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A Benchmarking Survey of Open Access Funds at the University of California

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See table of contents

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Article abstract

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Methods – In 2022, the authors surveyed the 10 UC campus libraries about both the outcome of an earlier UC-wide OAF pilot and the current status of application-based OAFs to support article processing charges (APCs), book processing charges (BPCs), and open educational resources (OERs). Five campuses reported having a current OAF. These five campuses responded to additional questions about their budgets and their sustainability, the number of publications funded, policies, and staffing resources for managing the OAF.

Results – Five UC campuses had an active application-based OAF, with budgets or expenditures ranging from $20,000 - $271,000 annually. Only two campuses felt their budget was sustainable. One of the five campuses closed its fund after the survey. The number of staff resources per fund ranged from 1 to 6 with 3 to 32 hours of work weekly. Funding policies were similar to other institutional OAFs with some distinctions. All campuses had revised their criteria to disallow funding for journals covered by UC's transformative open access agreements.

Conclusion – Providing application-based funds for OA publishing at high-publishing academic institutions requires a substantial budget and workforce. Though these funds benefit some authors, the wider equity of APCs and BPCs needs to be considered.

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Research Article

A Benchmarking Survey of Open Access Funds at the University of California

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Abstract

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Methods – In 2022, the authors surveyed the 10 UC campus libraries about both the outcome of an earlier UC-wide OAF pilot and the current status of application-based OAFs to support article processing charges (APCs), book processing charges (BPCs), and open educational resources (OERs). Five campuses reported having a current OAF. These five campuses responded to additional questions about their budgets and their sustainability, the number of publications

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Conclusion – Providing application-based funds for OA publishing at high-publishing academic institutions requires a substantial budget and workforce. Though these funds benefit some authors, the wider equity of APCs and BPCs needs to be considered.

Introduction

Open access funds have been a popular approach for libraries to support authors at their institutions who wish to publish their work open access (OA) for about two decades. Though libraries are now embracing a variety of approaches for subsidizing OA publishing costs, OA funds remain in place at about 130 institutions globally (Springer Nature, 2024).

The definition of "open access fund" (OAF) for this study refers to a pool of funds that individual faculty, students, and/or staff can request funds from to help pay for open access article processing charges (APCs) or book processing charges (BPCs). Because some University of California libraries include open educational resources (OERs) in their OAF, the authors also included this publication category in the survey. OAFs are sometimes called subvention funds, since they offer financial support to authors to help pay for open access publishing or to offset the costs of providing OERs. These funds are often managed by the library for individuals affiliated with the institution, and awardees must submit an application to receive funds.

The study reported in this article primarily addresses OAFs at the University of California (UC) campuses that provide funds for APCs and BPCs. We explore how the UC Libraries' management of their funds compares to trends in OA fund management in the national OA landscape that exists in 2024. This landscape has evolved to incorporate library and institutional investment in multiple approaches to advancing OA, including publisher agreements wherein the institution pays its authors' APCs, non-APC/BPC-based models, investments in OA initiatives and memberships, and library publishing.

In late 2021, the libraries at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) wanted to assess their plans for providing an open access fund to researchers at their universities. UCSD did not have an OAF (although it did set aside funds to support authors publishing books on UC Press's open access Luminos platform) but was considering establishing one. UCSF had an active OAF supporting APCs and BPCs but had reduced its budget in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021 and needed to strategize its long-term plan for the provision of funds.

The authors developed a benchmarking survey of the 10 University of California libraries.[1] The survey included questions addressing campuses' interests in OAFs and collected data on UC's historical and current involvement with OAFs. The UC Libraries are highly coordinated and collaborative and share multiple advisory, oversight, shared service, and Common Knowledge Groups (CKGs) (UC Libraries, n.d.).

The California Digital Library (CDL) is part of the UC Libraries advisory structure. In the 2011 - 2012 fiscal year, CDL provided seed funding to the 10 UC campus libraries to pilot an OAF at each campus. This historical funding combined with the existing advisory structure made the UC system an ideal group for benchmarking purposes. We aimed to determine what impact the seed funding had on the ongoing availability of OAFs and, for those campuses with active funds, what policies they applied, what their budget considerations were, and what resources and staffing were used to maintain their fund.

Since the UC Libraries have established over 18 open access publisher agreements to help UC authors publish open access scholarly articles, we also sought information on what impact these agreements have on OAFs. This type of agreement is frequently referred to as a "transformative agreement" (TA), which UC defines as agreements that "... substantially shift payments for subscriptions (reading) into payments for open access (publishing). Most such agreements are intended to be transitional—a step on the path toward full open access" (University of California, n.d.-a).

Many of UC's TAs use a multi-payer model, wherein the first $1,000 of an APC is automatically paid for UC corresponding authors. Authors with research funds are asked to pay the remainder of the APC, and those who do not have research funds receive funding for the full APC after submitting a request. UC authors also receive discounted APCs with a number of publishers through subscription agreements (University of California, n.d.-b.).

The results of this survey may help other institutions assess their existing OAFs as well as institutions considering establishing a new OAF. We will frame the role of OAFs alongside transformative agreements and "diamond" OA approaches supported by libraries (models whereby the costs to publish OA are subsidized by the author's institution and no author-facing fees are levied).

