

Editorial

WHAT IS AN ARTICLE PROCESSING CHARGE?

Most journals have two types of models for publishing of articles: open-access, and green open access. A few only offer paywall publications. All publishing models incur costs. The Society of Radiographers of South Africa (SORSA) covers the costs of publishing *The South African Radiographer*. It is an open-access journal hence authors do not pay submission and publication costs.

Many journals do require an author to pay an article processing charge (APC), also known as article publication charge, if a submission, following peer review, is accepted for open access publication. APC varies from R7,000 to R18,000 for some South African open access publications. For international journals it ranges from R20,000 to > R50,000. APC generates funds to cover administrative costs, the peer review process, production costs, web-platform and archival costs of volumes and issues of a journal. Some open access journals also charge per hour for copyediting (e.g., checking spelling). Some offer language editing services at an additional fee. In South Africa a professional language copyeditor charges per page comprising 250 to 300 words, or per word. For example, R50 to R200 per page, or 0.25 to 0.60 cents per word. Proofreading is an additional cost.

Subscribers pay for the costs of 'green open access' model publications. They are subscription-based journals; copies of published articles are on the platforms of institutional repositories, namely, self-archiving. Some journals charge a submission fee. This has to be paid when an author submits a manuscript and is not refundable if the manuscript/article is rejected.

The main benefits of an open access journal are that articles are free to access and download by readers as well as by researchers. There are however challenges if an author does not have access to funds to cover an APC. Authors at academic institutions or doing post-graduate research, for example, could apply for funding from their institution; there could however be budget constraints. Another challenge is that authors in clinical practice most likely are personally responsible for payment of APC: this may be perceived as a publication barrier.

One also should consider all that is involved when an author submits a manuscript to a journal. An APC, as stated above, covers the entire administrative and production process. All of these tasks are done by the editorial team of this journal. They undertake these tasks on a voluntary basis. The majority do this in their personal time. Time spent on 'walking through' a submission includes checking that the author has uploaded all required files. The next step is allocating an editorial member to handle the peer review process. Often suitable peer reviewers have other commitments and may either decline to peer review the submission or request an extension of deadlines. On receipt of comments from reviewers the next step is that an author is informed of the decision (e.g., accept, revisions required, or decline). The overwhelming majority of peer reviewed submissions require fairly extensive revising. A revised submission is then checked to make sure the author has addressed all the comments of the reviewers. In the past 25 years there has only been one submission that did not require extensive language editing by the editor. On average it takes at least six hours to language edit and proofread a revised 3500 to 4000 words manuscript. An accepted submission is then uploaded for production. Proofreading a galley takes on average one hour. The final layout of an issue of the journal is proofread by the editor. It is evident therefore that on average 20 to 30 hours in total are spent on one submission accepted for publication in this journal.

It would be interesting to get input from radiographers who are on the editorial board of other journals, or guest-editors, in terms of what they do and how much time they spend walking through an article including language editing. The experience of incumbent editors and previous ones of this journal is that they spend many hours of their personal time walking through a submission. Some have post-graduate qualifications not related to radiography and usually handle language-editing of manuscripts. We acknowledge their dedication as well as that of peer reviewers of this journal. They are the linchpin of the journal.

The philosophy of SORSA is that the journal must be a platform for all potential authors including those in clinical practice as they do not have access to funding. Their voice is important because their articles usually pertain to clinical service topics that could benefit management and treatment of patients. We look forward to submissions to the journal from all authors.

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