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**Irish Humanities Alliance:  
statement on open access and  
Plan S**

**February 2019**

Irish Humanities Alliance



The Irish Humanities Alliance broadly welcomes the overall principles underpinning Open Access, noting its important role in promoting the exchange of knowledge and the dissemination of research findings. Enhanced access to knowledge is critical to informed citizenship and the ideal of an open, democratic society. We welcome initiatives that facilitate the dissemination of scholarship to a wider audience and acknowledge, in particular, the desirability of making the outputs of publicly funded research more freely available.

A number of European research funding organisations (cOAlition S), have agreed to require full and immediate open access to research publications resulting from their research grants by January 2020. However, given their singular importance to the Humanities, we are concerned about the implications for authors of monographs and contributors to edited books. While separate implementation guidance in this area is to be issued at a later date, we nevertheless recommend that the planned schedule for implementation be revised as the transition to open access in these areas will take longer to achieve.

Furthermore, we recommend that the following considerations be taken into account

- **Licences**

- Too many **details regarding licencing are still unclear** and this is reason enough to believe that the timeline for implementation is not feasible.
- Further clarification is needed regarding the **protection of intellectual rights of authors** and the type of open licence to be used. Plan S should ensure an appropriate degree of choice for researchers and should also allow for exceptional cases. We believe that the researcher should have a central role in shaping and facilitating Open Access, reflecting both the researcher's freedom and responsibilities
- We recommend the inclusion of **No Derivatives in the licence for any Open Access** publication so as to ensure that text is not taken out of context for commercial or other inappropriate use. This is especially important to the humanities disciplines where the text of the article, chapter or book is the core of the research or scholarship

- **Taking the diversity of disciplines into account**

- Plan S does not adequately address the very significant differences that exist between different fields of research and pays insufficient attention to the distinct, publishing culture and landscape of the Humanities.
- We are **concerned that a 'one size fits all'** model would favour those institutions and disciplines with access to the largest share of the funding. This risks creating a system that benefits better funded disciplines or institutions that can access the necessary resources to bear the costs of Open Access publication.
- While welcoming the statement that guidance on Open Access monographs and book chapters will be issued at a later date, **we would emphasise the singular importance of monographs and edited books within the humanities disciplines.** These remain the main currency for career development within the humanities disciplines.

- **Maintaining Research Excellence**
  - In terms of research infrastructures, **compliance with Plan S** depends on publishing in compliant Open Access journals or platforms. Maintaining research and scholarly excellence in the humanities must remain the core pillar of the research process through robust peer-review. Plan S acknowledges that newly established Open Access journals will not have a solid system for reviewing in place.
  - Plan S stipulates that the hybrid model of journal publishing is incompatible with the principles underpinning Open Access. **Humanities journals are overwhelming published on a hybrid basis.** In the current funding landscape for the humanities we would, therefore, encourage recognition of the value of hybrid journals as compatible with the principles of open access. Scholars and researchers should have the freedom to choose publication venue and – while complying with Open Access mandates – be able to choose how papers are made Open Access.
  
- **Safeguarding Early Career Researchers**
  - Peer-review publication – particularly in journals/publishing houses with an international reputation for academic excellence – remains the primary currency for career development. Given that Plan S is primarily **a European initiative there is a risk that it could have a detrimental impact on career prospects** given that the choice of countries with which academics can conveniently collaborate may be restricted.
  - We are particularly concerned that this could seriously **disadvantage early career researchers** where, at present, a track record of publications in “high impact” journals is considered an essential criteria for career development. Researchers have legitimate concerns that their ability to obtain research grants and academic promotions may be harmed if they are prevented from publishing in prestigious, non-compliant journals. This may have particularly adverse effects for the early-career researchers.

### **Further information**

Irish Humanities Alliance – Promoting the Value of the Humanities  
 19 Dawson Street, Dublin 2, Ireland  
 E. [info@irishhumanities.com](mailto:info@irishhumanities.com)