

## Editorial

# **Breast Cancer Research: the move to introduce article-processing charges**

Cornelia Schnelle<sup>1</sup>, Emma Scott<sup>2</sup> and Bruce AJ Ponder<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In-house Editor, *Breast Cancer Research*, BioMed Central Ltd, London, UK

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Editor, *Breast Cancer Research*, BioMed Central Ltd, London, UK

<sup>3</sup>Editor-in-Chief, *Breast Cancer Research*, and Head of the Cancer Research UK Department of Oncology, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, UK

Corresponding author: Cornelia Schnelle (e-mail: editorial@breast-cancer-research.com)

Published: 5 June 2003

*Breast Cancer Res* 2003, 5:218-219 (DOI 10.1186/bcr617)

© 2003 BioMed Central Ltd (Print ISSN 1465-5411; Online ISSN 1465-542X)

When *Breast Cancer Research* was launched in 1999, we took the innovative decision to make all research articles open access. Open access means research published in *Breast Cancer Research* is universally and freely available via the Internet and the authors or copyright owners grant any third party the right to use, reproduce and disseminate the article. The benefits of open access for the research community are enormous but the consequence is that the journal does not receive any subscription income for its research content. To cover the running costs, *Breast Cancer Research* will be introducing article-processing charges for all research articles from August 2003.

### **Why open access?**

*Breast Cancer Research* is part of BioMed Central, a publisher who has chosen the open-access model because it believes that the results of scientific research should be publicly available. Open access makes it easy for readers to find and make use of research literature in their field of interest, and it gives authors and their works increased visibility, readership, and impact [1-4].

We believe that the open-access model will be more sustainable than the traditional subscription model, under which journal prices have been rising faster than inflation and faster than library budgets for three decades [5,6]. Between 1970 and 1995, the average subscription price of a science, technology or medical journal increased by 471% [4]. Consequently, subscriptions by academic institutions as well as by individual academics have decreased sharply, which means that researchers have access only to a small percentage of all research in their field [7].

### **What do the article-processing charges pay for?**

As an open-access journal, *Breast Cancer Research* does not differ from traditional journals in its commitment to peer review or its way of conducting it. We take seriously the journal's "gate-keeping function" [1] to control and

certify research quality. Article-processing charges will cover the cost of our high-quality peer review, copy-editing and publication, and ensure permanent world-wide, barrier-free, open access to the full text of research articles published in *Breast Cancer Research*.

### **Why charge the authors?**

The certification and dissemination of scientific work is an integral part of the scientific process. It is in the interest of scientific authors and their institutions that their research results be certified, seen, cited and used to inform further research. As they obtain the reward for the publication, it is becoming logical that they should be the ones to cover the costs for peer review and publication. This is already being acknowledged by funding agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health (USA), the National Health Service (UK), and the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, who take into account the cost of publication when allocating their grants [8].

### **What does it cost?**

Analyses show that the overall costs of providing open access to peer-reviewed research are far lower than the costs of traditional forms of dissemination. Estimates vary between US \$300 and US \$1800 per open-access article [7,9], compared to an average of US \$4000 per article published in a traditional subscription journal [9].

*Breast Cancer Research* has decided to charge US \$500 for each accepted research manuscript submitted after 31 July 2003, which we anticipate will cover our costs. Discounts of US \$50 will be available if authors submit their manuscript formatted with EndNote 5/6 or Reference Manager 10 [8]. Special discounts will also be available for punctual referees, and waiver requests from authors from developing countries or low-funded institutions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

An automatic waiver will be granted if the submitting author's institution is a BioMed Central member. More than 100 institutions have already chosen to join BioMed Central's Institutional Membership Program [10]. It enables institutions to support open access in scholarly publishing, and will help ensure the most widespread dissemination of the research published by their scientists.

### Who else is using article-processing charges?

*Breast Cancer Research* is not the only journal introducing article-processing charges. Two new journals by the Public Library of Science [11] will also be funded this way and several existing journals are considering similar models [12]. Other journals are experimenting with mixed models. For example, several entomology journals give their authors the choice between paying a processing charge, thus ensuring open access to their articles, or not paying and thereby restricting access to subscribers [13].

Other forms of charging for processing articles may develop in time. *Breast Cancer Research* is following the example of a large number of journals also published by BioMed Central, a publisher with a 4 years' track record of open-access publishing who started introducing article-processing charges in January 2002, believing that open access to peer-reviewed research is the publishing model of the future.

### References

1. Stevan Harnad: **Research access, impact and assessment.** *Times Higher Education Supplement* 2001, **1487**:16.
2. Steve Lawrence: **Online or invisible?** *Nature* 2001, **411**:521.
3. **arXiv.org weekly access graph** [[http://arxiv.org/show\\_weekly\\_graph](http://arxiv.org/show_weekly_graph)] (accessed 26 May 2003)
4. European Science Foundation: **Open access: restoring scientific communication to its rightful owners.** *European Science Foundation Policy Briefing* 2003, **21**:1–7.
5. **Publishing, perishing, and peer review: could new kinds of electronic publishing rescue academia from its long-running "journals crisis"?** *The Economist* 1998, (Jan 22).
6. Martha Kyrillidou: **Journal costs: current trends and future scenarios.** *ARL* 2000, **210**.
7. Tony Delamothe, Fiona Godlee, Richard Smith: **Scientific literature's open sesame?** *BMJ* 2003, **326**:945-946.
8. **BioMed Central article-processing charge policy** [<http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/about/apcfaq>]
9. Andrew Odlyzko: **The economics of electronic journals.** *firstmonday* 1997, **2**:8
10. **BioMed Central Institutional Membership** [<http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/about/instmembership>]
11. **Public Library of Science** [<http://www.plos.org/journals/model.html>]
12. Tony Delamothe: **"Author pays" may be the new science publishing model.** *BMJ* 2003, **326**:182.
13. David Prosser: **SPARC Europe on open access.** *UKSG Serials-eNews* [[www.biblio-tech.com/UKSG/SI\\_PD.cfm?AC=2160&PID=10&ZID=623](http://www.biblio-tech.com/UKSG/SI_PD.cfm?AC=2160&PID=10&ZID=623)] (accessed 26 May 2003)

### Correspondence

Cornelia Schnelle, BioMed Central Ltd, Middlesex House 34–42 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4LB, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7323 0323; fax: +44 (0)20 7631 9923; e-mail: [cornelia@biomedcentral.com](mailto:cornelia@biomedcentral.com)