Literature Review

Establishment and Breadth of OA Funds

Open access funds (OAFs) provide money to the institution's authors to help authors publish their work open access (OA) and distribute it more widely. These funds promote publishing models that make content free to read and allow authors to retain their copyright. Since OAFs are run by the library, they insert libraries into the publication process, which is a relatively new role for libraries. Having an OAF creates opportunities for dialogue between library workers and authors about rights retention, OA publishing models and mandates, and scholarly publishing broadly speaking. These conversations help establish the library's expertise in areas that are increasingly complex for scholars and researchers (Tananbaum, 2014).

[1] University of California campus acronyms: UCB = Berkeley; UCD = Davis; UCI = Irvine; UCLA = Los Angeles; UCM = Merced; UCR = Riverside; UCSD = San Diego; UCSF = San Francisco; UCSB = Santa Barbara; UCSC = Santa Cruz

The exact number of open access funds around the world or in any one country is difficult to determine. Lists of such funds are challenging to keep up to date, and some funds may go unreported. The advocacy group SPARC tracks 54 active and 36 inactive North American funds among its members (SPARC, n.d.), with 22% of SPARC's 250 members having active funds. The Open Access Directory lists publication funds (Open Access Directory, 2024) and discontinued funds (Open Access Directory, 2018) by institution name but does not include a count of agreements. Publisher Springer Nature's list tracks 130 OAFs for books and/or journal articles and 170 funders in 30 countries (Springer Nature, 2024).

Reports of academic libraries establishing OAFs in North America can be found in the literature as early as 2005 (McMillan et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2007). The University of California, Berkeley was one of 20 signatories to the Compact for Open-Access Publishing Equity (COPE), committing to providing a stable source of funding for their institution's authors publishing in open access journals. The last institution to become a COPE signatory joined in 2014 (Compact for Open-Access Publishing Equity, n.d.; Eckman & Weil, 2010). A study of Canadian libraries found that, as of 2012, OAFs were common in Canadian academic libraries but not a standard service (Hampson, 2014).

A 2016 survey of the Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) 67 member libraries found that 30% had an active OAF. This was a slight decrease from 31% of members with an active OAF per ARL's 2012 survey (McMillan et al., 2016). In 2022, the provision of funds to pay for article processing charges (APCs) was still not prevalent in the United States. An American Association for the Advancement of Science survey of 89 institutions found that only 36% had funds available in one form or another to support APCs for its authors (American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2022). The fact that well under half of U.S. institutions have OAFs in place 18 years after they first appeared speaks to the challenges of funding and maintaining OAFs as a viable means of paying author-facing APCs and BPCs.

Other Surveys or Assessments of OA Funds

Once OAFs were established, libraries began to report on their value and assess impact, with most published reports appearing between 2014-2019. Much of this reporting centers on authors' positive perceptions of the value of such funds (Beaubien et al., 2016; Doney & Kenyon, 2022; McMillan et al., 2023; Tenopir et al., 2017; Teplitzky & Phillips, 2015) or the application of research impact metrics to quantify return on investment of OA funds (Click & Borchardt, 2019; Hampson & Stregger, 2017).

In a 2014 global survey of 149 libraries from 30 countries, 70% of libraries that provided funding for OA publishing sourced their OAFs from existing materials (collections) budgets (Lara, 2015). Any additional funding typically comes from provost or research offices at academic institutions (McMillan et al., 2016). These funding sources are precarious as OA budgets are not seen as essential in the same way subscription expenditures are (Kennison et al., 2019). Providing a sufficient budget to meet demand is a common challenge, as reported by a survey of 77 ARL member libraries. To stay within budget, libraries have implemented policy changes such as reducing the amount paid per article, capping how much an individual may receive in a fiscal year, disallowing APCs for hybrid OA journals, or discontinuing the fund altogether (McMillan et al., 2016). Evidence of these financial challenges can be seen in screenshots of the OAF webpages at Dartmouth University and Harvard University when applications were put on hold due to depleted funds, and at UCSF when eligibility policies were changed in 2021 due to a reduced budget (Taylor, 2021).

An important aspect of running and sustaining OAFs is the increased workload for library staff, though this topic is not frequently addressed in the literature. Articles that mention the impacts of managing

OAFs on library workers include the Ashworth et al. (2014) report on the University of Glasgow's commitment of three full-time equivalent (FTE) staff to manage their open access service, the Glushko et al. (2015) recommendation to document time spent managing funds, the caution from Kennison et al. (2019) for libraries to attend to the critical need to create new staffing and workflow models for OA content, and the Hacker (2023) alert to the challenge of accommodating additional workloads related to national open access initiatives in Switzerland.

To assess OAFs, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) Open Access Working Group (OAWG) recommends tracking both quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative metrics, such as number of articles and unique authors, author departments, and journals where articles are published, help institutions assess "changes in demand, identify trends, and understand the effect of changes to criteria and to funding" Glushko et al. (2015). The CARL OAWG suggests that qualitative measures can be collected through author surveys about topics such as the quality and timeliness of services, the clarity of criteria and communications, and the impact of receiving funding on an author's ability to publish open access.

Recent assessments have questioned the sustainability of OAFs and their role in a shifting scholarly communication landscape. Korolev (2022) examines the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Library's OAF and finds that "partnerships for mutual cost-sharing or fund-raising are critical" to the sustainability and growth of an OAF. Click & Borchardt (2019) and Reinsfelder & Pike (2018) identify trends in libraries that increasingly support non-APC/BPC funding models such as crowdfunding, collective funding, and support for library publishing and open infrastructure. The viability of the OAF model is threatened by these concurrent OA and library initiatives, such as investment in non-APC/BPC models, transformative OA agreements, and funder public access policies (Click & Borchardt, 2019).

