

# Philosophers' perceptions of pay to publish and open access in Spain: Books versus journals, more than a financial dilemma

Ramón A. Feenstra <sup>1\*</sup> and Emilio Delgado López-Cózar <sup>2</sup>



Ramón A. Feenstra



Emilio Delgado  
López-Cózar

<sup>1</sup>Department of Philosophy and Sociology, Universitat Jaume I de Castelló, Avd Sos Baynat s/n, Castelló, 12071, Spain

<sup>2</sup>Department of Information and Communication, Universidad de Granada, Calle Campus De Cartuja, s/n, Granada, 18011, Spain

ORCID:

R.A. Feenstra: 0000-0002-4775-8762

E.D. López-Cózar: 0000-0002-8184-551X

\*Corresponding author: Ramón A. Feenstra,  
Universitat Jaume I de Castelló, Spain.  
E-mail: feenstra@uji.es

## Abstract

Pay to publish and open access have been studied extensively, but less so in disciplines such as philosophy and ethics. This study examines the habits and perceptions of researchers from these two fields in Spain. The study draws on data from a survey (completed by 201 out of 541 researchers), a public debate with 26 researchers, and 14 in-depth interviews. Our results offer some interesting insights into the criteria researchers apply when selecting publishers and journals, notably the value they place on the absence of publication fees. However, habits differ for publishing an article or a book, since payment to publish books is more widespread. The study finds contrasting views on the market for publishing books and journals: some respondents perceived what they consider to be the commercialisation of publishing in academic journals, while others provide arguments to support the Spanish book industry. Sceptical views were also voiced on pay to publish as a funding model. Finally, the study finds broad agreement among the researchers surveyed that publicly funded research should be free to read.

**Keywords:** article processing charges, book processing charges, ethics, humanities, open access, peer review, philosophy, publication funding, publishing fees, scholarly communication, Spain

## INTRODUCTION

Since its introduction, open access of scientific publications has generated debate on how it should be paid for (Harnad et al., 2004; Truth, 2012; Björk & Solomon, 2015; Bo-Christer Björk, 2017; Severin et al., 2018; Edelmann & Schoßböck, 2020). The traditional publication model, financed through subscriptions, was free for the author, but paid for (and with limited access) by readers. However, an alternative form of publishing has recently

become established within the OA model, based on article processing charges (APC) paid by the author (or their institution) and available to the reader without charge (Araiza Díaz et al., 2019; Gadagkar, 2016; Leopold, 2014; Schroter & Tite, 2006). In sum, the business model has shifted from pay-to-read to pay-to-publish.

An intense debate has arisen over the implications of the pay-to-publish model, which has mainly been implemented and studied in regard to research journals (Gadagkar, 2016). Some

authors consider that this business model can affect the quality of published material, can give rise to possible conflicts of interest in journals or can distort review processes (Al-Khatib & da Silva, 2017; Gadagkar, 2016; Leopold, 2014; Mabe, 2004; van Dalen, 2013). Criticism has also been levelled at the disproportionate profits accrued from the excessive fees (compared with the cost of production) charged to authors (Buranyi, 2017; Dal-Ré, 2019; Pinter, 2018), which create inequalities among researchers, who do not all have the same access to funding for these payments (Al-Khatib & da Silva, 2017; Gadagkar, 2008; Leopold, 2014; Mabe, 2004; Tzarnas & Tzarnas, 2015; van Dalen, 2013). This is especially the case for young researchers, who often identify the high cost of APCs as one of the main problems of OA publishing (Jamali et al., 2020; Nicholas et al., 2019; Nicholas, Watkinson, et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Bravo & Nicholas, 2020). Other authors warn that behind the attractive OA label lie some 'predatory' journals, known for their tendency to extort high fees from authors (Al-Khatib & da Silva, 2017; Alonso-Arévalo et al., 2020; Beall, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2019; Shehata & Elglab, 2018; Truth, 2012; Tzarnas & Tzarnas, 2015).

The option to pay to publish for OA is also available in book publishing through book processing charges (BPC) (Eve, 2014). This model is not as widespread as among journals, although it is growing (Capaccioni, 2020; Ferwerda et al., 2017; Giménez Toledo & Córdoba Restrepo, 2018). The BPC model has also sparked debate about the effects on manuscript review (Knöchelmann, 2018) and has met with a low level of acceptance in the humanities and social sciences. This rejection is due above all to the high cost and scarce funding opportunities (Giménez-Toledo, 2018; Jobmann & Schönfelder, 2019). Humanities publishers are also concerned that this model may not be sustainable if researchers cannot meet the costs involved (Severin et al., 2018). Other analysts have also documented huge disparities among BPC fees (Ferwerda et al., 2017; Jubb, 2017). Finally, other initiatives and studies have explored alternative funding formats to stimulate open books, both in general (Barnes & Gatti, 2019; Reinsfelder & Pike, 2018) and in the humanities (Eve et al., 2017; Jobmann & Schönfelder, 2019; Snijder, 2019).

The present paper examines the habits and perceptions related to pay to publish and open access in the fields of philosophy and ethics. This research is particularly important because it focuses on disciplines that have received scant academic attention, and in which the publication of books in the vernacular language addressed to local readerships is an essential publication format (Engels et al., 2018; Fry et al., 2009; Hammarfelt, 2017; Hammarfelt & De Rijcke, 2015; Kulczycki & Korytkowski, 2019). In addition, the publication of books (and book chapters) is also taken into account in the humanities and philosophy by the Spanish scientific evaluation agencies. This concerns both the *sexenios*, a productivity bonus assessed by the Spanish National Commission for Research Evaluation (CNEAI) every 6 years (CNEAI, 2020), and the *acreditación*, a tenure review process for promotion conducted by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA, 2019). Moreover,

### Key points

- Spanish philosophy and ethics researchers reject the pay-to-publish model, especially in the case of journal publications. Payment is associated with a commercial publishing model.
- Paying to publish is favoured in the case of book publications. The publication of books in the local language is defended as culturally and socially valuable. Payment to publish books does not imply open access distribution.
- Paying to publish raises questions about manuscript review processes, their quality and equal opportunities.
- Open access is commonplace in Spanish philosophy because many Spanish academic journals are financed with public funds.
- Most of the researchers surveyed agree that publicly funded research should be openly disseminated without restrictions. Note that open access is understood as a model that is free for the reader and the author, and is financed with public funds.

the culture of academic publishing in philosophy in Spain is idiosyncratic in that payments to publish books generally go towards subsidizing a precarious publishing market. In contrast to the underlying logic of BPCs, some Spanish publishers request payment to ensure publication is viable or even possible. In this case, payment is not used to provide OA distribution of the book; rather, the author buys a stipulated number of books to guarantee the publisher's production costs are covered. This somewhat unconventional practice has attracted little research attention (Giménez-Toledo et al., 2019). The ANECA's own standards for promotion to the position of professor state that in the case of books and chapters of books, they must be published by specialised publishers of clear prestige in the area of knowledge and which have external and rigorous evaluation processes for the selection (ANECA, 2019).

