Notes on the *Journal of Vision* Publication Charge

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The Journal of Vision will be available free of any charge to readers worldwide, but will charge authors a $500 Publication Charge to help defray the costs of publication. The following are some observations and justifications regarding the proposed charge.

**Objections to Charge**

- **Excludes younger /poorer scientists**
  
  Some argue that some scientists will be unable to afford the charge. This is a legitimate complaint, but must be balanced against the observation that all aspects of scientific research cost money, and this is a very modest cost compared to many of those expenses (see below). Young scientists typically are supported by the grant of a more senior investigator, and that grant should pay the charge. Alternatively, young investigators often have set-up monies that can be used. Finally, young investigators will not have to pay to subscribe for this journal nor will they need to find money for reprints. Where this is not possible (e.g. the author has no senior co-authors and no sources of support), a waiver of the fee (Publication Grant) should be considered.

- **Some Funding Agencies won't allow Publication/Page Charges**
  
  It has been suggested that some funding agencies (perhaps in the UK) specifically prohibit publication charges. It would be helpful to get some specific documentation of this so that we can respond appropriately.

- **Where will it come from?**
  
  We assume that the $500 will come from the author's research budget, the same place that paper, pencils, computers, travel reimbursements, reprints, and the other essentials of research come from.

**Reasons for the Charge**

- **Costs of Publication**
  
  The journal cannot operate without income. We do not know precisely what the costs will be, but it seems clear that even with the Publication Charge the journal will lose money in the first several years. For an "average" print journal publishing 100 articles/year, the total production costs per article are estimated at $4,889 (Tenopir & King, 2000). Our costs may be less, due to reduced costs of reproduction and distribution, but these typically constitute only half the total costs at a journal of our size.

- **Desire for free access**
  
  Free access (no subscriptions, memberships, or any other barriers to entry) is a paramount goal of JOV, and is in the author's interest. They want as many people as possible to see
the article. Since they receive no royalties, they want the charge to each reader to be zero. But without subscriptions, income must come from somewhere else. Since broad distribution is so much in the author's interest, it is sensible for them to pay a modest charge.

**Comparison with other Costs of Participation in Science**

**Cost of Authorship**
The cost of authoring a scientific article in 1998 was $6,000 (Tenopir & King, 2000). This includes only the time, support, and materials for writing the article; if the amounts for doing the research were included, this figure would be many times higher. Likewise, inclusion of a single color figure can add $1000 to the author's costs. Compared to these costs, the $500 charge seems very modest.

**Presentation at Scientific Meetings**
Attendance at, and presentations to scientific conferences are important parts of scientific research, but are not without costs to the author. As an example, in 2001 costs for a student presentation at ARVO (membership and registration) are $155, while for a non-student they are $330. These costs do not include, of course, the costs of travel, which range from several hundred to several thousand dollars. Other conferences impose similar fees.

**Page Charges**
Many journals charge authors page charges. Examples are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal</th>
<th>Charge</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Visual Neuroscience</em></td>
<td>$100/page over 12 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>J. Optical Society of America A</em></td>
<td>$125/page, $210/page over 10 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>J. Neuroscience</em></td>
<td>$60/page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>J. Neurophysiology</em></td>
<td>$60/page</td>
<td>+$50 submission fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Investigative Ophthalmology &amp; Visual Science</em></td>
<td>$60/page, $150/page over 8 pages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>European Journal of Neuroscience</em></td>
<td>£20/page + VAT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>PNAS</em></td>
<td>$40/page</td>
<td>+$150/color graphic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Amelioration**

**Publication Grants**
It would be possible to waive fees in deserving cases. Criteria and an application process would need to be established.
For comparison, ARVO does have a Travel Fellowship Grant program for the annual meeting (but it provides only one years support ($500-$1000) for 145 investigators).

**Change Policy at Funding Agencies**

If some funding agencies do indeed have a prohibition against publication charges, we should approach responsible officials at relevant agencies for a clarification of what fees they will and will not accept, and lobby for a change if appropriate. If they accept conference registration fees, we could add a note to the journal indicating that it is also an ongoing virtual conference, with a registration fee of $500 ;-}.

**Different business model**

Suggestions are welcome for alternative business models that meet the criteria of 1) no subscription charges, and 2) enough income to pay the bills by a foreseeable date.

**References**