

Current
State
of

Scholarly Publishing in Africa

Preliminary Notes & Findings – Phase 1

Publishers for Development

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Background

- Various projects on global publishing scene and specific elements of scholarly publishing, but nothing specifically on Africa
 - important because: *“Focus on African problems/challenges could make research unpublishable in other countries”*
- Hypothesis: Dynamic publishing scene in Africa, but issues, trends, challenges not always the same in African context as at global level – ex: OA, print vs. online, management of journals, predatory OA, today’s key issues



Background

- Timeline:
 - Part 1: Survey (August-September 2013)
 - Part 2: Follow-up in-depth conversations (end of 2013)
 - Full report: Early 2014
- Funding in part from Carnegie Corporation of New York and Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)



Survey Target Population

- **Direct: email invitations to journal editors**
 - 1200+ emails, 800+ reminder emails
 - English and French email & survey
 - Online and “offline” options
- **Encouragement from publishing organizations**
 - INASP, PKP, AJOL, EIFL, Taylor & Francis, BioMed Central, Elsevier, African Journal Partnership Project (AJPP), BioLine, etc.
- **Indirect invitations & awareness raising:**
 - Listservs: World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), IFLA Africa Section, Sabinet, HIFA2015, KM4Dev, etc.
 - Social networks: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+



Survey Responses

- **Approx. 330 responses**

- ~30% of African-based actively publishing journals that we identified
- ~5-10% of responses were from journals we had not identified

- **Challenges in identifying target population**

- Ulrich's, DOAJ, OJS, Scopus, Scimago, AJOL, South African Department of Education Accredited Journals, Web of Science, ProQuest Int'l Bibliography of Social Sciences
- Duplicates with slightly different names, out-of-date information
- Some difficulty defining African-published/-based



Demographics of Respondents

Geography: Responses from 32 countries

Country	Responses
South Africa	105
Nigeria	99
Egypt	19
Ethiopia	18
Ghana	13
Kenya	13
Uganda	8
Tanzania	6

5 – 2 responses:

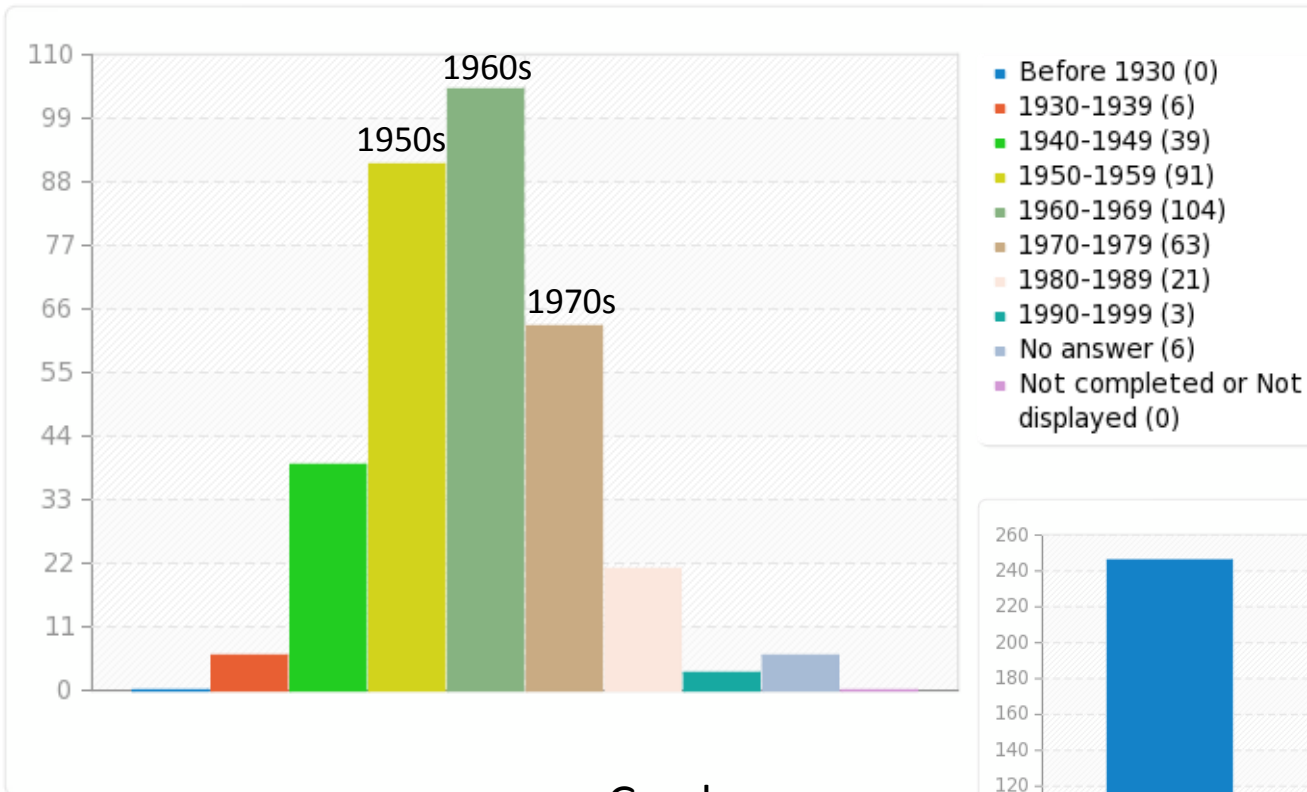
Sudan (5), Algeria (3), Cameroon (3), Madagascar (3), Rwanda (3), Botswana (2), Ivory Coast (2), Morocco (2), Mozambique (2), Senegal (2), Togo (2), Tunisia (2), Zambia (2), Zimbabwe (2)