In turn, the Spanish journal publishing sector in the field of philosophy is supported by a model of public funding in which authors do not pay to publish and readers are not charged to access journal content. In other words, OA is subsidized through public funds that support academic journals affiliated to universities and research centres, both in the humanities in general (Claudio-González & Villarroja, 2017; Melero, 2017) and philosophy in particular (Feenstra & Pallarés-Domínguez, 2021). This model has not, however, taken hold in this context for book publication (Lopez-Carreño et al., 2021).

Several studies have analysed and gathered data on OA in the Spanish context, whether in reference to a particular institution (Serrano-Vicente et al., 2016), the whole country

(Bernal, 2010; Hernández-Borges et al., 2006; Ruiz-Pérez & Delgado-López-Cózar, 2017; Segado-Boj et al., 2018), or specific groups such as early career researchers (Rodríguez-Bravo & Nicholas, 2019; Rodríguez-Bravo & Nicholas, 2020). However, few studies examine the perceptions and practices adopted in the areas of the humanities in Spain (Ruiz-Pérez & Delgado-López-Cózar, 2017; Serrano-Vicente et al., 2016) and there is no specific research in the field of philosophy, the focus of the present study.

In sum, to our knowledge, no previous studies have specifically examined the views of philosophy researchers on the questions of paying to publish and OA. This study aims to fill this gap by finding out the extent to which these researchers accept, engage with or challenge these practices, and document their dilemmas, reticences or intellectual misgivings.

## METHODOLOGY

In this study, we apply triangulation methodology comprising a self-administered questionnaire, a debate held at the annual meeting in 2019 of the Spanish Association for Ethics and Political Philosophy (AEEFP), and 14 in-depth interviews. These three data-gathering techniques yielded quantitative and qualitative information about pay to publish and OA.

### Self-administered questionnaire

The study population comprised university researchers and faculty working in the knowledge areas of philosophy and ethics in Spain, together with researchers from the Institute of Philosophy at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). We identified the members of this academic community through a systematic search of the websites of Spanish universities. Through these inquiries we identified 541 faculty members and researchers, of whom 521 worked in universities and 20 in the CSIC; 44 universities (37 public and 7 private) took part in the study and responses were received from all but three institutions. Table 1 shows the distribution by knowledge area.

The survey was piloted on a group of nine researchers from four different categories (two research fellows, three lecturers, two senior lecturers and two professors). Once this validation process was completed, the questionnaire was launched and remained open for responses between February and June 2019. On 25 February, a message was sent to the institutional email address of the 541 faculty members and researchers identified,

followed by two reminders. The survey was also promoted by three Spanish philosophy associations: the Spanish Association for Ethics and Political Philosophy (AEEFP), the Academic Society of Philosophy (SAF) and the Spanish Philosophy Network (REF). The survey was closed on 14 June 2019.

The survey was designed in Google Forms and included 22 questions, of which 21 were closed multiple-choice questions and one was an open-ended question designed to give respondents a free rein to make comments and express their opinions. The questions were divided into four main sections: (1) information search behaviour, (2) scientific evaluation (Feenstra & López-Cózar, 2021), (3) ethics in scientific publication (Feenstra et al., 2021) and (4) communication practices on pay to publish and open access, the latter being the focus of the present study. Of the 21 multiple-choice questions included in the survey, 7 were related to aspects of the present study.

- Q1. Please evaluate the importance of the following factors when selecting a journal or publisher for your work on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Not important at all, and 5 = Very important.
  - Publication is free to read impact measured by citation counts
  - Prestige: the tradition of the journal or publisher
  - Speed of publication
  - Quality of manuscript selection and peer review process
  - Ease of access to the publication's editors
  - Publisher's subject orientation or specialization
  - Journal's dissemination and visibility in databases
  - No publication fee charged
- Q2. Has a publisher that has published your work ever asked you to pay to publish a book (whether an individual book or a chapter in a multi-authored book)? Please select one of the following options:
  - Never
  - Only rarely
  - Not often
  - Often
  - Always
- Q3. If the answer to the previous question is yes, how much on average did the publishers ask you to pay? Please select one of the following options:
  - Less than 500 Euros
  - 500 to 1,000 Euros
  - 1,001 to 2,000 Euros
  - 2,001 to 3,000 Euros

**TABLE 1** Demographics of the survey of Spanish university faculty and researchers in philosophy and ethics.

Knowledge area (ÁREA DE CONOCIMIENTO)	No. approached (Población)	No. responses (Muestra)	Response rate (Tasa de respuesta)
Philosophy	380	115	30.3%
Ethics	161	86	53.4%
Total	541	201	37.2%

- More than 3,000 Euros
- Q4. Has a journal that has published your work ever asked you to pay to publish an article? Please select one of the following options:
  - Never
  - Only rarely
  - Not often
  - Often
  - Always
- Q5. If the answer to the previous question is yes, how much on average did the journal ask you to pay? Please select one of the following options:
  - Less than 500 Euros
  - 500 to 1,000 Euros
  - 1,001 to 2,000 Euros
  - 2,001 to 3,000 Euros
  - More than 3,000 Euros
- Q6. Of your last 10 articles, how many are open and free to read?
- Q7. Do you agree with the following statement? "All publications by researchers who receive public funds should be published in open access format, without exception".

The questionnaire closed with an open-ended question where respondents could freely express their opinions on the study topic.

## Debate at the annual meeting of a scientific society

On 30 May 2019, the authors of this study coordinated a debate during the annual meeting of the Spanish Association for Ethics and Political Philosophy (AEEFP), held in the Institute of Philosophy at the CSIC (Madrid). The session began with a 10-min presentation of some partial data collected from the survey, after which the debate delved into the qualitative perceptions of researchers regarding paying to publish, open access, peer review, the evaluation system and publication ethics. A total of 29 interventions were recorded, of which four detailed contributions

**TABLE 2** List of acronyms.

Stage career	
Research fellow	Rf
Lecturer	L
Senior lecturer	Sl
Professor	p
Source of information	
Debate	
Survey (open question)	
Interview	

addressed paying to publish and two dealt with open access. The debate lasted 65 min and 26 researchers contributed to the discussion. This qualitative information came from researchers working in a number of different universities and with diverse academic careers: 6 research fellows (23.1%), 3 lecturers (11.5%), 10 senior lecturers (38.5%), and 7 full professors (26.9%). The interventions were transcribed and analysed, providing valuable input in preparing the in-depth interviews, the final stage of the research.

