unlikely	0	0	1	0	0	1

Impact can extend beyond the author's actions, intentions, and article metrics. Forty-one of 43 respondents agreed that the UNLV Fund supports the Top Tier 2.0 statement "UNLV fosters a climate of innovation in which faculty and students produce high-quality, widely disseminated, and influential research, scholarship, and creative activities."²²

Impact can extend beyond the author's actions, intentions, and article metrics.

Value

Since the fund is supported by the collections budget, the survey asked whether it provided more, equal, or less value than equivalent spending on collections. Twenty-two of 44 respondents indicated the fund provided equal value, 21 said more value, and one said less value. Tenured and tenure-track faculty differed in their responses (see Table 3).

When asked whether the library should continue to support the UNLV Fund, 41 of 44 respondents selected "yes, it should be a priority," and one said that it should not be a priority. Three selected "it depends" and provided different suggestions having to do with journal criteria, funding amount, and support for a needs-based approach.

Since predatory publishing, in which authors are charged fees for services that are not provided, and the cost of APCs are common concerns at UNLV, the survey asked whether participants thought their publisher charged a fair amount for the quality of service, review, and production rendered for the funded article.²³ Of 43 responses, 24 selected yes, 16 selected no, and three chose "other," with the option to elaborate. Each of the free text comments suggest those respondents did not feel they had enough experience with OA publishing to answer. A higher proportion of tenured faculty felt the publisher charged a fair amount compared to the tenure-track faculty participants (see Table 4).



Table 3.

Survey respondents' assessment of the value library support for the UNLV Open Article Fund as compared to spending on subscriptions or collections purchases

Future OA publishing?	Academic: Tenured	Academic: Tenure-track	Academic: Not tenured or tenure-track	Administrative faculty	Graduate student	Total
Better Value	15	3	2	1	0	21
Equal Value	9	8	2	1	2	22
Less Value	1	0	0	0	0	1

Table 4.

Respondents' assessments of whether their publishers charged a fair amount given the quality of service, review, and production rendered for their articles

Future OA publishing?	Academic: Tenured	Academic: Tenure-track	Academic: Not tenured or tenure-track	Administrative faculty	Graduate student	Total
Yes – the cost was fair for the service provided	16	5	0	2	1	24
No – the publisher charged too much for the service	8	4	3	0	1	16
Other	1	1	1	0	0	3



Criteria and Management of the Fund

To a question asking who should be supported with the fund, respondents indicated tenure-track and tenured faculty the most frequently, closely followed by PhD students and postdoctoral scholars, with master's students, undergraduates, and other categories of faculty and staff receiving much less support (see Table 5).

Regarding other criteria that would help the fund reach more researchers, "limiting the award to one per fiscal year," was by far the most popular choice with 27 respondents choosing this option among several presented. The question allowed for other suggestions, which included increasing the maximum award and prioritizing high impact factor journals (see Figure 2).

Since many of the awards only provide partial funding, the survey asked how authors covered amounts over \$1,500. Nineteen participants reported that they used department or college funds, eight used personal funds (whether theirs or a co-author's), one requested and received a reduced invoice from the publisher, and all four that selected "other" indicated they used grant funds. Eight reported that the UNLV Fund award fully covered the cost.

Regarding the authors' unit support for APCs, thirteen stated that their unit administrator(s) support using unrestricted funds, while 18 answered that they did not have that support. Of the thirteen that selected "in some circumstances" most were not sure, and others stated their unit had either author role or journal-based criteria in place.

One question asked participants to rate six different aspects of the fund experience using "high/great," "neutral," or "low/poor." The application form received a uniformly high rating. All other categories received high ratings much more often than any other rating (see Table 6).

Open Access Perceptions

The final section of the survey asked about additional experience with a range of high-profile issues such as open sharing of research, open and public access policies, and predatory publishing. The last questions provided respondents with two opportunities to share other comments about the UNLV Fund and open access more generally.

Thirty-six respondents reported they participate in other open activities besides the article(s) supported with the UNLV Fund. The choices presented focused primarily on publishing but provided an option to share additional open science activities. Under "other," two respondents indicated they participated in open science registration. The tenured and tenure-track faculty participate in these efforts at similar rates, although their types of participation differed (see Figure 3).