In addition to the sustainability of OAFs, author-pay models like APCs and BPCs raise broader questions and concerns about equity for researchers around the globe. Folan (2023) questions if there should be APCs at all, stating that the business model is intrinsically inequitable. The University of California Libraries have signed multiple transformative open access agreements based on APCs (University of California, n.d.-a), but there is concern about how this model disenfranchises researchers who don't have institutional agreements or other funds to pay APCs (Hudson-Ward, 2021; Harington, 2020). We undertook this survey and examination of the role of the OAF with these issues in mind.

Aims

The purpose of this study was to examine the availability of application-based open access funds (OAFs) within the University of California (UC) Libraries and to benchmark policies, budgets, staffing, and sustainability of UC OAFs. The authors explore the management of the UC Libraries' funds in comparison with trends in national OAF management. We will frame the role of OAFs alongside transformative agreements and diamond open access (OA) approaches (models whereby the costs to publish OA are subsidized by the author's institution and no author-facing fees are levied) supported by libraries. The results of this survey may help other institutions make more sustainable and equitable decisions for their existing OAF as well as those considering establishing a new OAF.

Methods

Survey Development

The authors developed the questions for this University of California (UC) open access fund (OAF) study based on their institutions' interests in benchmarking OAFs across the UC campuses. The survey was created in Qualtrics with display logic so that all 10 UC campuses could respond to the survey and see only the questions that applied to their OAF status. IRB approval was not required by the authors' institutions due to the low risk level and type of study.

The authors shared a draft survey for review with scholarly communications librarians at two other UC campuses with active OAFs and with two stakeholder groups at their respective campuses. UCSD's Scholarly Communications Working Group, a group of librarians with responsibilities in collection development and discipline liaison roles, provided feedback and details on the history of UCSD's original pilot OAF. At UCSF, a group of librarians who discuss members' research activities tested the survey draft and suggested several improvements.

The final survey was distributed to the UC Scholarly Communications Common Knowledge Group (SCCKG). This group of librarians includes those who are the most knowledgeable about their campus's activity with OAFs and support open access (OA) initiatives on a daily basis and often manage existing funds.. The SCCKG holds monthly virtual meetings and has an email distribution list with at least one representative from each UC campus library, as well as several representatives from the California Digital Library (CDL).

The survey questions (Swift & Taylor, 2022a) were arranged into four sections to collect information about the evolution of OAFs since their initial implementation, how they are managed, and plans for continuing or canceling existing OAFs or reconstituting funds. These sections were:

- fund history and current status
- policies
- budget
- staffing and resources

Survey Distribution

The final survey was sent to the UC SCCKG email distribution list (27 recipients) in February 2022 with a request that each campus designate one person to gather information and to answer on behalf of their campus.

In our email request, we noted our intentions for dissemination of the final report to the SCCKG, then to our broader library stakeholders, and finally as an open access publication, and stated that we would share the results with a presentation to the SCCKG so that the respondents could review the report for any errors or omissions. We obtained consent from each respondent to include the information collected in a final open access published report. A very small amount of redaction was requested.

One librarian from each of the 10 UC campuses responded to the survey, usually after conferring with other stakeholders on their campus. Eight of the responding librarians' titles included scholarly

communication(s), one was a collections strategist librarian, and one person was an associate university librarian.

Data Analysis

The dataset was exported from Qualtrics to Excel (Swift & Taylor, 2022d) and then converted to Google Sheets for analysis. Data were presented along with narratives in a report (Swift & Taylor, 2022b), sent to the campus respondents for review, and presented (Swift & Taylor, 2022c) to the UC SCCKG. SCCKG members were encouraged to share the findings with relevant stakeholders at their campuses. The report was shared with the UCSF Library Leadership Team as well as the stakeholders who provided suggestions on the survey draft. UCSD presented it to the UCSD Library's Collections Strategists Group and to the Scholarly Tools and Methods Program.

Results

Fund History and Current Status

Complete results are available in the UC Open Access Fund 2022 Benchmarking Report (Swift & Taylor, 2022b).

In the 2012-2013 fiscal year, the California Digital Library (CDL) provided $10,000 in "seed funding" to all 10 University of California (UC) campus libraries to establish campus-based open access funds (OAFs). This funding was to be supplemented by campus library funding to provide a sufficient level of funding. Survey questions 1-3 asked about the campus libraries' use of these funds and the current status of an OAF.

Table 1
Fund History and Current Status Across the UC Campus Libraries

University of California campus	Fund before seed funding?	Use of 2012 seed funding from CDL	Current OA fund?	Current fund active since
UC Berkeley (UCB)	Yes	Other	Yes	January 2008
UC Davis (UCD)	Uncertain	Yes, continuous	Yes	November 2012
UC Irvine (UCI)	Yes	Yes, and replenished through 2014	No	—
UC Los Angeles	No	Other	No	—

(UCLA)				
UC Merced (UCM)	No	Yes, until it ran out	No	—
UC Riverside (UCR)	Yes	—	No	—
UC Santa Barbara (UCSB)	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes	July 2016
UC Santa Cruz (UCSC)	No	Yes, until it ran out	No	—
UC San Diego (UCSD)	No	Yes, and replenished for 3 years	Yes*	2016
UC San Francisco (UCSF)	No	Yes, and replenished for 2 years	Yes**	May 2015

Notes:
* UCSD ran its APC-based OAF from 2012-2015. Initially, the money ran out after three to four months. The University Librarian added more money to the fund to ensure a balance until the end of the fiscal year; however, the supplemental funds were quickly dispersed, and this model was found to be unsustainable. The UCSD fund was adjusted in 2016 to support non-APC initiatives and new open access models in response to growth in these areas and the unsustainability of funding individual APCs for such a large and research-intensive campus. The UCSD Library responded to the survey at a time when there was an existing fund, but the future of this fund was in question. Since 2022, the UCSD Library does not have a designated OAF but provides ad hoc funding for author BPC requests.
** UCSF shut down its fund in April 2022 after this survey was conducted (Taylor, 2022).