## Interviews

The interviews took place in September and October 2019. The 14 interviewees were selected according to the criteria of affiliation, professional category, gender and disciplinary area in order to guarantee the widest possible range of profiles. Seven of the interviewees were men and seven were women, and seven worked in the field of ethics and seven in philosophy. The interviewees included three research fellows, two lecturers, five senior lecturers and four full professors. The interviewees were affiliated to the universities of Barcelona, Castellón, Complutense (Madrid), Granada, Murcia, Valencia, Zaragoza and the Basque Country, as well as the Institute of Philosophy at the CSIC. The semi-structured interviews lasted an average of 35.30 min; the shortest was 14.14 min and the longest, 59.10 min. The individual interviews were conducted by telephone, and were all carried out by the same interviewer. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Specifically, the following questions were asked for this study:

What is your experience in the Spanish publishing sector with regard to paying to publish either books or in journals?

What are your personal assessments of paying to publish when it is associated with book publishing and when associated with publishing an article?

What are your thoughts on open access?

Does the fact that a publication is or is not free to read influence your decisions on where to publish?

Thus, the qualitative material for the study comes from the open-ended survey question, the discussion and the interviews. The most significant verbatims are reproduced in the results section following the acronyms in Table 2. Both the quantitative and the qualitative data were presented in an open data summary report, which was endorsed by the three main Spanish philosophy and ethics associations: AEEFP, SAF and REF.<sup>1</sup>

1. Available (in Spanish) at: <http://repositori.uji.es/xmlui/handle/10234/189924>

## RESULTS

### The importance of paying to publish and open access in researchers' journal and publisher choices

Before examining Spanish philosophers' pay to publish and open access practices, we wanted to find out how important they consider these factors when selecting a journal or publisher for their work. The results showed that Spanish philosophy and ethics researchers greatly value the absence of publication fees ( $n = 197$ ), which they rate as the third most relevant criterion in their decision (Fig. 1). Only the prestige of the journal ( $n = 198$ ) or publisher and its subject specialization ( $n = 199$ ) are considered more important when choosing where to submit their work for publication. In contrast, being free to read and openly accessible ( $n = 194$ ) is not a highly relevant factor, lying second from the bottom of the table.

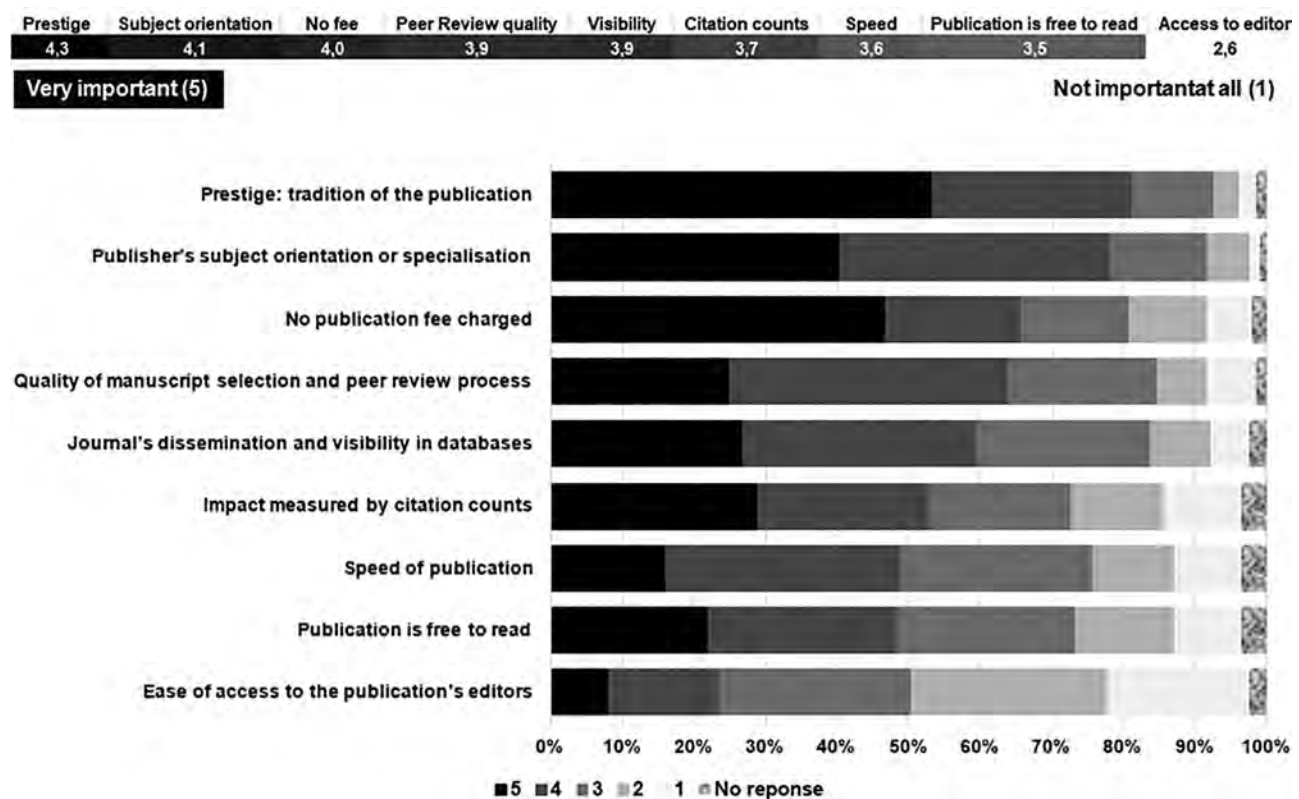
### Perceptions of pay to publish and associated practices in Spanish philosophy: Books versus journals

Philosophy and ethics researchers adopt different pay-to-publish practices, depending on whether they want to publish

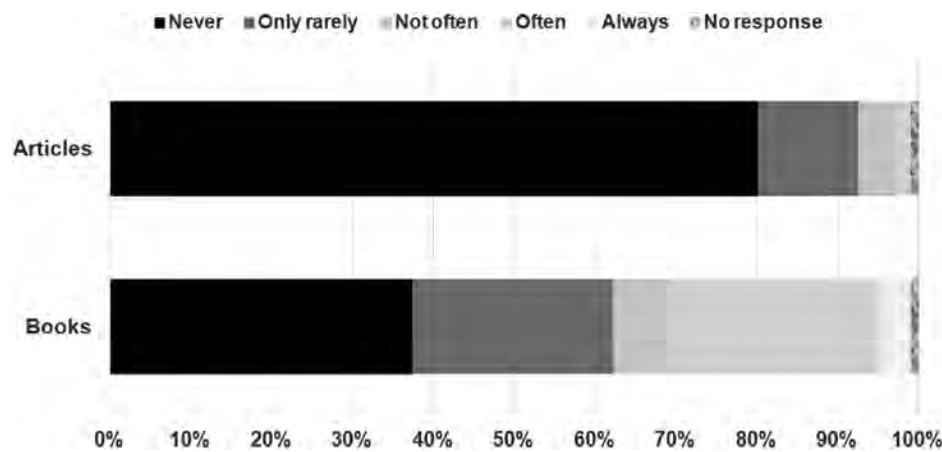
an article or a book. In the former, payment is not common practice as 80% of the survey respondents ( $n = 161$ ) reported never having paid to publish a journal article (Fig. 2), compared to only 37% in the case of publishing a book ( $n = 75$ ). Notably, only 2% of respondents ( $n = 4$ ) said they often or always paid to have an article published, compared to 30% ( $n = 50$ ) in the case of books.

