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Foreword

Open vision of the future

This is the third e-zine on open access. It comes at the start of an important year full of fresh negotiations, including Elsevier. In this third edition, we will present our 2018 – 2020 Roadmap to open access. The collective goal of the VSNU (Association of Universities in the Netherlands) – together with NWO/ZonMw (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research/Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development) and the KNAW (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) – is to realise 100% open access for all research disciplines and all types of publications. The development of our own ‘rules of engagement’, with which all service providers must comply, will be of substantial added value to this process. The VSNU’s coordination of a vast range of domestic and international partners will help achieve both of these goals. These efforts are a continuation of the course we have set for ourselves, which has already borne a great deal of fruit.

The figures show that the Netherlands has already achieved excellent open-access results in recent times: in 2016, nearly 42% of peer-reviewed articles published by Dutch research universities were open-access publications. This is an excellent result from an international perspective, although it is vital that even more publicly funded research is made available via open access. It is vital to scientists around the globe as it allows them to see and use each other’s results much sooner. It is vital to the business sector as it boosts innovation. And it is vital to anyone interested in hearing the latest developments in science, such as teachers, patients or engineers.

VSNU is committed to and confident of achieving the goal set by the National Plan for Open Science, i.e. 100% open access by 2020. The Dutch government’s coalition agreement, entitled ‘Vertrouwen in de toekomst’ (‘Trust in the Future’, October 2017) emphasises the importance of this issue, pledging that ‘open science and open access will be the norm in scientific research’. In addition to open access, the Netherlands also wants to ensure that research data is more effectively reused and that scientists’ contributions to the open-research process are appropriately recognised and appreciated. The VSNU also plays a vital role in these issues.
I am convinced that we can continue to make a difference and maintain the Netherlands’ world leadership in this field. Approximately 3% of global scientific publications originate from the Netherlands, which may not sound like much, but when you consider the relatively small number of researchers in the country it is a very high proportion. Dutch research is among the best in the world. The 14 research universities in the Netherlands form a united front during negotiations with the major publishing companies in order to optimise cost management and further growth of open access. Our negotiating organisation is a leading light for foreign universities, and we will continue to follow our open vision of the future until we achieve 100% open access. In this way, we will ensure that the valuable knowledge provided by our universities benefits the whole of society.

Pieter Duisenberg
President of the Association of Universities in the Netherlands
Open access is the norm

Where are we now?

The results of publicly funded research must be freely available to all. By 2020, universities want to make all peer-reviewed articles by Dutch researchers open-access publications as standard. Following a request by the government, in 2013 the VSNU formulated a plan to achieve this goal.

‘The Dutch universities’ strategy is unique on the international stage,’ says Koen Becking, executive open-access negotiator for the VSNU and Executive Board President at Tilburg University. Together with Tim van der Hagen, Executive Board President at Delft University of Technology, and Anton Pijpers, Executive Board President at Utrecht University, he leads executive negotiations with the major publishing houses.

Fltr: negotiators Koen Becking, Tim van der Hagen and Anton Pijpers.
Open access as part of VSNU negotiations, starting in 2014

November 2014: Springer

Big deal: two years 100% open-access articles.

Latest update: after one year’s extension in 2017 the big deal with 100% open access continues in 2018 – there is agreement on the main issues.

July 2015: Sage

Partial agreement: two years open access for 20% of published articles.

Update: Big deal with 100% open access 2017 - 2019.

December 2015: Elsevier

Partial agreement: three years open access for 10-20-30% of published articles.

February 2016: Wiley

Big deal: four years 100% open access.

May 2016: American Chemical Society (ACS)

Big deal: five years 100% open access.

July 2016: Taylor & Francis

Big deal: two years 100% open-access articles.

Latest update: Early 2018 an agreement on the main issues was established, extending the current agreement for another three years.

February 2018: Oxford University Press & Wolters Kluwer

For these publishers an agreement on the main issues is about to be established; for both agreements open access is included, though in different ways.

For up-to-date information see openaccess.nl.
The Dutch approach is such a success because the universities have formed a single negotiating body and are supported by the government. In this regard, Becking refers to the government’s open-access policy, which was continued by the new government in 2017. Dutch universities and partners in the field such as NWO/ZonMw, KNAW and the NFU (Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres) are coordinating their open-access policies in order to deliver a clear and simple message: 100% open access will be the norm by 2020 at the latest. So what exactly does open access involve and whose interests does it serve?