UCB is one of the campuses that continues to fund article processing charges (APCs) and book processing charges (BPCs). Its Berkeley Research Impact Initiative (BRII) fund (UC Berkeley Library, 2024) was set up in 2008 through a joint sponsorship between the library and the Vice Chancellor for Research. UCB incorporated the CDL seed $10,000 into the BRII fund in 2012-2013.

UCLA used the original funds not for journal APCs, but to create a faculty grant program to encourage use of open course materials. This fund has since been adjusted to incentivize faculty to participate in the Affordable Course Materials Program (UCLA Library, n.d.) to “identify, access, adapt and adopt alternative course materials” that include library-licensed collections in addition to open access resources.

When the five campuses without a current APC- or BPC-based OAF were asked whether they plan to establish one, all answered "No." The deciding factors echoed across the campuses were the lack of administrative support, financial sustainability, and staffing concerns (see Table 2).

Table 2
Reason for Not Establishing an OA APC/BPC Fund

Campuses without an OA fund	Reason for not planning to establish an APC- or BPC-based fund
UCI	Experience with the 2013-14 pilot suggested that the amount of money would not cover the anticipated number of requests. When the fund was supplemented and still ran out the fund was closed.
UCLA	We thought it was not a good return on investment for APCs. We have [been] supporting book/OER funding in recent years.
UCM	The library would certainly be interested, but it would take external support that just is not there. Establishing [an] APC/BPC fund is not something that campus leadership considers a priority.
UCR	Cost and administrative overhead.
UCSC	UCSC is investing in the systemwide approaches to OA through transformative agreements, publisher discounts, subscribing to open access books, and UC OA policies for green OA in eScholarship.

Campuses that did not have an active application-based fund to pay APCs or BPCs or to support OERs were given the option to skip to the end of the survey after this question and end their response. Though UCLA supports OERs, they skipped to the end of the survey. UCLA's Affordable Course Materials Program currently allows instructors to apply for $1,000 to support the adoption of alternative learning materials for courses with fewer than 200 enrolled students and $2,500 for courses with more than 200 students (UCLA Library, n.d.). The five campuses with active funds that fund APCs or BPCs (UCB, UCD, UCSB, UCSD, and UCSF) completed the rest of the survey.

These five campuses were asked for the number of publications funded by type and any fund caps for that type (Table 3). At the time of the survey, UCB, UCD, and UCSF supported publication of peer-reviewed scholarly articles, books, and book chapters. UCB also supported open educational resources (OERs), though no funding went towards that category in the 2020-2021 fiscal year. UCSD only funded BPCs through the UC Press Luminos imprint, and UCSB only funded journal articles. Individual journal article APC caps, where imposed, ranged from $1,000 to $2,500. UCSB does not have an APC cap. Variance in the BPC cap reflects the breadth of support for book publishing. UCSD and UCSF were at the

lower end of the range with a cap at $5,000 to cover the author rate to publish on the Luminos platform. UCD and UCB were at the higher end of the range, with UCD's individual BPC cap at $15,000 for authors publishing through TOME (Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem) and UCB's $10,000 cap providing support across a variety of publishing venues.

Table 3
Campuses With Current Funds – Caps and Publications Funded in Fiscal Year 2020-2021

Publication Type	UCB	UCD	UCSB	UCSD	UCSF
Scholarly articles cap	$2,500	$1,000	No cap	—	$2,000
# of articles funded	83	291	55	—	93
Book cap	$10,000	$15,000	—	$5,000	$5,000
# of books funded	3	4	—	2	—
Book chapter cap	$2,500	$1,000	—	—	$2,000
# of chapters funded	—	5	—	—	—
OER cap	$5,000	—	—	—	—
# OERs funded	—	—	—	—	—

Note: Data covers July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021.

Policies

The four campuses that use their OAFs to pay for journal article APCs do not fund articles covered by a UC-wide or campus-based transformative agreement (TA). All four campuses confirmed either in the comments or by separate email to the authors that their OAF covers qualifying articles in journals that are excluded from or not yet covered by a TA. None of the five campuses ask applicants how they pay the APC or BPC remainder if their OAF only covers a portion of the fee.

When it comes to qualifying criteria for an author's publication to be funded, all four campuses that fund journal article APCs only do so for articles published in full OA journals (i.e., hybrid OA journals do not qualify). At three campuses (UCB, UCD, and UCSB), the applicant must still be affiliated with the university to receive funds. Additional limitations include one publication per applicant per year; one application per publication; the application must not have a grant; OA journals must be indexed in DOAJ; and the publisher must follow professional and ethical publishing practices, such as adherence to OASPA's criteria or equivalent. Two campuses limit funding to either first authors (UCSF) or corresponding authors (UCSB). In the "Other" response (Table 4), UCSD noted that Luminos BPC coverage was reviewed on a case-by-case basis and reliant on fund approval.