The survey asked whether governmental, charitable and private funders, and universities should have public or open access policies. Support was strong for each type of organization having such a policy. Tenured and tenure-track faculty differed in their expectations of charitable funders (see Tables 7a-7c).

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Table 5.

Respondents' opinions about which UNLV staff and students the fund should support

Categories to support with the UNLV Fund	Responses
Tenure-track faculty	42
Tenured faculty	35
PhD students	30
Post-Docs	29
Master's students	18
Professional faculty	12
Clinical faculty	11
Undergraduates	11
Other	2

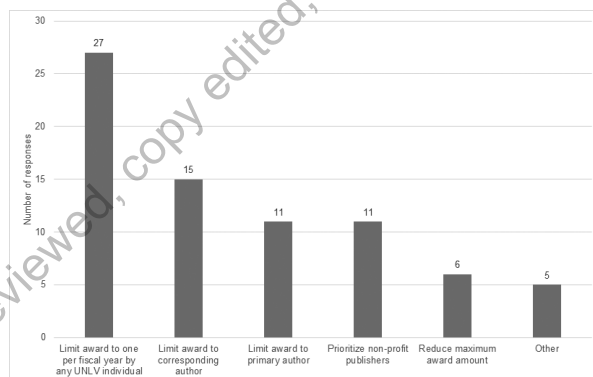


Figure 2. Respondents indicated what they believed to be the fairest award criteria.

Thirty-five of 42 respondents said that they are concerned about predatory publishing, with responses from tenured and tenure-track faculty similar to one another.

Openly sharing COVID-19 pandemic research became standard practice at the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

The survey asked for respondents' opinions about the importance of open sharing of research results by broad disciplinary area, as well as more specific health sciences topics, including COVID-19 pandemic research.



Table 6.

Respondents' ratings for the elements of the UNLV Open Article Fund award process

Rating	Application form	Timeliness of response to questions	Clarity of criteria	Timeliness of response to award application	Timeliness of payment by UNLV	Publisher's communication about payment
High/great	40	38	37	37	33	25
Neutral	0	1	3	4	5	11
Low/poor	0	0	1	0	2	0

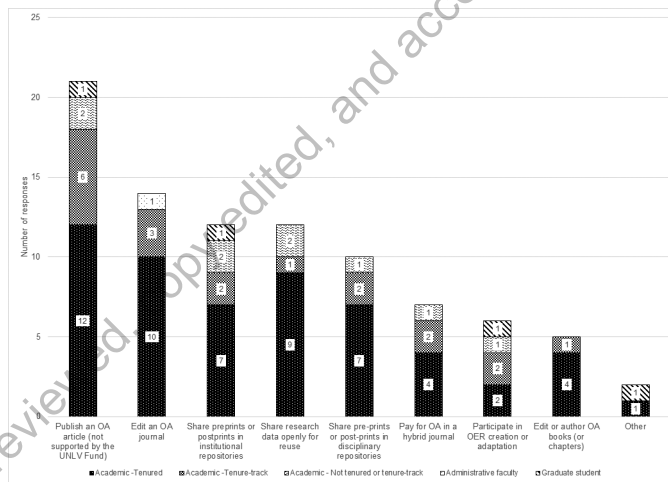


Figure 3. Types of UNLV Fund-supported open access or open science activities respondents have participated in, sorted by the individuals' employment status.

Openly sharing COVID-19 pandemic research became standard practice at the onset of the pandemic in 2020. However, it was not without challenges particularly regarding peer review, or lack thereof for pre-prints and the potential ephemeral nature of publisher-provided free access to normally paywalled materials.²⁴ The COVID-19 Pandemic and public health research publications received the most selections for "Open access is important" (see Figure 4). Tenured and tenure-track faculty differed in their opinions about the importance of open access across four of the categories, with tenured faculty



Table 7a.

Respondents' recorded opinions about whether government agencies should have public and open access policies

	Academic: Tenured	Academic: Tenure-track	Academic: Not tenured or tenure-track	Administrative faculty	Graduate student	Total
Should have open or public access policies	19	8	3	2	2	34
Unsure	4	3	1	0	0	8
Should NOT have open or public access policies	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 7b.