These results are firmly corroborated in the qualitative section of the study. All the interviewees stated that paying to publish a book was widespread and either they or their colleagues had personal experience of the practice. In addition, they explained that the cost of publishing books was usually covered by a publicly funded research project. They also acknowledged that this did not necessarily mean the books would be openly accessible, but the payment was made to cover some of the production costs in exchange for a specified number of copies. Some comments from the interviews are reproduced below:

- It's a fairly common practice. Funds from research projects are used to pay to publish books. And many publishers get practically all their business from this type of publication. P.1-interview
- It's fairly common now among publishers ... they'll only publish a collective volume with limited sales under these terms. SI.2-interview



**FIGURE 1** Criteria used in selecting journals and publishers in which to publish, according to university lecturers and researchers in philosophy and ethics in Spanish institutions.



**FIGURE 2** Extent of pay-to-publish practices among Spanish university philosophy and ethics lecturers and researchers.

- My experience is that with books associated with a research project, the books we write as a group, part of the publication costs were financed through the project (...) and I think it's a fairly widespread practice. SI.2-interview
- My impression is that now nearly all SPI<sup>2</sup> publishers, the best ones, are all willing to listen to offers if a book is having difficulties getting sales. SI.1-interview
- But I know the case, that is, in publishers where you have to pay to get published. SI.5-interview

On the question of the fees researchers paid, substantial differences emerged between article and book publications (Fig. 3). Practically 60% (22 out of 37) stated that articles published cost less than 500 Euros, whereas 64% (77 de 121) reported fees generally above a 1,000 Euros for books. This difference seems logical, given the differences in the cost of publishing the two formats.

These data show a stark difference between publication practices, depending on whether the publication is an article or a book, reflecting two contrasting views of the publishing market for these two formats. In addition, as described in the following section, in their qualitative responses, researchers firmly rejected the pay-to-publish model for journal articles, which they considered a purely profit-driven activity. In contrast, there was clear support for paying to publish books, the hallmark of philosophical identity, due to the fragility (limited readership, low profitability) of this publishing market, which they considered must be preserved and supported.

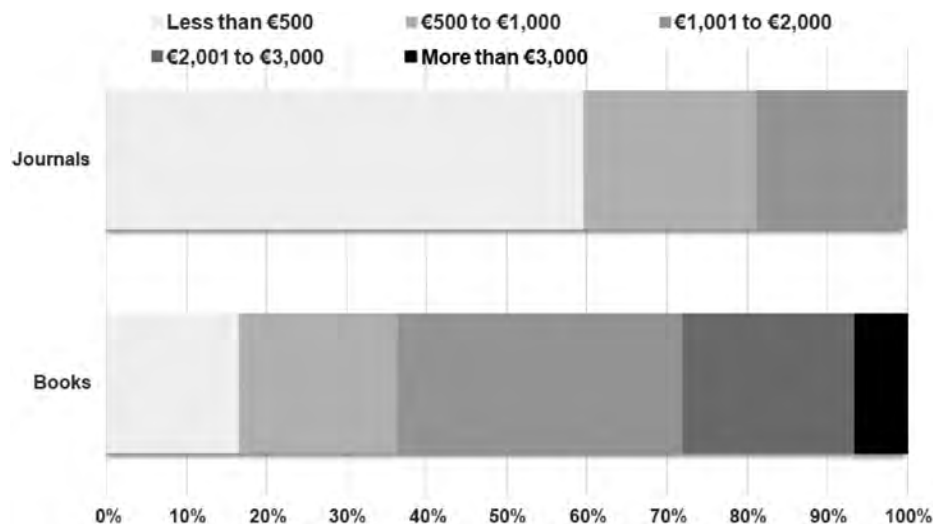
### Rejection of the “commercialisation of publishing” in academic journals ...

The quantitative results clearly show that payment for publishing articles openly is not widespread. On the other hand, the

qualitative information reflected heavy criticism of this practice by the participants in our study. The researchers regard it as an economic model driven by profit gained at the expense of others' efforts, but not really offering anything substantial in return. They do not even perceive the pay-to-publish fee as a way of subsidizing OA to the article. As other studies have noted (Dal-Ré, 2019; Pinter, 2018), the fees charged are generally considered exorbitant; furthermore, the researchers argued that it is inappropriate to allocate public money to private companies. Their comments are overwhelmingly condemnatory (especially those from seven interviewees, three participants in the debate and one respondent to the survey). The comments include the following statements:

- In the case of journals [...], I think it's despicable to charge authors to maintain the system. P.4-interview
- In the end what happens is that public money goes into private hands, that's what happens with the big publishers that control the most prestigious journals, the ones you have to pay to have your work published. P.1-debate
- What I think is bad, appalling, is the business that has developed around [the journals]. In other words, public money is financing an industry that isn't actually contributing anything. P.2-interview
- On the question of journals, the problem is that a large proportion of the most prestigious journals are private. There's a whole publication industry there [...] P.1-interview
- This means that they ask you for money to publish in a journal that, in addition, is disseminated through the internet (and so the production costs are very low), I think it's scandalous. [...] You're paid to do research [...] and they make you pay if you want access to the actual research that you have done in your university. SI.1-interview
- [...] I think the publishing conglomerates are abusing their power. In the end, what these huge companies are doing is exploiting your material (because you deliver them a document free of charge, the fruits of your labour, efforts and

2. SPI (Scholarly Publishers Indicators) is a system for evaluating and ranking scientific publishers in the field of humanities and social sciences in Spain. Available at <http://ilia.cchs.csic.es/SPI/indexEn.html>



**FIGURE 3** Fees for publishing books and journal articles reported by university lecturers and researchers in philosophy and ethics in Spanish institutions.

years of research) and on top of that you have to pay them. It's appalling. SI.5-interview

- [...] journals that only publish on line, I understand there's business there. And the prices are very high. SI.3-interview
- High impact journals, it's a market [...]. And uncannily, almost all the top rated [journals] are English language. SI.19-survey