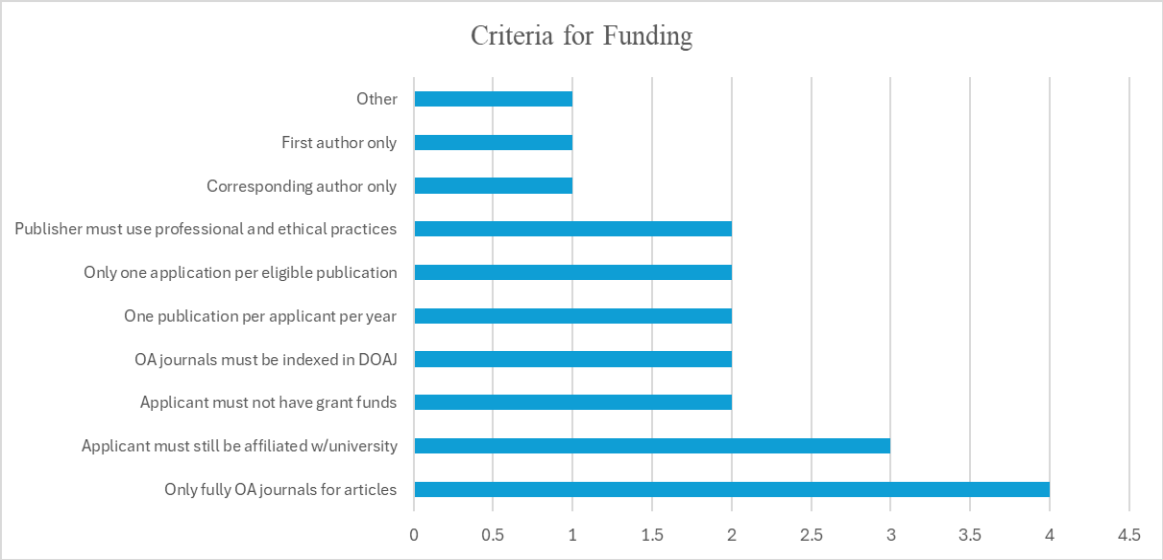

Figure 1
Campus criteria for successful funding applications (select all responses that apply).

Two campuses (UCB and UCSF) limit their OAF to authors without grant funds. Both campuses have language about funding restrictions on the webpage and on the application form. Applicants must also attest that they do not have grant funds for OA on the funding request form, though neither campus verifies an applicant's funding status beyond their application.

UCSF noted, "We know that many applicants do in fact have grant funds despite our efforts otherwise. They justify the request based on their budget being low or insufficient, or the publication coming out after the previous grant expires, though they often have a new grant."

The responses to the question of which individuals may apply for funding were typical for library OAFs. Each of the UC campuses with OAFs considered applications submitted by faculty, postdoctoral scholars, research fellows, staff, librarians, and graduate students. The two campuses with medical schools (UCD and UCSF) allow resident physicians to apply. UCB, UCD, and UCSF also accept applications by students in professional degree programs, such as medicine, nursing, and law. UCD and UCSF are the only campuses that allow emeritus faculty to apply, and UCD is the only campus that allows undergraduate students may apply.

When asked "Does your fund support marginalized researchers and scholars (based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, discipline, career stage, or otherwise) in any way?", two campuses selected "Yes." The other three did not indicate any explicit criteria targeting these identities, though UCD clarified that "funding is approved for any UCD affiliated author." UCB explained that their BRII fund website encourages applications from scholars in the social sciences and humanities. UCSF's fund was modified in 2021 to target early career and staff applicants, excluding faculty applicants (Taylor, 2021).

Budget

The five UC campuses with an OAF were asked:

- What is the annual budget for your fund?
- Where does the funding come from?
- If funding comes from the library, please provide any additional information you can about which library unit(s) the funding comes from (e.g., collections budget, general fund).
- Is your funding stable and sustainable for the next 2-3 years?
- If your campus is not planning to continue funding your fund for the near future, what, if anything, are you shifting your funds towards instead?

All five campuses coordinate their OAF budget with library leadership/administration, finance, or collection teams according to their local structure and budget. UCB's OAF was the only fund that reported receipt of an extramural, multi-year grant that contributes to their OAF budget.

Table 4
Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget by UC Campus

Campus	Budget	Source	Stable?	Redirect funds
UCB	No set budget, annual spend is $100k-$150K	multi-year philanthropic grant that supports the library's general fund	Yes	—
UCD	$175K (overages are accommodated; $271K spent in 2020-21)	Library/Collections fund	Yes	—
UCSB	$150K	Library/Collections fund	No	—
UCSD	$20K	Library/Collections fund	Uncertain	Uncertain
UCSF	$80K	Library/General fund	Uncertain	Uncertain

Staffing and Resources

The last section of the survey asked:

- What is the headcount of personnel contributing to management of the fund?
- What are the job titles for the individuals who fulfill the following roles for managing your campus fund, and the average number of hours spent on a monthly basis?
- What is the total monthly average number of hours spent managing your fund by all personnel?

Table 5
OAF Staffing and Time Spent Managing Funds

Campus	Headcount*	Hours monthly	Hours weekly	Position titles
UCB	5	14	3.5	• Scholarly Communication and Copyright Librarian • Circulation Supervisor • Library business office personnel • Scholarly Communication Officer
UCD	2**	45 (estimated)	11.3	• Scholarly Communications Officer • Financial Services Assistant • Head of Collection Strategy
UCSB	3	10-12 (estimated)	3	• Scholarly Communication Librarian • Library Business Manager • AUL for Research & Learning
UCSD	1	15-20	5	• Scholarly Communication Librarian***
UCSF	5**	126	31.5	• Library Assistant 3 (two positions) • Library Assistant 4 • Head of Scholarly Communication • Administrative/Finance Manager • AUL for Research & Learning

Notes:
*Headcount refers to the number of individuals who contribute to the running and management of the OAF, regardless of how much time each spends per week.
**Both UCD and UCSF undercounted their headcount by one (1) based on the number of positions provided. The numbers shown in this column reflect the number provided in the survey responses.