**What does open access actually mean and for whom is it important?**

Most research is publicly funded and should therefore be freely available to the public. The Internet greatly facilitates digital and open-access publishing. Dutch universities are a huge supporter of open access and are constantly in contact with publishers on this issue. Results of scientific research are published in scientific journals that generally have high subscription costs, meaning only financially strong institutions such as universities and hospitals can afford to access them. Other interested parties, such as teachers, patients, policymakers or SMEs, do not have unrestricted access. Dutch universities believe science is not a luxury item and that everyone should be able to access and reuse it freely. After all, a significant proportion of research is publicly funded. In addition, open access is good for Dutch researchers: open-access publications are easier to find on the Internet and are therefore more frequently cited.

**Open access is in the interest of:**

- researchers, as they can bring their results to the attention of a wider audience;
- doctors, practitioners and patients, as they can access the latest developments in treatment methods;
- businesses, as open access boosts the development and application of innovation;
- scientists in developing countries, as they gain access to scientific knowledge;
- teachers and pupils, as they can access knowledge to help them with their lessons/assignments.

Traditionally, subscriptions to scientific journals have been a major part of the universities’ negotiations with publishers (conducted via the university libraries). They agree what are referred to as ‘big-deal contracts’ for collections/packages of multiple journals. Since the VSNU open-access project, the universities only extend their contracts with publishers if open access is offered to the researchers for no extra cost. The results have been impressive: two years of executive negotiations have increased the total percentage of open-access articles in the Netherlands from 20% in 2014 to 42% in 2016. In addition to 20% open-access articles from the ‘big-deal’ negotiations – also known as ‘hybrid’ open access – 9% of the articles are gold open access and 13% are green open access.
Green, gold and hybrid open access

**Green open access**
Green open access assumes that the authors will make their own articles open access by archiving the manuscript in an institutional or other repository. This is already possible at all universities in the Netherlands. Often, an embargo applies to the final version of articles published via a publishing house, although at almost all times, the researcher is free to archive draft versions of his/her manuscript in the repository (known as an author’s version).

**Gold open access**
Gold open access publications are immediately made freely available online via the publisher’s platform. With this type of open access, the author pays in advance (often via a research funder or institution) for the right to make the article freely accessible straight away. This payment is called an APC or Article Processing Charge.

**Hybrid open access**
The results of the Dutch universities’ negotiations exclusively offer open-access publication of articles in traditional journals to authors at Dutch universities. The other articles in the journals remain solely accessible to the subscribers. Journals such as these survive based on readers’ subscriptions, but they also make open articles available to non-subscribers. In this way, a form of hybrid access is created.

The Dutch universities are not alone in their endeavours. In 2017, the National Plan for Open Science (NPOS) was signed by ten coalition parties, and at the European level, an increasingly substantial amount of knowledge is being exchanged between universities and politicians. In Germany, an alliance of German universities has adopted a similar negotiating strategy (see the article in ‘Nature’). Broad support for open access is an important condition for making open access an international standard.
Agreements made for 2018 - 2020
The road to 2020

The Dutch government has put open science on the political agenda: first in 2013 at the national level and then in 2016 at the European level during the Netherlands’ EU Presidency. In February 2017, the National Plan for Open Science – which implemented the European agreements in the Netherlands – was signed by ten parties, including KNAW, NWO/ZonMw and VSNU/UKB (UKB is the Dutch consortium of the thirteen university libraries and the National Library of the Netherlands). One of the key ambitions of the NPOS is 100% open-access publication by 2020, i.e. all scientific publications (articles, books, book excerpts, reports) funded with public money must be freely available for viewing or reuse by anyone in the world as from 2020.