Respondents' recorded opinions about whether charitable and private funders should have public and open access policies

	Academic: Tenured	Academic: Tenure-track	Academic: Not tenured or tenure-track	Administrative faculty	Graduate student	Total
Should have open or public access policies	17	3	3	1	2	26
Unsure	6	8	1	1	0	16
Should NOT have open or public access policies	0	0	0	0	0	0



Table 7c.
 Respondents recorded opinions about whether universities should have public and open access policies

	Academic: Tenured	Academic: Tenure-track	Academic: Not tenured or tenure-track	Administrative faculty	Graduate student	Total
Should have open or public access policies	17	7	2	2	2	30
Unsure	6	4	2	0	0	12
Should NOT have open or public access policies	1	0	0	0	0	1

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always indicating that open access is important at a higher rate than tenure-track respondents in those areas. The largest divide between the two groups was around social sciences research, with 73 percent of the tenured faculty indicating that OA is important, compared to 36 percent of the tenure-track faculty.

The survey ended with two open-ended questions that asked for recommendations for improving the UNLV Fund and invited additional comments about experiences with the UNLV Fund or open access. Both questions generated comments about the UNLV Fund and about open access more generally and therefore were analyzed together. Of the 26 responses, the most common theme reflected a positive sentiment about the fund itself (see Figure 5).

Discussion

Overall, the survey results show that authors supported by the UNLV Fund have experienced positive outcomes and believe the fund is valuable. Respondents also shared suggestions for changing the award criteria and provided their insights on current open access topics. However, tenured and tenure-track faculty differed somewhat in their opinions and experiences with the fund and open access. This additional breakdown is helpful since there is ongoing debate as to whether longevity in career contributes to a researcher's interest in pursuing open access publication.²⁵ Supporting the notion that younger faculty may be more interested, Blankstein found that faculty aged 22 to 44 "would be happy to see an open access publications system replace the traditional subscription-based system."²⁶ The current study did not ask for respondents' age. However, more senior UNLV faculty (using tenure as an imperfect proxy for comparison to Blankstein) are more likely to publish open access in the future, more readily support the use of the collections budget on open access publishing, and felt publishers charged a fair APC price. This could suggest tenured faculty at UNLV are more supportive of OA publishing than tenure-track faculty.

The results indicate the fund is having an impact on author publishing choice and perceptions of open access. Some of the questions used in the impact section of the survey were inspired by and adapted slightly from Beaubien, Garrison, and Way. The UNLV and GVSU authors' responses were comparable. One difference in sentiment between the two studies was that only 60 percent of the UNLV respondents reported that publishing OA had a positive impact, while 74 percent of the GVSU authors reported a benefit. Regarding the question of why one would choose open access publishing, the same top three choices (increase visibility, support open, best journal) were selected most often, with "increase visibility" being the most popular in both studies.

The UNLV Top Tier 2.0 plan helps guide strategies and services within the University Libraries and the efforts of the libraries in turn, hopefully, lead to university successes. That the respondents saw a connection between the UNLV Fund and the Top Tier 2.0

Respondents valued the fund but were divided about the quality of services provided by the publishers.

Plan suggests that this may be an area to explore further when looking to grow open access support. OA ambassadors at UNLV might rethink talking points to better tie efforts such as the UNLV Fund to university strategy.

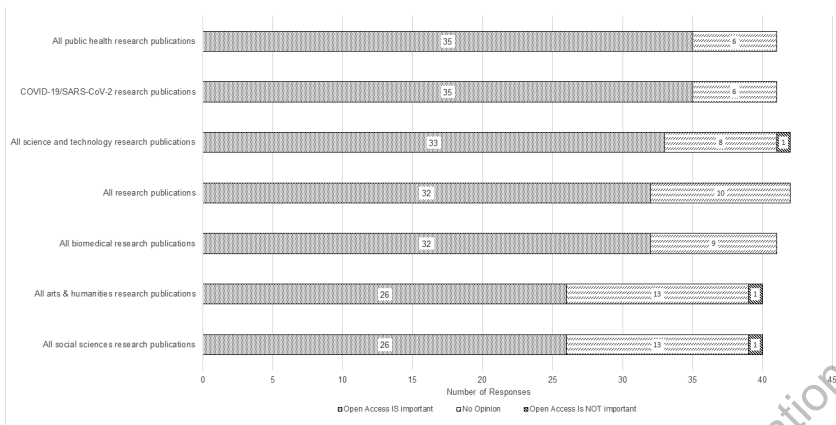


Figure 4. Respondents indicated the fields of research in which they believe open access publishing to be most important. Those related to public health and the COVID-19 Pandemic were selected most often.

