

Case Study

Bioscientifica Streamlines Author Invoicing and Agreements for Open Access Journals

Challenge

As the scientific publishing industry started to move to Open Access publishing, Bioscientifica had to transition its payment model to reflect this movement away from the traditional subscription-only model. Coupled with growth in the number of medical journals the organization was publishing, Bioscientifica needed to convert to a hybrid or fully open access model that allows free access to readers while charging fees to authors and their funding institutions.

“We had five subscription journals at the time,” recalls Simon Laurenson, Operations Manager at Bioscientifica. “When we launched our first two open access journals, they started to take off—so the payments coming in from authors and institutions increased, and we needed an efficient way to manage that process.”

For Bioscientifica, one of the key drivers for needing a more efficient way to invoice and collect payments was that production editors were stuck handling both processes. Collectively, the production team spent close to 500 hours every year on invoicing and collections. “We wanted to eliminate this burden so they could focus more time on producing quality articles,” Laurenson explains. “When asked what would make their jobs easier, the production editors always pointed to invoicing as the first responsibility to take away.”



About Bioscientifica

Based in the UK, Bioscientifica exists to strengthen biomedical communities to advance science and health through expertise in publishing research journals, hosting events, and managing association communities. All profits generated by Bioscientifica are redistributed to support biomedical research and practices. Bioscientifica is owned by the Society for Endocrinology, an organization representing a global community of scientists, clinicians and nurses who work with hormones.





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Simon Laursen
Operations Manager
Bioscientifica

The initial online payment system Bioscientifica used proved to be cumbersome, which discouraged user adoption. This led to most invoices continuing to be generated manually, making it difficult to monitor overdue invoices and track communications with authors and institutions. Without a process for following up on late payments, the bad-debt rate on invoices consistently ran at about 10%.

“Our invoice process is complicated because even when an author’s submission is covered by funding institutions, the author may pay for additional services relating to adding color images and data to their articles,” Laursen points out. “They may also be charged if the article runs longer than the word-count limit. An article could have no costs at all, or a combination of several line-items.”

As Laursen pursued a new invoice solution, another area of concern was Read and Publish agreements, where Bioscientifica receives payments for reading and publishing bundled into a single contract. If authors have a subscription to a Bioscientifica journal through a contract with an institution, then their publishing costs are covered. Tracking this information required a lot of administrative work given the number of authors and institutions Bioscientifica works with.

Solution

The answer to the challenges Laursen wanted to solve came from one of his long-term trusted partners — CCC (Copyright Clearance Center) — which Bioscientifica has relied on for many years to handle permissions for the reuse of content. “When CCC heard we were transitioning to an open access model, they proactively came to us with a new system to handle author and institution payments,” says Laursen. “This shows how CCC is always innovating new services that help clients operate more efficiently in the publishing process.”

After seeing a demo of the RightsLink for Scientific Communications solution, Laursen knew he had made the right choice. The solution provides Bioscientifica with the ability to manage both publication charges and agreements such as Read and Publish with institutions and funders.

The solution from CCC came along just in time for the Bioscientifica growth spurt—the organization now publishes 12 journals, and income from author payments for open access articles has tripled. Given that there’s a combination of subscription and open access models along with optional author charges as well as cases where charges are waived and others where authors may use a variety of promotional discount codes, invoicing has grown more complex. Bioscientifica needs to verify if authors are members of funding institutions or entitled to discounts, and RightsLink accelerates these verification processes.

More Time to Focus on Production Quality

“Thanks to CCC, the time our production editors spend on invoicing is nearly zero,” Laursen says. “And our bad-debt rate is now down to 2%, so time spent on collections is way down as well. That means more time for editing and collaborating with authors to produce quality journal articles.”

For the Read and Publish agreements, Bioscientifica can now use RightsLink to secure deals through Jisc, an organization in the UK that offers procurement services to negotiate with vendors on behalf of their clients. RightsLink automatically picks up an author’s institution and confirms whether that institution qualifies the author for free publishing to a journal without going through the billing process. RightsLink also confirms that the author qualifies as a member of the institution.



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“The Read and Publish process is a big boost for our sales team because traditional journal subscriptions are falling away,” says Laurenson. “RightsLink helps us build relationships with institutions through contracts where they buy a subscription and can then publish a certain amount of material or unlimited material, depending on the terms. This covers all the costs of authors funded by an institution so their articles will be published with open access to all—which benefits the entire biomedical community.”

Laurenson adds that RightsLink reduces the amount of admin time spent on invoice tasks such as determining when sales tax is applicable, and if so, how much. RightsLink also automatically converts currencies, which is key since Bioscientifica works with authors from across the globe. “Our finance department finds it much easier to run reports and allocate the income to our various journals,” Laurenson adds.

Bioscientifica also appreciates that CCC goes beyond designing, implementing and supporting solutions that help publishers operate more efficiently. “CCC connects us with other publishers on various round tables to discuss what the industry needs and uses that input to guide their innovations,” says Laurenson. “They’re easy to work with and make modifications to their solutions to meet our particular workflow needs. They also understand we’re a nonprofit that needs to control costs so we can reinvest our revenues into industry research and building relationships with industry experts.”

Results

As Bioscientifica tripled revenue from author payments, the RightsLink for Scientific Communications solution deployed by Copyright Clearance Center reduced the amount of annual time spent by production editors on invoicing from 500 hours to nearly zero. The organization also decreased the bad-debt rate on invoices from 10% to 2% while streamlining workflows for processing Read and Publish agreements with funding institutions. As a result, authors can more easily publish their articles and grant open access to their audiences.



About CCC

A pioneer in voluntary collective licensing, CCC (Copyright Clearance Center) helps organizations integrate, access, and share information through licensing, content, software, and professional services. With expertise in copyright and information management, CCC and its subsidiary RightsDirect collaborate with stakeholders to design and deliver innovative information solutions that power decision-making by helping people integrate and navigate data sources and content assets.



Learn more

Contact CCC to explore how RightsLink for Scientific Communications can help your organization.

✉ publishers@copyright.com

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