***At the time of completing the survey, the UCSD Scholarly Communications Librarian was responsible for the OAF and relied on a group of librarians volunteering in the Scholarly Communications Working Group to advise and track the fund.

Discussion

Fund Policies and Budget Constraints

Some of our results mirror findings from previous assessments of campus-based open access funds (OAFs) and surveys of universities with OAFs. Funding for journal articles, book chapters, and books dominates OAFs at University of California (UC) campuses as it does elsewhere. UC OAF policies that determine funding eligibility are similar to OAF criteria at other institutions (Open Access Directory, 2018), although funding criteria differ amongst UC campuses. For example, only UCSB and UCSF limit journal article applications to either first authors or corresponding authors.

UCD, UCSB, UCSD, and UCSF mentioned the challenge of funding their OAF adequately to meet demand. This challenge matches our observations about OAFs outside of UC being either shut down or put on hold due to overspent budgets (Open Access Directory, 2024; Dartmouth Libraries, n.d.; Harvard Library, n.d.; Kennesaw State University Library System, n.d.; University of Arizona Libraries, n.d.; University of Ottawa Library, n.d.).

UCB is the only campus whose fund supports open educational resources (OERs), though no funding went towards OERs in the fiscal year of the study. UCLA used the 2012 seed funding from the California Digital Library to set up an OER-based Affordable Course Materials Initiative (ACMI) (Farb & Grappone, 2014). ACMI continues today as a grant-based program to incentivize and support the adoption of alternative course materials (UCLA Library, n.d.)

UC OAFs apply a range of policies, such as limiting funding to fully open access (OA) journals (thereby excluding OA-optional journals) and limiting the number of applications to one per publication and per author on an annual basis. Some of these policies are values-based (resisting the payment of APCs to subscription journals due to publisher double-dipping), whereas others are designed to prevent funds from being overspent (per-publication and per-author annual caps).

The per-article caps range from a low of $1,000 at UCD to a high of $2,500 at UCB. UCSB is the only UC campus that does not cap how much it will pay for article processing charges (APCs). UCD's lower cap has allowed a higher number of articles to receive funding. The fact that this cap doesn't cover the full cost of most APCs doesn't deter authors—even partial coverage can aid a researcher facing APCs averaging $3,000. UCSF experienced the same demand for funds as UCD when it lowered its cap to $1,000 from $2,000 to accommodate a surge in funding applications during the COVID-19 shutdown in 2020 and 2021 (the cap was raised back to $2,000 before this study was conducted) (Taylor, 2021).

Publication rates increased during these pandemic years due to both the urgency of publishing COVID-19-related articles and the fact that some researchers had more time to focus on writing and publication when they couldn't conduct many of their normal activities. However, as has been widely reported in the literature, some researchers had less time for all professional activities during the pandemic, in particular women and those in caretaking roles (Squazzoni et al., 2021). This study did not examine this phenomenon.

The nature of application-based OAFs means that they are first-come, first-served. There is no controlled expenditure for any one publisher, and demand can be difficult to predict. Staying within budget may require lowering caps or simply cutting off the fund mid-year when funds are spent, which happened at UCSF in spring 2022 after this study was completed (Taylor, 2022), and as we've seen with other funds, such as the University of Ottawa Library's discontinued OAF (University of Ottawa Library, n.d.) and Kennesaw State University's paused OAF (Kennesaw State University Library System, n.d.). Both UCD and UCSB had to supplement their funds during the fiscal year of this study to increase their budgets and meet demand (see Table 4).

Staffing Considerations

In addition to budgetary hurdles, our study provided insights into the required staff time and staff positions that run OAFs at the UC campuses. The average personnel headcount to support a fund is 3.6 (Table 5). All five UC campuses include the librarian in charge of scholarly communication in their headcount, and four include business or finance personnel to manage the reimbursement authors for their OA fees. Two campuses, UCB and UCSF, involve members of circulation/access services in their fund management. At UCSF, the three library assistants who were involved are all access services personnel.

The two outliers with regards to the personnel headcount and the number of hours spent managing the fund are the home institutions of the authors. UCSD had the lowest headcount at one, and UCSF had both the highest headcount with six and the most hours spent.

UCSD's original OAF pilot ran until 2015 when it was determined that APC funding was unsustainable, both financially and in regard to staff time. In 2016, the collections program decided to explore alternative OA funding models and reserved money for initiatives and resources such as Knowledge Unlatched, PeerJ, and Punctum. At the time of the survey, the UCSD OAF supported Luminos book processing charges (BPCs).

UCSF's headcount of six personnel stems from an effort to enlist additional support for the head of scholarly communication in reviewing applications, answering questions about the OAF, and adding funded publications to the UC institutional repository, eScholarship. This expanded effort helped distribute the workload and brought access services into a key library service. However, it also meant that those personnel needed to spend time learning the ins and outs of the fund's policies and UC's transformative agreements. In addition, UCSF Library's business office moved from being internal to external to the library, a change which added complexity and time needed to handle the financial aspects of fund management. Finally, the fact that the budget for UCSF's OAF was in flux in the fiscal year of the study resulted in significantly more time spent on assessment, modification of eligibility and policies, and outreach to UCSF authors about the changes.