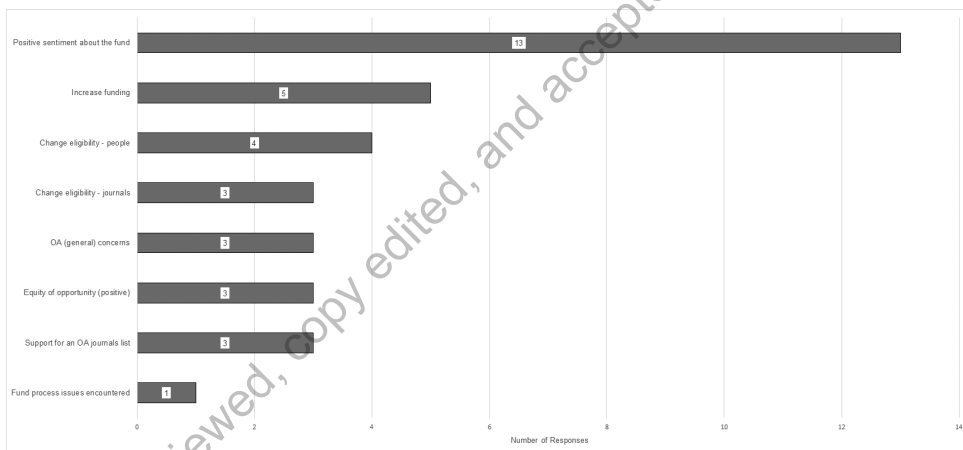


Figure 5. Responses to the invitation to provide additional comments about OA publishing were generally positive and offered suggestions for how to improve the UNLV Fund award process.

Respondents valued the fund but were divided about the quality of services provided by the publishers. That said they overwhelmingly felt the fund provided equal or more value than the same money spent on collections. This suggests that award recipients generally do not believe that collections are suffering due to the financial cost of the UNLV Fund, a factor that may aid in protecting the fund during budget cuts.

Some respondents requested further guidance on “approved” journals in their open-ended comments at the end of the survey. In addition, some expressed that they (or the fund) did not receive value for the price paid to publishers, and many expressed concerns about predatory publishers. This suggests that additional local guidance on these topics would be helpful for fund applicants.



Criteria and Management

The survey results prove there is broad interest in supporting graduate students and postdoctoral scholars in addition to tenured and tenure-track faculty. Since the budget for the UNLV Fund is unlikely to grow soon, this may serve as a case to seek funding from other entities on campus. The MSI Student Council has ended its pilot project to support graduate students publishing open access. In the future, the Graduate and Professional Student Association plans to provide APC fund support for their members. Knowing that respondents favor supporting graduate students and postdoctoral scholars, expanding the library's ability to reach early-career researchers is important to consider.

Another way to reconsider who can apply for funds is to shift to supporting only corresponding or primary authors, which was a popular suggestion in the survey responses. Using this model might allow for support of additional author populations but would disadvantage authors who may be working with colleagues from other institutions where the corresponding author resides. The UNLV Fund was set up purposefully to allow any author to apply, regardless of their status on the article, as a way of recognizing the varied roles authors play in producing research papers and the influence each author might have on the decision to publish openly.

Due to the UNLV Fund's limited budget, it is a challenge to raise the maximum award amount to keep up with APC price increases. However, it may be possible to raise the award amount in the future. Additionally, several respondents affirmed that they are able to make use of their unit's funds to support the difference if the APC is more than \$1,500. Understanding more about which units do support APCs and why could help efforts to encourage broader university support.