1 response:

Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Libya, Malawi, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Angola, Benin, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Namibia, Niger, Republic of the Congo, Sao Tome, Seychelles, Somaliland, South Sudan, Swaziland, Western Sahara

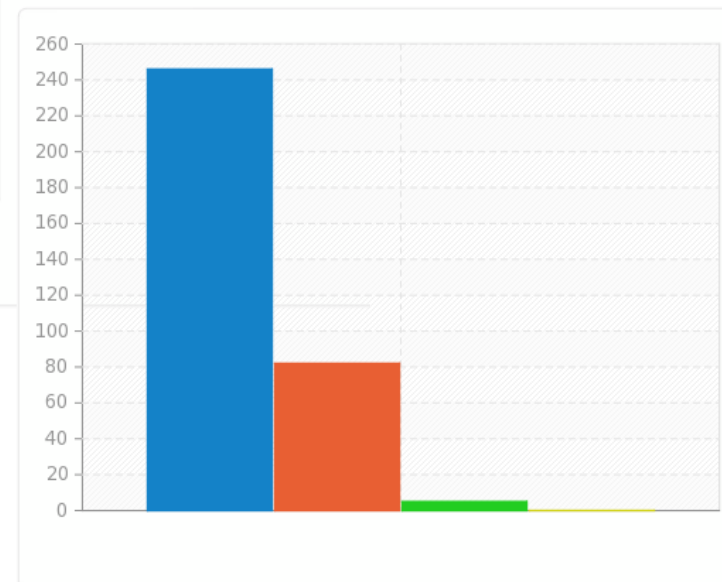


Demographics of Respondents



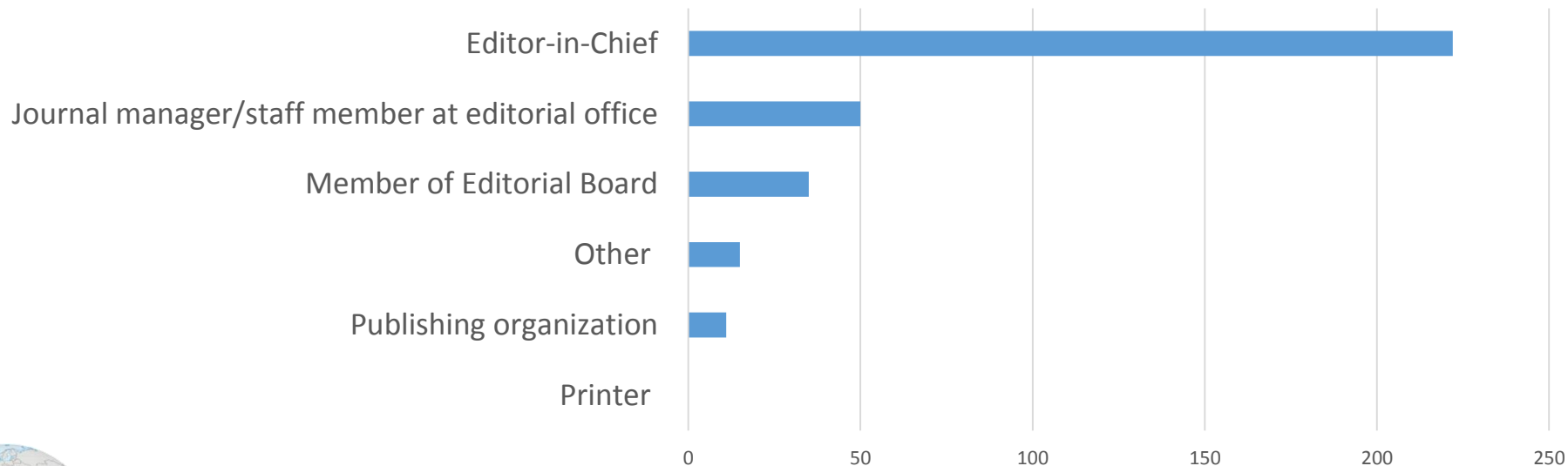
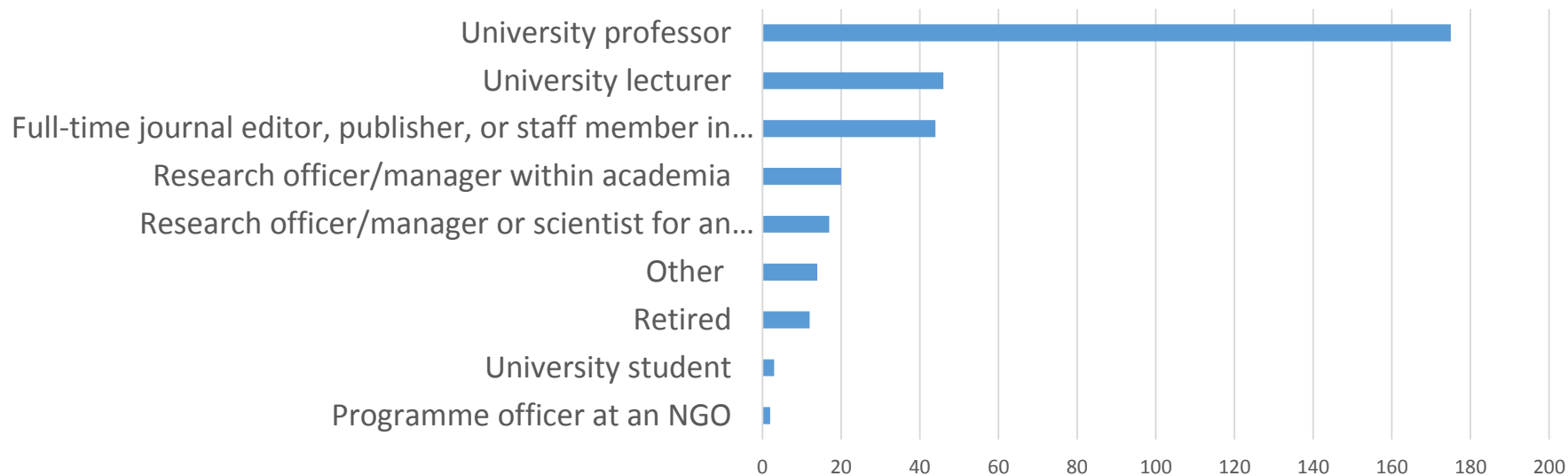
Date Range of Birth Year