Some UC campuses have been able to manage their funds with relatively small staff impact, echoing what Tananbaum found in SPARC's 2010 report. While this report provided a rough estimate of 15-45 minutes spent per article from submission through payment, this does not account for differences in institutional financial procedures or the much more complex world of OA support that libraries find themselves in now. Only the 45-minute end of this estimate strikes the authors as realistic for the most straightforward of applications, considering the range of tasks involved as outlined in the provided guide (Tananbaum, 2010).

The components of establishing a fund and setting and revising eligibility and policies can be very involved and may require substantial amounts of time. These tasks include, from Tananbaum's guide with revisions and additions by the authors noted:

- drafting and revision of policies, procedures, and eligibility requirements (revision)
- vetting of above with relevant campus units
- development, testing, and ongoing revisions of application process (revision)
- creation and maintenance of website and marketing materials (revision)
- development of application vetting process and training materials (revision)
- creation of fund disbursement protocols
- securing of actual funds
- determining staffing and training staff (addition)
- surveying funded authors (addition)
- producing reports for assessment purposes (addition)

The authors' modified version of Tananbaum's task list for ongoing fund management is:

- outreach activities to promote the fund among eligible authors
- vetting of applications to ensure eligibility/compliance
- responding to authors' questions regarding submitted and unsubmitted applications (revision)
- verifying and tracking actual publication of article (revision)
- disbursement of funds
- tracking payment results (revision)
- adding funded publications to institutional repository (addition)

Kennison et al. (2019) stress that understaffed and under-resourced OAFs are more likely to be unsustainable and unsuccessful. Management and decision-making about what efforts to fund "must not be labors of love by passionate volunteers, but designated responsibilities of resourced staff. Such efforts take considerable time, effort, and communication" (Kennison et al., 2019).

A Changing OA Landscape

OA funds are no longer the only game in town for supporting open access publishing. The University of California entered into its first transformative open access agreement (TA) in 2019 and now has over 18 TAs, with more than 50% of journal articles published by UC authors eligible for funding (University of California, n.d.-b). UC campuses with an active OAF no longer reimburse APCs for journals fully covered by a TA. Both UCB and UCD reported that they saw a modest decrease in both the number of OAF applications and approvals as the number of TAs negotiated by UC has increased.

In addition to receiving fewer applications, a higher percentage of applications are being rejected due to authors asking for funding for journals covered by a UC TA. The difference between an OAF and a TA is lost on most authors—they see it as one and the same. As one librarian who manages their library's OAF remarked, "those rejections result in a significant workload (email to authors, explaining the rejections, explaining the TA if the application was for a TA-covered journal)" (M. Ladisch, personal communication, December 5, 2024). With every new agreement, OAF staff need to familiarize themselves

with it in order to know when to reject an application for an article in a journal covered by the TA, or when to review an application for a journal because it is excluded from the TA. All UC Libraries staff reported a significant increase in the amount of time spent replying to questions about funding for OA publishing since the TAs came about.

Despite the extra workload that managing TAs brings to the library, they are still more effective at increasing an institution's OA journal article output than OAFs when APC business models are involved. For example, UCSF authors published 549 articles in fully OA journals through UC TAs over a 20-month period, compared to the 93 articles reported in Table 3 (University of California, 2024). TAs control the institution's expenditures, pay OA publication costs on behalf of its authors (or part of the costs, as is the case for UC authors with grant funding), and typically cover an unlimited number of articles by the institution's authors each year (University of California, n.d.-a). TA workflows are streamlined and more efficient than OAFs, since they are implemented at scale on publishing platforms. However, there is still a role for OAFs since TAs are not possible with every publisher.

Authors are embracing OA publishing and see their institutional library as the source of funds or agreements to cover associated costs. This growing demand means that libraries need to be staffed and trained to respond to the variety of questions that arise around OA funding. The fate of OAFs must be determined by a library's budget and staffing capacity and not necessarily authors' needs. Now that UC has TAs with numerous publishers, authors ask regularly about coverage for publishers with no agreement. To address this "long tail" of publishers, individual UC campuses have negotiated local TAs selectively with publishers including Cold Spring Harbor Lab Press, John Benjamins, and The Microbiology Society (UC San Diego Library, 2024; UCSF Library, 2024). These local agreements occur where there are not UC-wide subscriptions.

Though APCs and BPCs don't seem to be going away anytime soon, there is no shortage of non-APC diamond OA models that libraries also now support. Business models with widespread support from UC and many other libraries include Subscribe-to-Open (S2O) used by Annual Reviews and Project MUSE; collective/crowdsourced funding models, such as Knowledge Unlatched and Direct to Open (D2O); and supportive partnership models, such as Open Library of Humanities and the values-aligned Open Access Community Investment Program (OACIP) (Inefuku et al., 2024; Reinsfelder & Pike, 2018). Library-based publishing, whereby institutional libraries host and subsidize open access publishing platforms, has also gained steam in the last decade. Library Publishing Directory lists 179 programs in 2024, up from 115 in 2014 (Library Publishing Coalition, n.d.).