Open Access Perceptions

Other than concerns about predatory publishing, the responses to the section of the survey that asked about issues of open access policies and open and public access to research in broad disciplines were generally positive. Additionally, 36 respondents reported participating in other open publishing and science activities. Pairing this finding with strong support for the UNLV Fund reported in the earlier part of the survey highlights potential for making better connections with awardees as possible advocates for change. One challenge to doing so will be the need to simultaneously support the popular APC program locally while integrating more messaging about alternative open publishing models and sharing information about the equity problems of APCs as described previously. Essentially, the situation is both an opportunity and challenge. While acknowledging the problems of APCs, the local implementation of APC support could be better situated as an outreach and advocacy lead for other open initiatives, through a network of likely OA supporters. Success in this endeavor could result in eventual diminishing popularity of the fund or even its retirement.

Next Steps

The results of this survey provide direction for changes to the UNLV Fund and offer ideas for improving outreach efforts. Because the response to the UNLV Fund was



overwhelmingly positive, it is not practical to recommend a discontinuation of the fund (although budgetary concerns could always provide that impetus). Actions identified as a result of this study include:

- Determining how to expand eligibility beyond tenured and tenure-track faculty to postdoctoral scholars and graduate students,
- Updating guidance on selecting an OA journal,
- Improving OA outreach to funded authors and further exploring their potential role in campus-wide OA advocacy, and
- Re-balancing the efforts for supporting the UNLV Fund so that more energy is spent on growing local support for alternatives to the APC model.

Study limitations

While the survey was sent to authors whose applications were not successful, nearly all participants said their award request had been granted. This makes analysis from the perspective of authors whose applications were declined impossible.

The population surveyed represents those who already demonstrate some level of acceptance of OA publishing. While providing potential ideas for serving a wider audience, the data only speak to this population's opinions.

Conclusion

Overall, the fund is valuable to UNLV's authors and supports institutional strategy. Particularly helpful information gleaned from the questions that focused on open access perceptions included the varied participation in other open publishing efforts, wide support among respondents for open and public access policies, and the importance placed on open or public access across broad disciplinary areas.

Conducting a survey of UNLV Open Article Fund applicants and their local co-authors has proven insightful for the management of the fund and for direction of outreach. A hope is that other fund managers may be encouraged by this experiment to look beyond fund impact, value, and criteria toward broader OA concerns when assessing their own funds.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

Questions marked with an asterisk were adapted from Beaubien et al. which is licensed under CC BY 4.0.²⁷ The survey was created using Qualtrics.²⁸ The survey questions are available under a CC BY 4.0 license at <https://osf.io/37f8m/>.

Consent

Participant Consent: I have read the [consent statement] and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

I agree

Have you or a co-author applied for an award from the UNLV Open Article Fund?

- Yes, I applied for an award (even if award request was unsuccessful)
- Yes, I am a co-author of someone who applied to the UNLV Open Article Fund (even if award request was unsuccessful)
- No, I have not applied for, nor been the co-author of someone who applied for, the UNLV Open Article Fund (you will be routed to the end of the survey)

In which area does your field of research fit most closely?

- Humanities & Arts
- Social Sciences
- Sciences & Engineering
- Medicine & Health Sciences
- Other (please elaborate below)
- Decline to answer

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If What is your role at UNLV? = Academic faculty

What is your tenure status at UNLV?

- Tenured
- Tenure track
- Not tenured or tenure-track
- Decline to answer

How many years have you been conducting research in your field?

- Please enter a number.



What is the status of your Open Article Fund award?

- Awarded and the invoice has been paid
- Awarded but not yet paid (article still in review; invoice not yet received or received but not paid)
- Awarded but not paid (article rejected, award expired)
- Not awarded - funding request was declined

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? = Not awarded - funding request was declined

If your award application was declined (you were not awarded funds) was the reason clear and the feedback provided helpful?

- Yes
- No (please elaborate)
- Unsure / Don't remember

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? = Awarded and the invoice has been paid

Or What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? = Awarded but not yet paid (article still in review; invoice not yet received or received but not paid)

Is the article for which you received the award your first open access article?

If you have received an Open Article Fund award more than once, please think of the first time you received the award.