### ... but there is support for books (through payment) in a fragile philosophy publishing landscape in Spain

The widespread rejection of paying to publish is reversed, however, where books are concerned. Various arguments are put forward in favour of payment, although the idiosyncratic nature of philosophy is always stressed. Financial support for publishers is defended and justified on the grounds that publishing academic philosophy is barely profitable. Some researchers also defend the cultural and social value of publishing books in the vernacular. They argue that this field should receive special protection and that it cannot be left to the dynamics of a market where academic publishing in the humanities has little chance of survival. These arguments are put forward by seven researchers in the interviews, of which we highlight the following reflections:

- Some books hold their own in the market and others don't. [...] There are certain places that the market doesn't reach, and the State helps out because it considers this to be culturally relevant output. On the other hand, having to pay to publish a philosophy book is as old as philosophy itself. Nietzsche paid out of his own pocket to publish all his books, and in no way does this diminish the quality of a literary work. [...] But even the best book, if Pierre Aubenque wanted to republish *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote* now, however good and serious a book

it may be, no publisher would take it on because it's a limited market in business terms. I'm referring to monographs about authors, which do have a bigger readership. There are books that, unless the author is so prestigious that their books sell regardless, it is very difficult to market them and make a profit. So we have two options. Either we ostracise all philosophical output that can't hold its own in the market, or, there are publishers that have found a niche in the market and publish work that falls between being able to hold its own in the market by selling 800 or 1000 copies, and work that needs support to be viable in this context. Over the years, I haven't seen this as just a predatory way for private publishers to get hold of public funds, but rather they are using public money to bring out books that wouldn't be published otherwise. In other words, they are collaborating (they aren't enemies) because it's difficult to keep a commercial publishing house afloat by publishing philosophy books with a certain level of exigency, academic quality or specialisation. SI.1-interview

- [...] I don't consider it to be a bad thing at all. [...] if publishers can't make a profit from publishing that book, because obviously it will be sold to a very limited public (libraries and specialists), I understand that we have to collaborate economically. Rf.2-interview
- [...] I think that if you have a project with funds and you can finance it, it's not a bad thing, so long as the amount they ask you for is reasonable. L.1-interview
- I understand that in book publishing they sometimes ask you for money because dissemination is more difficult and has some costs. L.2-interview
- Given that book sales are so low, I think it's a more or less acceptable kind of collaboration. Obviously, if the aim is to make a profit, the works we usually produce don't have very



high commercial potential. So a prestigious publisher that produces a beautiful edition of your books, they ask you for money ... but you also achieve one of the aims of the project. And moreover, the history of the group continues through its publications. I don't think that's a bad thing. SI.2-interview

- I understand that marketing this type of product is complicated [...]. I understand that for certain philosophical content there are publishers that receive funding. SI.3-interview

## DEBATES AROUND PAY TO PUBLISH

According to our informants, paying to publish raises doubts and suspicions about its potentially distorting effects on the integrity and quality of manuscript evaluation systems and equality of opportunity for authors faced with publication fees.

### Payment and questions of research quality

For the philosophy and ethics researchers in our study, the effects on review processes of paying to publish are a key problem. Some argue that quality may be compromised because there is no guarantee of a rigorous, neutral review process with no conflicts of interest, as also noted in other studies (Al-Khatib & da Silva, 2017; Gadagkar, 2016). In other words, they believe that publication is conditioned exclusively by the payment, not by the virtue of the work itself, thereby corrupting the ethos of the peer review process. Some views on this subject were expressed in the survey, the debate, and the interviews as follows:

- The business of publishers charging ... it's totally mercenary. Surely if without money there's no interest, why is there an interest when money is involved? That's the big question. The quality of what's published should be the priority, not money. P.4-interview
- In effect, there is a paradox in the case of books: the publishers ask the researchers/authors for a fee to publish. This then corrupts the guarantee of the work's quality. If the publisher publishes the book simply because they have secured funding for printing, that's no guarantee of quality. P.1-interview
- Paying corrupts the system. Now when you apply for research projects, a basic item of expenditure is payment to publish. SI.4-debate
- There are many mercenary publishers. Everyone knows that many of them have no future. And if you get 3000 or 5000 euros from a project, from wherever, they'll publish. I don't know where this is leading us, but not to a good place for sure. P.1-debate
- Academic book and book chapter publication in Spain doesn't have a good reputation because it depends on payment, without any guarantee of open access to the publication. SI.11-survey
- This implies that there are no well-established quality criteria for what gets published, because it isn't the publisher's

criterion that decides what is published [but the payment]. L.2-interview

In sum, paying to publish affects the other essential research criterion: the objective evaluation of publishing proposals. Paying to publish, the review process and quality are caught up in a complex relationship, especially in a fragile publishing system.

### Paying to publish and equal opportunities

Another matter raised in our interviews is the concern about possible inequality in the resources available to researchers to meet publication fees, a subject previously raised in the literature (Gadagkar, 2008; Leopold, 2014; Mabe, 2004; Tzarnas & Tzarnas, 2015; van Dalen, 2013). Our respondents noted that some research lines may encounter greater difficulties in obtaining public funds, or that some sectors of the academic community, especially early career researchers, may find it more difficult to make such payments because they have not yet had the opportunity to access public or private funding. Indeed, other studies have reported costs as a major worry among young researchers struggling to pay APCs (Jamali et al., 2020; Nicholas et al., 2019; Nicholas, Watkinson, et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Bravo & Nicholas,

Fewer informants in this study expressed their concerns in this respect but, significantly, they were two early career researchers, a group often affected by this form of inequality. They expressed their views in the interviews as follows:

- But there are people who don't have [research] projects, or depending on other specific circumstances ... I think it's more complicated, because does that imply that only people with projects or money can publish? This greatly limits who can actually publish. L.1-interview
- Now, what this [paying] means is that in the end certain people who have research projects and have extra funds are those who publish and it isn't accessible to everyone. L.2-interview

## ON OPEN ACCESS, PUBLIC FUNDING AND RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

To find out about open access publication practices, we asked our researchers in the survey how many of their last 10 articles were free to read. The results showed a fairly high average of six publications. While approximately onethird (67 out of 183) of the survey participants reported that practically all their most recent papers were free-to-read publications (between 8 and 10), only 31 (out of 183) had published two or less. What explanation lies behind these figures? First, the Spanish government, through Law 14/2011, committed to promoting open access to results from research mainly paid for with public funds (BOE, 2011). Second, there is a significant conviction among researchers of the importance of disseminating publicly funded work openly and free of charge to readers. Moreover, our results showed that 77.6% of



Spanish philosophy and ethics academics ( $n = 156$ ) held this view, compared with 19.9% ( $n = 40$ ) who considered otherwise, and 2.5% ( $n = 5$ ) who did not answer this question.