Gender:
 74% Male
 25% Female
 5% No answer



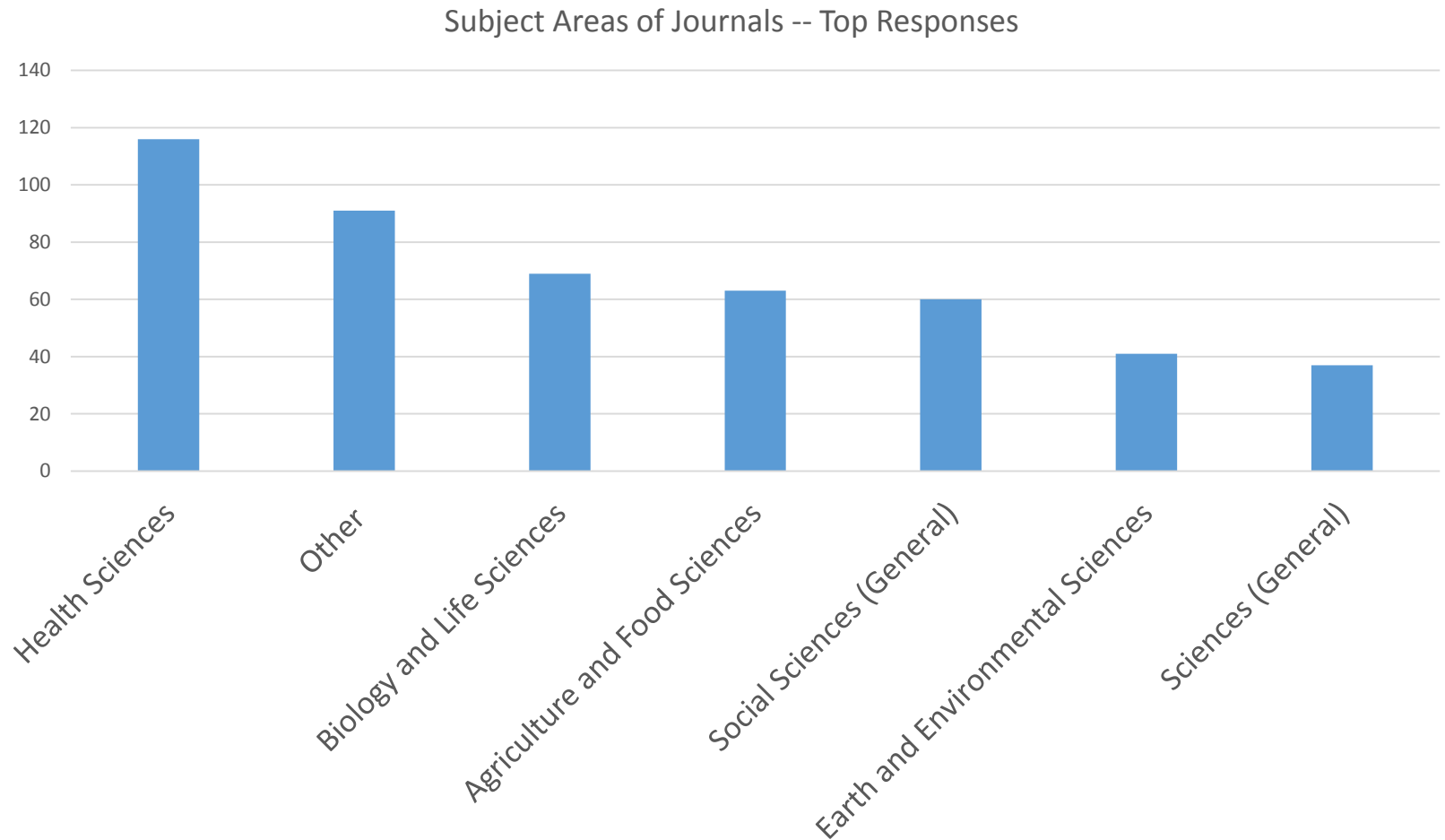
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Current Occupation & Current Role in Publishing