- Yes
- No

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? = Awarded and the invoice has been paid

*Has choosing an open access venue had a positive impact on the exposure (readership, citations, social media mentions, etc.) of your article?¹

- Yes
- No, my article has been published for a while but there has been no obvious impact
- No, my article has just recently been published and it is too soon to gauge impact
- No, my article is not yet published
- Unsure



*Why did you choose to publish your article as open access?¹

Choose all that apply.

- Best journal for disseminating this research
- Funded research had an open access requirement
- Support for open sharing of research results
- Wanted to increase visibility of the research
- Wanted to ensure research could be deposited in Digital Scholarship@UNLV (university repository) for long-term storage
- Other (please elaborate below)

*How did the availability of the Libraries' UNLV Open Article Fund influence your decision to publish your article open access?¹

- The availability of the fund had significant influence, I would not have been able to afford the open access fee without support from the fund
- The availability of the fund had some influence, I was considering publishing open access with or without the support of the fund
- The availability of the fund had no influence, I had already decided to publish open access before learning about the fund

*How likely are you to consider publishing an article open access in the future?¹

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? = Awarded and the invoice has been paid

Or What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? = Awarded but not yet paid (article still in review; invoice not yet received or received but not paid)

How has receiving funding through the UNLV Open Article Fund changed your opinion of open access?

- My opinion of open access improved
- No change in my opinion of open access
- My opinion of open access lessened
- I don't have enough information yet (for example, if the award is for an article still under review by the journal)

Does publishing open access support UNLV's Top Tier 2.0 goals?



UNLV's Top Tier Plan includes the statement "UNLV fosters a climate of innovation in which faculty and students produce high-quality, widely disseminated, and influential research, scholarship, and creative activities."

- Yes
- No
- Unsure (please elaborate below)

What is the value of the library supporting the UNLV Open Article Fund?

The library spends approximately 0.2% (less than one half of one percent) of its collection budget on the Open Article Fund. In your opinion, how does the library spending this money on article processing charges compare in value to the library spending the same money on journal subscriptions or collections purchases?

- This amount of spending on the Open Article Fund provides better value than if it were spent on subscriptions or collections purchases.
- This amount of spending on the Open Article Fund provides equal value to subscriptions or collections purchases.
- This amount of spending on the Open Article Fund provides less value than if it were spent on subscriptions or collections purchases.

Should the library continue to support this fund?

- Yes, it should be a priority
- No, I prefer that the money be spent elsewhere
- It depends (please elaborate below)

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? != Not awarded - funding request was declined

For your funded article, do you believe your publisher charged a fair amount for the quality of service, review, and production rendered for your article?

- Yes - the cost was fair for the service provided
- No - the publisher charged too much for the service provided
- Other (please elaborate below)

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If Should the library continue to support this fund? = Yes, it should be a priority

Or Should the library continue to support this fund? = It depends (please elaborate below)

Which categories of UNLV staff and students should we support with the fund?



The budget for the fund is limited and in 2019 we changed author criteria so that only tenured and tenure track faculty could apply for funds. This was to increase the likelihood funding would be available through the year.

- Tenured faculty
- Tenure-track faculty
- Clinical faculty
- Professional faculty
- Post-Docs
- PhD students
- Master's students
- Undergraduate students
- Other (please elaborate below)

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If Should the library continue to support this fund? = Yes, it should be a priority

Or Should the library continue to support this fund? = It depends (please elaborate below)

Our hope is that UNLV researchers from many disciplines can use this fund. What do you believe would be the most effective and fair award criteria that could enable more individuals to participate in the use of the fund?

- Limit award to corresponding author
- Limit award to primary author
- Limit award to one per fiscal year by any UNLV individual
- Reduce maximum award amount (currently \$1,500)
- Prioritize non-profit publishers
- Other (please elaborate below)

Display the next question based on the following logic:

If What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? = Awarded and the invoice has been paid

Or What is the status of your Open Article Fund award? = Awarded but not yet paid (article still in review; invoice not yet received or received but not paid)

If your invoice from the publisher was more than \$1,500 how did you pay the balance?