In the qualitative section of the study, the researchers were also in favour of open dissemination of all research financed with public funds. Indeed, they considered it as a logical obligation. Some of their views are reflected in the following comments:

- All research carried out with financing from the Ministry or the European Research Council should be published in open access publications because it's funded with public money. Rf.1-interview
- Public institutions must meet the costs of maintaining and updating open access dissemination platforms L.12-survey
- As for journal articles, I think it's absolutely right to demand that work financed with public funds be available in open access. SI.1-interview
- I always submit to open access journals. When I'm deciding where to publish, I always check whether it's open access. L.1-interview

Finally, a third possible explanation for the high percentage of OA publications lies in the publishing landscape of Spanish journals. As mentioned earlier, they are supported by public funds, and no payment is required either to publish in them or to read their contents. The qualitative results of our study in particular reveal that researchers tend to associate the concept of open access as being free of costs (for authors and readers). For many respondents, the two concepts were synonymous, as reflected in the following statements:

- The results of any research, especially if carried out in public institutions and/or financed with public funds, must have free and open access ... P.6-survey
- Especially in research, ideally it should be as accessible as possible to everyone and should exclude any payment for the objective of the research to succeed. The more accessible and simple the better, because it will advance research. L. 2-interview
- The space for publicly funded publications (especially university journals) must be restored, and no one should have to pay for access. P.1-interview

Significantly, the interviewees do not allude to the concept of APC in their statements and their understanding and defence of open access journals is linked to the predominant model of university publications in Spain (Feenstra & Pallarés-Domínguez, 2021), a model that is supported with public funds and that is free for both authors and readers.

## DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we found that not having to pay to publish is the third most important criterion for researchers when they are deciding where to publish their work. However, as we have seen,

researchers' habits and perceptions vary substantially depending on whether they are referring to articles or books.

The study showed that payment for publication of journals is not widespread. This is unsurprising, bearing in mind previous studies that find APCs are uncommon in philosophy, and account for just 3% of the publications listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (Kozak & Hartley, 2013). Other studies have found that 87.3% of researchers paid no fee to publish their latest OA article in 2010, and 83.3% of researchers in 2016 (Ruiz-Pérez, 2017). Our data coincide in that a large majority of the respondents (80%) never had to pay a fee, and another significant percentage (12%) paid only infrequently. Researchers have fairly negative views on the payment of APCs, which they associate with a commercial industry model that aims to make disproportionate profits, a perception that has been noted by other studies (Buranyi, 2017; Dal-Ré, 2019).

In contrast, the results show that paying to publish books is a widespread practice in the areas of philosophy and ethics in Spain. In this case, the researchers' negative view is tempered by arguments they put forward in favour of publication fees. It is worth noting that in this context, the pay-to-publish debate is grounded in justifications that diverge from the usual arguments. Paying to publish is often justified as the way to ensure open access to published work. Those funding the research cover the author's publication costs so their work appears in OA publications (Björk, 2017; Björk & Solomon, 2015; Edelmann & Schoßböck, 2020; Severin et al., 2018; Truth, 2012). This is not the case here, however, where the option is presented as a fee to support and guarantee the 'survival' of the book, but not to provide a free, OA product. Although this phenomenon has been noted previously (Giménez-Toledo et al., 2019), it has not been studied in depth. One reason that might explain this position is that books, as studied here in the case of the humanities in Spain (Giménez-Toledo, 2016), are seen as a hallmark of identity by researchers in the areas of philosophy and ethics (Delgado-López-Cózar et al., 2020). A second reason for their willingness to pay is that they consider the precarious publishing industry deserves support through publicly funded research projects, in the same way as other cultural sectors are supported in Spain.

However, the researchers in our study were not unanimous in their views on paying to publish, as reflected in the debates on the negative impact the practice can have on the review process, academic quality, and equality of opportunities, as also noted in previous studies and forums (Al-Khatib & da Silva, 2017; Gadagkar, 2008; Gadagkar, 2016; Leopold, 2014; Mabe, 2004; Tzarnas & Tzarnas, 2015; van Dalen, 2013). Some of the respondents expressed concern that the quality of published work may be under threat if publishers face a conflict of interest between publishing for mere economic profit and offering real quality, or that the process of review and critical, rigorous and neutral evaluation of their work may be compromised. The question some of them raise, therefore, is whether a review process really takes place when payment is involved. They also note inequality of opportunities as a potential perverse effect, since not everyone is in the same position to obtain financial resources.

In turn, the researchers were in favour of open dissemination for publicly funded research, in line with findings from other studies in Spain focusing on early career researchers (Rodríguez-Bravo & Nicholas, 2019; Rodríguez-Bravo & Nicholas, 2020). This attitude is confirmed by the researchers' publication practices, as reflected in the significant percentage of their recent work published openly and free to read. It should be noted, however, that when we asked the researchers about the criteria they followed when selecting a journal or publisher for their work, free to read was ranked the second least relevant. It is important to stress, therefore, that so much of the ethics and philosophy researchers' work appears in OA publications because of the current journal publishing landscape. It is precisely this landscape that leads researchers to understand open access as a publication model which is free for both authors and readers and supported through public funding. Future research could usefully extend these data and examine, for example, the extent of Spanish philosophy researchers' knowledge about OA routes, and their opinions about the various financing models. For the moment, we have uncovered some interesting aspects regarding pay to publish and open access in philosophy and ethics in Spain, how widespread the practices are, and the debates they have raised.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank Daniel Pallarés-Domínguez for his help in the data collection process and Mary Savage for the English translation. We would also like to thank the three main Spanish philosophy and ethics associations, AEEFP, SAF and REF, for their collaboration during the research process and their endorsement of the data collection report. Finally, we are most grateful to the editor Pippa Smart, as well as the anonymous reviewers, whose detailed comments and editing have allowed us to substantially improve the manuscript.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Emilio Delgado López-Cózar and Ramón A. Feenstra conceived the project, Emilio Delgado López-Cózar developed the methodology, Ramón A. Feenstra organized the data collection process; Emilio Delgado López-Cózar analyzed the data and created the tables and figures, Ramón A. Feenstra wrote the original draft, Emilio Delgado López-Cózar and Ramón A. Feenstra reviewed and edited the final version.