The multitude of diamond OA initiatives, open infrastructure investment opportunities, and library publishing programs create competition for library funds. The complexities for libraries in this environment necessitate making open content as central as licensed content, budgeting and evaluating it accordingly, and changing staffing and workflows to support open content (Kennison et al., 2019; Chodacki & Gould, 2022). Some institutions, such as the University of Arizona Libraries, have repurposed their former OAF for OA support more broadly (University of Arizona Libraries, n.d.). The UC Libraries have adopted multiple OA approaches and models, including diamond OA and green OA policies, as outlined in the Pathways to Open Access toolkit (University of California, n.d.-b)

The Intention Behind the Funds – Are the UC Campuses Meeting Their Goals?

The intent behind the original UC OA Fund Pilot was for all UC campuses to offer an OAF similar to UC Berkeley's Research Impact Initiative (UC Berkeley Library, 2024). These OAFs met the pilot's goals of demonstrating an institutional commitment to OA publishing to ensure that UC authors' work is freely accessible to the public, encourage faculty control of copyright, and provide opportunities for libraries to engage with their campuses around open access and scholarly communication (UC Scholarly Communication Officers, 2012). Another goal was to support UC's mission of contributing to the public good by removing access barriers to UC research results (University of California, n.d.-c) The pilot resulted in 506 articles published over 18 months across all 10 UC campuses benefitting a global readership. By comparison, the OAFs of the five campuses contributing to this survey helped publish 522 journal articles, 9 books, and 5 book chapters during one fiscal year. The UC campus OAFs have helped many UC authors who would not have otherwise had the funds to publish open access to benefit from increased access to and visibility of their research. However, these 522 journal articles are a small percentage of the total publication count from these institutions. Each of these UC campuses typically publishes between 2,500 and 9,000 research and review articles each year.

Authors who received financial support through an OAF were understandably grateful, especially those who would not have had the funds to publish in journals that charge APCs. Yet there are just as many unfortunate authors who learn too late that the journal they chose to submit their manuscript to is not covered by a publisher/university "read and publish" or transformative agreement or by a campus library OAF. In addition, for those libraries with OAFs, often the award amount does not cover the entire APC or adjust for the rapidly rising charges that many journals levy. Libraries that aren't able to replenish their OAF budget when it's spent before the end of the fiscal year have to pause or shut down their fund (Taylor, 2022), leading to authors publishing later in the fiscal year being turned away empty-handed. These factors point to the inherent inequities and challenges of managing and administering an OAF.

Authors in STEM disciplines tend to be better funded than those in the social sciences and humanities (SSH), publish mostly journal articles, and publish more frequently and rapidly. Though SSH authors publishing in journals can also benefit from OAFs, the OAF budget for BPCs is not sufficient to cover the much higher cost of BPCs compared to APCs for these monograph-heavy disciplines.

Furthermore, there are inherent inequities in the proliferation of author-facing APCs and BPCs. Publishing disparities exist for many under-resourced authors due to funding and publishing differences, which are lower for some disciplines, and requirements to be affiliated with an institution with an OAF or a TA in order to receive funding for transactional publishing fees (Farley et al., 2021; Harington, 2020; Kwon, D., 2022). While individual campus OAFs benefit some authors at that institution by ensuring that their research is globally accessible, there is increasing evidence that OAFs increase inequity in the entire scholarly communication ecosystem by fueling the "APC barrier" and in turn only serving a minority of the world's researchers (Folan, 2023; Johnson & Ficarra, 2021a; Johnson & Ficarra, 2021b; Klebel & Ross-Hellauer, 2023; Kwon, D., 2022).

Conclusion

Understanding the history and current state of open access funds (OAFs) at the University of California (UC) can serve as a foundation for budgetary decision-making at campuses where libraries are working to support open access (OA) initiatives and strategies. The uncertain disposition of the OAFs at the

authors' home institutions prompted this examination. By surveying 10 UC campus libraries in a closely collaborative yet very independent system, our analysis found that the deciding factors for discontinuing OAFs were staffing concerns and financial sustainability. Support for OAFs at the remaining four campuses has become more complicated with the advent of UC's transformative agreements. UCSF's attempt to stay within a reduced budget by modifying application criteria and favoring early-career authors still proved unsustainable, and the fund was shut down. UCSD currently has no dedicated OAF or similar program.

OAFs have been found to be of most benefit to authors at institutions where the fund's financial and staffing resources are on par with the publishing output of the institution. However, there is growing concern that funding models such as OAFs and transformative agreements privilege authors at well-resourced institutions and further broaden global inequities in scholarly communication.

Another area of concern for the viability of this model is the staffing needed to implement and manage an OAF. The wide range of staffing models across the UC campuses revealed that neither increased allotted staff and time or revising the funding criteria ensure the sustainability of funds. Many libraries with OAFs also have institutional transformative open access agreements and diamond OA memberships, which both complicate the offerings for authors and increase the workload for the library workers who support these OA funding mechanisms.

Libraries considering implementing an OAF, as well as those at a point of assessing, continuing, or shuttering a fund would do well to understand their impacts on staffing, budgets, and justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility on the advancement of open access. Libraries are increasingly considering values-based guidelines to guide their decision-making and investments. While OAFs provide a benefit to authors who receive funding to make their publications open for all to access, they do not rein in OA expenditures or move the needle on transforming scholarly communication to an open model that is within reach for all authors and readers.

Author Contributions

Allegra Swift: Conceptualization (equal), Data curation (equal), Formal analysis (equal), Investigation (equal), Methodology (equal), Visualization (equal), Writing - original draft (equal), Writing - review & editing (equal) **Anneliese Taylor:** Conceptualization (equal), Data curation (equal), Formal analysis (equal), Investigation (equal), Methodology (equal), Visualization (equal), Writing - original draft (equal), Writing - review & editing (equal)

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