As the driving force behind this key ambition, the VSNU/UKB must initiate collective policy and coordinate the main players in this field. Together with the main parties involved, agreements were made for 2018 - 2020 under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The coalition agreement states that open access and open science must become the norm for scientific research.
In the coming period, a fifth pillar – ‘alternative publication platforms’ – will be added to the original four pillars defined in the VSNU's previous strategic roadmap.
The five pillars of open access

Negotiations with publishers

Alternative publication platforms

International collaboration

Monitoring

Archiving (deposit)
The VSNU continues to negotiate with the large publishing houses with which its affiliates have contracts. The universities want the reading contracts to be made fully open access for no extra cost. This will apply to all disciplines, while we understand that differences in publication culture exist. For this reason, the road to open access may require a number of different routes.

**Differences in publication culture**

The following list displays a number of examples of differences in publication culture that affect the transition to open access:

- Articles by a single author compared to articles with multiple authors (sometimes over 100).
- Publication of mostly articles compared to publication of mostly books, bundled articles or other formats.
- Publication for a purely academic target group compared to publication for a mixed target group.
- Publication involving major impact factors compared to publication without major impact factors.
- Clearly defined research communities with their own specific journals/professional associations etc. compared to more diffuse research communities.
- Publication of articles in ‘closed’ journals and/or publication in repositories and preprint servers such as arXiv.org, bioRxiv.org and the SSRN (Social Science Research Network).
- Articles with short shelf-lives compared to articles with longer shelf-lives (e.g. in the humanities).
- Articles free of rights compared to articles to which third-party rights apply (e.g. to images or specific data).
It is vitally important that open access remains high on the political agenda and that open science was given political priority during the Dutch Presidency of the European Union. Universities need a European lobby in order to exert political pressure on publishers and to keep each other informed. It is therefore evident that the European lobby must gird its loins and universities must work closely together in order to make open access a high priority on the international agenda. The VSNU is not alone in its efforts in the Netherlands: its partners NWO/ZonMw and KNAW are also firm proponents of this kind of international collaboration.

At the end of 2016, all universities embraced a collective archiving policy in order to ensure the goal of 100% access by 2020 is achieved. Universities feel a responsibility to guarantee access to its own research output, and this archiving policy reinforces this process. In the coming period, VSNU will continue consultation with its national partners to further emphasise the importance of retaining copyright rather than transferring it exclusively to publishers. VSNU will develop an application of the right to open access as referred to in the Copyright Act (Taverne Amendment, clause included in 2015).
In 2018 - 2020, the universities’ negotiating position must be strengthened by reducing their dependence on established publishers. With the aid of these definitions, the universities conducted an official study of open-access performance in 2016, the results of which were presented to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science at the end of 2017. This study found that 42% of articles in the Netherlands in 2016 were open-access publications. In collaboration with its partners, the VSNU will initiate an exploratory study into alternative methods of monitoring open-access publications, although the ambition remains to allow all parties to register and monitor open access by means of a simple method.

Recently, the VSNU – together with a number of academic experts – formulated definitions concerning the monitoring of open-access publications. With the aid of these definitions, the universities conducted an official study of open-access performance in 2016, the results of which were presented to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science at the end of 2017. This study found that 42% of articles in the Netherlands in 2016 were open-access publications. In collaboration with its partners, the VSNU will initiate an exploratory study into alternative methods of monitoring open-access publications, although the ambition remains to allow all parties to register and monitor open access by means of a simple method.

Principles compatible with both open access and open data, formulated by Bilder et al. (2015). The authors write that ‘Everything we have gained by opening content and data will be under threat if we allow the enclosure of scholarly infrastructures. We propose a set of principles by which Open Infrastructures to support the research community could be run and sustained. – Geoffrey Bilder, Jennifer Lin, Cameron Neylon’. They subsequently assert that trust in a common infrastructure is vital and define principles concerning the following three areas: ‘running the infrastructure (governance), funding it (sustainability), and preserving community ownership of it (insurance)’. The current GO FAIR (Barend Mons et al.) initiative includes rules of engagement based on this article, applicable to all parties involved within a federative data infrastructure. In this way, GO FAIR seeks to protect the interests of science by setting entry rules for anyone who wishes to contribute to the realisation of an open-data infrastructure. A natural next step would be to formulate similar principles for open access.
Publication platforms
Putting researchers in control

In 2017, a variety of initiatives were set up to give researchers or research funders greater control over the publication process.