## REFERENCES

- Al-Khatib, A., & da Silva, J. A. T. (2017). Threats to the survival of the author-pays-journal to publish model. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 33(1), 64–70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-016-9486-z>
- Alonso-Arévalo, J., Saraiva, R., & Flórez-Holguín, R. (2020). Revistas depredadoras: fraude en la ciencia. *Cuadernos de Documentación Multimedia*, 31, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.5209/cdmu.68498>
- ANECA. (2019). *Méritos evaluables para la acreditación nacional para el acceso a los cuerpos docentes universitarios: cátedra de universidad. Arte y Humanidades*. Retrieved from: [http://www.aneca.es/content/download/15229/187663/file/Criterios%20Academia%202020b\\_AyH\\_corregido.pdf](http://www.aneca.es/content/download/15229/187663/file/Criterios%20Academia%202020b_AyH_corregido.pdf)
- Araiza Díaz, V., Ramírez Godoy, M. E., & Díaz Escoto, A. S. (2019). El Open Access a debate: entre el pago por publicar y la apertura radical sostenible. *Investigación Bibliotecológica*, 33(80), 195–216. <https://doi.org/10.22201/iibi.24488321xe.2019.80.58039>
- Barnes, L., & Gatti, R. (2019, September). The ScholarLed Consortium. In *Septentrio Conference Series: The 14th Munin Conference on Scholarly Publishing 2019*, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7557/5.4914>
- Beall, J. (2012). Predatory publishers are corrupting open access. *Nature*, 489, 179. <https://doi.org/10.1038/489179a>
- Bernal, I. (2010). *Perceptions and participation in the open access movement at CSIC: Report of digital. CSIC survey to researchers*. Digital. CSIC.
- Björk, B. C. (2017). Gold, green, and black open access. *Learned Publishing*, 30, 173–175. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1096>
- Björk, B. C., & Solomon, D. (2015). Article processing charges in OA journals: Relationship between price and quality. *Scientometrics*, 103(2), 373–385. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-015-1556-z>
- BOE. (2011). Ley 14/2011, de 1 de junio, de la ciencia, la tecnología y la innovación. *Boletín oficial del estado*, 131, 54387–54455. Retrieved from: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2011-9617&p=20190209&tn=2>
- Buranyi, S. (2017). Is the staggeringly profitable business of scientific publishing bad for science. *The Guardian*, 27(7), 1–12. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/jun/27/profitable-business-scientific-publishing-bad-for-science>
- Capaccioni, A. (2020). *Origins and developments of the open access books*. Digital Libraries. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.95357>
- Claudio-González, M. G., & Villarroja, A. (2017). Los modelos de negocio de las revistas científicas en España. In E. Abadal (Ed.), *Revistas científicas: situación actual y retos de futuro* (pp. 135–160). Universitat de Barcelona.
- CNEAI. (2020). *Orientaciones para la aplicación de los criterios de la evaluación de sexenios en la convocatoria 2020*. Filosofía, filología y lingüística. Retrieved from: <http://www.aneca.es/content/download/15892/194709/file/Comit%C3%A9-11-filosofiafilologiaylinguistica.pdf>
- Dal-Ré, R. (2019). Plan S: Funders are committed to open access to scientific publication. *European Journal of Clinical Investigation*, 49(6), e13100. <https://doi.org/10.1111/eci.13100>
- Delgado-López-Cózar, E., Feenstra, R.A., Pallarés-Domínguez, D. (2020). Investigación en Ética y Filosofía en España. Hábitos, prácticas y percepciones sobre comunicación, evaluación y ética de la publicación científica. Asociación Española de Ética y Filosofía Política, Sociedad Académica de Filosofía, Red Española de Filosofía. Retrieved from: <http://hdl.handle.net/10234/189924>
- Edelmann, N., & Schoßböck, J. (2020). Open Access perceptions, strategies, and digital literacies: A case study of a scholarly-led journal. *Publication*, 8(3), 44. <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications8030044>
- Engels, T. C., Starčić, A. I., Kulczycki, E., Pölönen, J., & Sivertsen, G. (2018). Are book publications disappearing from scholarly communication in the social sciences and humanities? *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, 70(6), 592–607. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJIM-05-2018-0127>
- Eve, M. P. (2014). *Open access and the humanities: Contexts, controversies and the future*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316161012>
- Eve, M. P., Inglis, K., Prosser, D., Speicher, L., & Stone, G. (2017). Cost estimates of an open-access mandate for monographs in the UK's