- Department or college funds available at your discretion
- Department or college funds you had to seek permission to use for this purpose
- Personal funds (yours or co-author's)
- Requested (and received) reduced invoice from the publisher
- Other (please elaborate below)
- N/A My invoice was less than or equal to \$1,500



Does your college, school, or department chair, dean, or other administrator, support paying for article processing charges from college or department unrestricted or discretionary funds?

- Yes
- No
- In some circumstances (please elaborate below)

Based on your experience with the fund, please rate the following elements of the Open Article Fund award process.

Element	Rating			
	High/great	Neutral	Low/poor	N/A
Clarity of criteria as described on the guide to the fund	High/great	Neutral	Low/poor	N/A
Application form (clearly worded, easy to complete)	High/great	Neutral	Low/poor	N/A
Timeliness of response to questions about the fund	High/great	Neutral	Low/poor	N/A
Timeliness of response to your award application	High/great	Neutral	Low/poor	N/A
Timeliness of payment by UNLV	High/great	Neutral	Low/poor	N/A
Publisher's communication to you about your payment	High/great	Neutral	Low/poor	N/A

Do you participate or have you participated in open access or open science besides through the UNLV Open Article Fund?

- Share pre-prints or post-prints of research articles in disciplinary repositories such as arXiv or bioRxiv
- Share pre-prints or post-prints of research articles in institutional repositories such as Digital Scholarship@UNLV
- Pay for open access in a traditional, non-open access journal (often referred to as a "hybrid" journal since some content is open and some is subscription access only)
- Share research data openly for reuse
- Edit an open access journal
- Edit or author open access books (or chapters in open access books)
- Participate in open educational resource creation or adaptation
- Publish an open access article (not supported by the UNLV Open Article Fund)
- Other (please elaborate below)
- None of the above

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Should government agencies, private funders, and universities have public access and open access policies?

Many government agencies, some charitable organizations, and some universities in the United States and other countries require research publications and research data to be made openly available. Some examples of those policies are listed here for your information as examples: National Science Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, University of Colorado-Boulder.

Funder	Response Choices		
Government Funders	Should have open or public access policies	Unsure	Should NOT have open or public access policies
Charitable and Private Funding Organizations	Should have open or public access policies	Unsure	Should NOT have open or public access policies
Universities	Should have open or public access policies	Unsure	Should NOT have open or public access policies

Are you concerned about predatory publishing?

Predatory publishing occurs when a publisher charges for services they state they offer, but they do not render (such as peer review, copy editing, formatting, assigning a DOI, participating in disciplinary research indexes, and using good preservation practices).

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

In your opinion, is it important to make research publications in the following areas openly accessible?

In light of COVID-19, publishers and authors made research related to the COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 open access or freely available throughout the height of the pandemic. We are asking here which broad subject areas of research you believe should be available open access, whether related to the pandemic or not.

Subject Area	Importance of Open Access		
COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 research publications	Open Access IS important	No Opinion	Open Access Is NOT important
All biomedical research publications	Open Access IS important	No Opinion	Open Access Is NOT important
All public health research publications	Open Access IS important	No Opinion	Open Access Is NOT important
All science and technology research publications	Open Access IS important	No Opinion	Open Access Is NOT important
All social sciences research publications	Open Access IS important	No Opinion	Open Access Is NOT important
All arts & humanities research publications	Open Access IS important	No Opinion	Open Access Is NOT important
All research publications	Open Access IS important	No Opinion	Open Access Is NOT important

Do you have recommendations for how the University Libraries could improve the UNLV Open Article Fund?

If there is anything else you would like to share about your experience with or opinion of open access or the UNLV Open Article Fund, please provide those comments here.

Notes

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5. "About UNLV," (University of Nevada Las Vegas, 2023), <https://www.unlv.edu/about>.
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11. Jylisa Doney and Jeremy Kenyon, "Researchers' Perceptions and Experiences with an Open Access Subvention Fund," *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* 17 no.1, (2022), <https://doi.org/10.18438/eblip30015>; Samantha Teplitzky and Margaret Phillips, "Evaluating the Impact of Open Access at Berkeley: Results from the 2015 Survey of Berkeley Research Impact Initiative (BRII) Funding Recipients," *College and Research Libraries* 77, no. 5 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.77.5.568>.
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