In the Netherlands, the most recent initiative is the platform ScholarlyHub, launched by Guy Geltner, a historian at the University of Amsterdam. ‘We want to achieve a type of open access that combines maximum accessibility with minimum costs for researchers and society,’ explains Geltner. ‘Digital technology enables much cheaper publication than was possible during the paper age.’ ScholarlyHub was launched at the end of 2017 and is currently seeking funds to enable it to go live. ‘By 2020, we want to get established journals to switch to our platform en masse, as well as helping to launch new journals,’ explains communications manager Tashina Blom. ‘It will be a cross-disciplinary platform via which research and education can be developed and large amounts of data can be stored.’ According to Geltner and Blom, continued efforts by the VSNU to raise awareness of the importance of open access among researchers and administrators will greatly benefit platforms such as ScholarlyHub. They also believe the roadmap must include consideration of ways to support these alternative publication platforms.
Another initiative originating from the University of Amsterdam is SciPost, created by Professor Jean-Sébastien Caux. Just like ScholarlyHub, this platform is free of commercial distractions. "To us, "open" means that authors don’t have to pay any publication costs, the review process is both open and respected, and that our financial structure is clear to all." SciPost was launched in autumn 2016, and the flagship platform SciPost Physics has already racked up 70 publications in just over a year. Within a very short time, SciPost Physics was awarded the DOAJ Seal from the Directory of Open Access Journals. ‘By 2020, SciPost Physics will publish a broad range of journals, including lecture notes, proceedings and codebases, although SciPost will also branch out into other academic disciplines.’ However, Caux is realistic about the fact that funding must be sought. ‘SciPost needs supporting partners to fund part of our operations and infrastructure. This is a much more attractive, cheap and sustainable funding method than the current APC models.’

A true alternative
Jean-Claude Burgelman, head of the Open Data Policy Unit and Open Science Cloud within the European Union’s Directorate-General for Research and Technical Development, hopes that the VSNU and the Netherlands specifically focus on rewards and incentives. ‘It is a great help when universities act as one on this issue. More generally, this kind of concerted action as part of a solid strategy is vital to the European objective of “open access on the day of publication at a reasonable cost”. The universities are a powerful player, although there’s still a lot of work to be done on incentives!’ Recently, the terms of reference were formulated for the European publication platform (see the information note published on 21 December 2017). The call for tenders will be issued in early 2018. ‘The publication platform must offer a genuine alternative,’ explains Burgelman. ‘Whatever happens, it will be a complementary open-access channel. It’s a zero-sum game for the EU, as we will still have to pay for open-access publishing. In this way, we want to provide a true alternative.’
A great deal of support from experts in the field

Project organisation

The project organisation will be directly managed by the General Board of the VSNU, with a great deal of support from experts in the field. This is the same organisation in which Robert van der Vooren established the original open-access strategy, which will be continued by the new project manager Wilma van Wezenbeek over the next two years.

An effective strategy can be organised by means of:
1. a unique negotiation model,
2. political support,
3. staying true to your principles, and
4. selecting a highly effective delegation of negotiators.

**Inspiring example**

‘I have noticed that our negotiating structure serves as an inspiring example to foreign universities,’ said VSNU director Babs van den Bergh about her colleagues within the EUA, an important European umbrella organisation representing over 800 universities. ‘The Netherlands is a small country with closely collaborating universities and a strong library consortium. This created excellent conditions to make a success of our idea,’ explains Robert van der Vooren.
Everyone is needed for 100% open access

‘We’re really making a difference now,’ says Wilma van Wezenbeek, who has been part of the VSNU open-access team in the past years. ‘Recently, together with the director of the University of Amsterdam Library, I wrote down our approach from the perspective of the libraries (see the preprint of the article). We must continue our drive towards 100% open access. It is vital that everyone plays their part: the researchers themselves, the department managers – who need to realise just how important open science and open access are, university library staff, ICT, HR, legal staff, the staff at Surfmarket and the institutions working together with us to achieve this ambition. And last but not least, the publishers.’
Colophon

This is a publication of the VSNU. More information (newsletters, fact sheets and more) can be found via http://vsnu.nl/en_GB/openaccess-eng.html.

Design and realization: Designwise.
Visual material: Shutterstock, portrait photographs VSNU.

Previous open access e-zines: Greater impact with open access! and The Netherlands: paving the way for open access.

March 2018