- third research excellence framework. *Insights: the UKSG Journal*, 30(3), 89–102. <https://doi.org/10.1629/uksg.392>
- Feenstra, R., & Pallarés-Domínguez, D. (2021). Las dimensiones éticas de los sistemas de valoración y difusión científica en el área de ética. *Daimon. Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, 83, 37–56.
- Feenstra, R. A., & López-Cózar, E. D. (2021). The footprint of a metrics-based research evaluation system on Spanish philosophical scholarship: an analysis of researchers' perceptions. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2103.11987*.
- Feenstra, R. A., López-Cózar, E. D., & Pallarés-Domínguez, D. (2021). Research misconduct in the fields of ethics and philosophy: researchers' perceptions in Spain. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 27(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-021-00278-w>
- Ferwerda, E., Pinter, F., & Stern, N. (2017). A landscape study on open access and monographs: Policies, funding and publishing in eight European countries. In *Knowledge Exchange*. Zenodo Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.815932>
- Fry, J., Oppenheim-DIS, C., Creaser, C., Johnson, W., Summers, M., White-LISU, S., & Hartley-CERLIM, D. (2009). Communicating knowledge: How and why researchers publish and disseminate their findings. Supporting paper, 4. London: RIN; JISC. Retrieved from: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.214.6876&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Gadagkar, R. (2008). Open-access more harm than good in developing world. *Nature*, 453(7194), 450–450. <https://doi.org/10.1038/453450c>
- Gadagkar, R. (2016). The 'pay-to-publish' model should be abolished. *Notes and Records: the Royal Society Journal of the History of Science*, 70(4), 403–404. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsnr.2016.0039>
- Giménez Toledo, E., & Córdoba Restrepo, J. F. (Eds.). (2018). *Edición académica y difusión. Libro abierto en Iberoamérica*. Editorial Universidad del Rosario - Editorial Comares. <https://doi.org/10.12804/th9789587841671>
- Giménez-Toledo, E. (2016). *El malestar de los investigadores ante su evaluación*. Iberoamericana. <https://doi.org/10.31819/9783954878826>
- Giménez-Toledo, E., Tejada-Artigas, C. M., & Borges-De-Oliveira, A. (2019). El libro y las editoriales académicas según los investigadores brasileños de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades. *Profesional de la Información*, 28(6), e280603. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2019.nov.03>
- Giménez-Toledo, E. G. (2018). La evaluación de las Humanidades y de las Ciencias Sociales en revisión. *Revista Española de Documentación Científica*, 41(3), 208. <https://doi.org/10.3989/redc.2018.3.1552>
- Hammarfelt, B. (2017). Four claims on research assessment and metric use in the humanities. *Bulletin of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 43(5), 33–38. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bul2.2017.1720430508>
- Hammarfelt, B., & De Rijcke, S. (2015). Accountability in context: Effects of research evaluation systems on publication practices, disciplinary norms and individual working routines in the Faculty of Arts at Uppsala University. *Research Evaluation*, 24(1), 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvu029>
- Harnad, S., Brody, T., Vallières, F., Carr, L., Hitchcock, S., Gingras, Y., Oppenheim, C., Stamerjohanns, H., & Hilf, E. R. (2004). The access/impact problem and the green and gold roads to open access. *Serials Review*, 30(4), 310–314. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.serrev.2004.09.013>
- Hernández-Borges, A. A., Cabrera-Rodríguez, R., Montesdeoca-Melián, A., Martínez-Pineda, B., de Arcaya, M. L. T. A., & Jiménez-Sosa, A. (2006). Awareness and attitude of Spanish medical authors to open access publishing and the "author pays" model. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 94(4), 449–51, e218.
- Jamali, H. R., Nicholas, D., Herman, E., Boukacem-Zeghmouri, C., Abrizah, A., Rodríguez-Bravo, B., Xu, J., Świgoń, M., Polezhaeva, T., & Watkinson, A. (2020). National comparisons of early career researchers' scholarly communication attitudes and behaviours. *Learned Publishing*, 33(4), 370–384. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1313>
- Jobmann, A., & Schönfelder, N. (2019). The transcript OPEN library political science model: a sustainable way into open access for e-books in the humanities and social sciences. *Publication*, 7(3), 55. <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications7030055>
- Jubb, M. (2017). Academic Books and their Futures: A Report to the AHRC and the British Library. London. Retrieved from: [https://academicbookfuture.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/academic-books-and-their-futures\\_jubb1.pdf](https://academicbookfuture.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/academic-books-and-their-futures_jubb1.pdf)
- Knöchelmann, M. (2018). Open Access Book Publishing and Selection Bias. *Lepublicateur*. Retrieved from: <https://www.lepublikateur.de/2018/10/22/open-access-book-publishing-and-selection-bias/>
- Kozak, M., & Hartley, J. (2013). Publication fees for open access journals: Different disciplines—Different methods. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 64(12), 2591–2594. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.22972>
- Kulczycki, E., & Korytkowski, P. (2019). What share of researchers publish monographs? In *17th international conference on Scientometrics & Informetrics: ISSI 2019* (Vol. 1, pp. 179–184). Edizioni Efesto. Retrieved from: <https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/handle/10593/25205>
- Leopold, S. S. (2014). Paying to publish — What is open access and why is it important? *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research*, 472, 1665–1666. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11999-014-3615-9>
- Lopez-Carreño, R., Delgado-Vázquez, Á. M., & Martínez-Méndez, F. J. (2021). Libros en abierto de las editoriales universitarias españolas. *Profesional de la Información*, 30(1), e300116.
- Mabe, M. A. (2004). Peer review and pay-to-publish: The world turned upside down? *Against the Grain*, 16(3), 16. <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4346>
- Melero, R. (2017). El perfil de las revistas científicas españolas respecto al acceso, derechos de explotación y reutilización de sus contenidos. In E. Abadal (Ed.), *Revistas científicas: situación actual y retos de futuro* (pp. 117–134). Universitat de Barcelona.
- Nicholas, D., Boukacem-Zeghmouri, C., Abrizah, A., Rodríguez-Bravo, B., Xu, J., Świgoń, M., Watkinson, A., & Herman, E. (2020). Open science from the standpoint of the new wave of researchers: Views from the scholarly frontline. *Information Services & Use*, 39(4), 369–374. <https://doi.org/10.3233/isu-190069>
- Nicholas, D., Watkinson, A., Abrizah, A., Rodríguez-Bravo, B., Boukacem-Zeghmouri, C., Xu, J., Świgoń, M., & Herman, E. (2020). Does the scholarly communication system satisfy the beliefs and aspirations of new researchers? Summarizing the harbingers research. *Learned Publishing*, 33(2), 132–141. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1284>
- Pinter, F. (2018). Why book processing charges (BPCs) vary so much. *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, 21(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0021.101>

- Reinsfelder, T. L., & Pike, C. A. (2018). Using library funds to support open access publishing through crowdfunding: Going beyond article processing charges. *Collection Management*, 43(2), 138–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01462679.2017.1415826>
- Rodríguez-Bravo, B., & Nicholas, D. (2019). Reputación y comunicación científica: investigadores españoles en el inicio de su carrera. *Profesional de la Información*, 28(2), e280203. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2019.mar.03>
- Rodríguez-Bravo, B., & Nicholas, D. (2020). Descubrir, leer, publicar, compartir y monitorizar el progreso: comportamiento de los investigadores junior españoles. *Profesional de la información*, 29(5), e290503. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.sep.03>
- Ruiz-Pérez, S. (2017). *Drivers and barriers for open access publishing: From SOAP data 2010 to WOS data 2016*. Universidad de Granada. Retrieved from: <https://digibug.ugr.es/handle/10481/47637>
- Ruiz-Pérez, S., & Delgado-López-Cózar, E. (2017). Spanish researchers' opinions, attitudes and practices towards open access publishing. *Profesional de la Información*, 26(4), 722–734. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2017.jul.16>
- Schroter, S., & Tite, L. (2006). Open access publishing and author-pays business models: A survey of authors' knowledge and perceptions. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 99(3), 141–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014107680609900316>
- Segado-Boj, F., Martín-Quevedo, J., & Prieto-Gutiérrez, J. J. (2018). Attitudes toward open access, open peer review, and altmetrics among contributors to Spanish scholarly journals. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 50(1), 48–70. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jsp.50.1.08>
- Serrano-Vicente, R., Melero, R., & Abadal, E. (2016). Open access awareness and perceptions in an institutional landscape. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 42(5), 595–603. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2016.07.002>
- Severin, A., Egger, M., Eve, M. P., & Hürlimann, D. (2018). Discipline-specific open access publishing practices and barriers to change: An evidence-based review. *F1000Research*, 7, 1925. <https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.17328.1>
- Shehata, A. M. K., & Elgllab, M. F. M. (2018). Where Arab social science and humanities scholars choose to publish: Falling in the predatory journals trap. *Learned Publishing*, 31(3), 222–229. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1167>
- Snijder, R. (2019). *The deliverance of open access books: Examining usage and dissemination*. Amsterdam University Press. [https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN\\_1004809](https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN_1004809)
- Truth, F. (2012). Pay big to publish fast: Academic journal rackets. *The Journal of Critical Education Policy Studies*, 10(2), 56–105.
- Tzarnas, S., & Tzarnas, C. D. (2015). Publish or perish, and pay—The new paradigm of open-access journals. *Journal of Surgical Education*, 72(2), 283–285. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsurg.2014.09.006>
- van Dalen, J. (2013). In the news! An opinion-paying to publish. *Education and Health*, 26(1), 66–67. <https://doi.org/10.4103/1357-6283.112806>