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Top Subject Areas of Journal (DOAJ Categories)



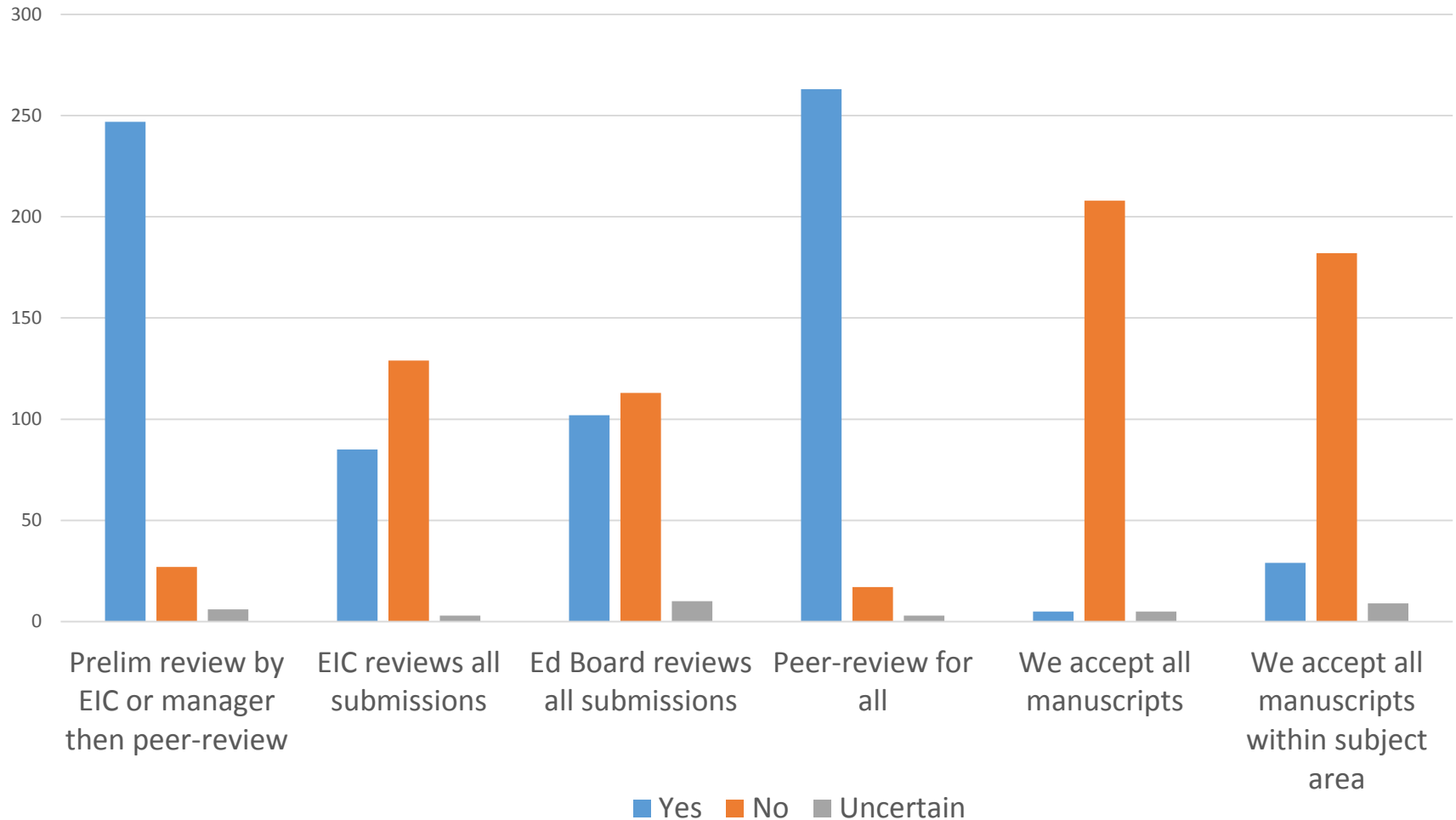
Other = mostly sciences that will be recoded into appropriate category



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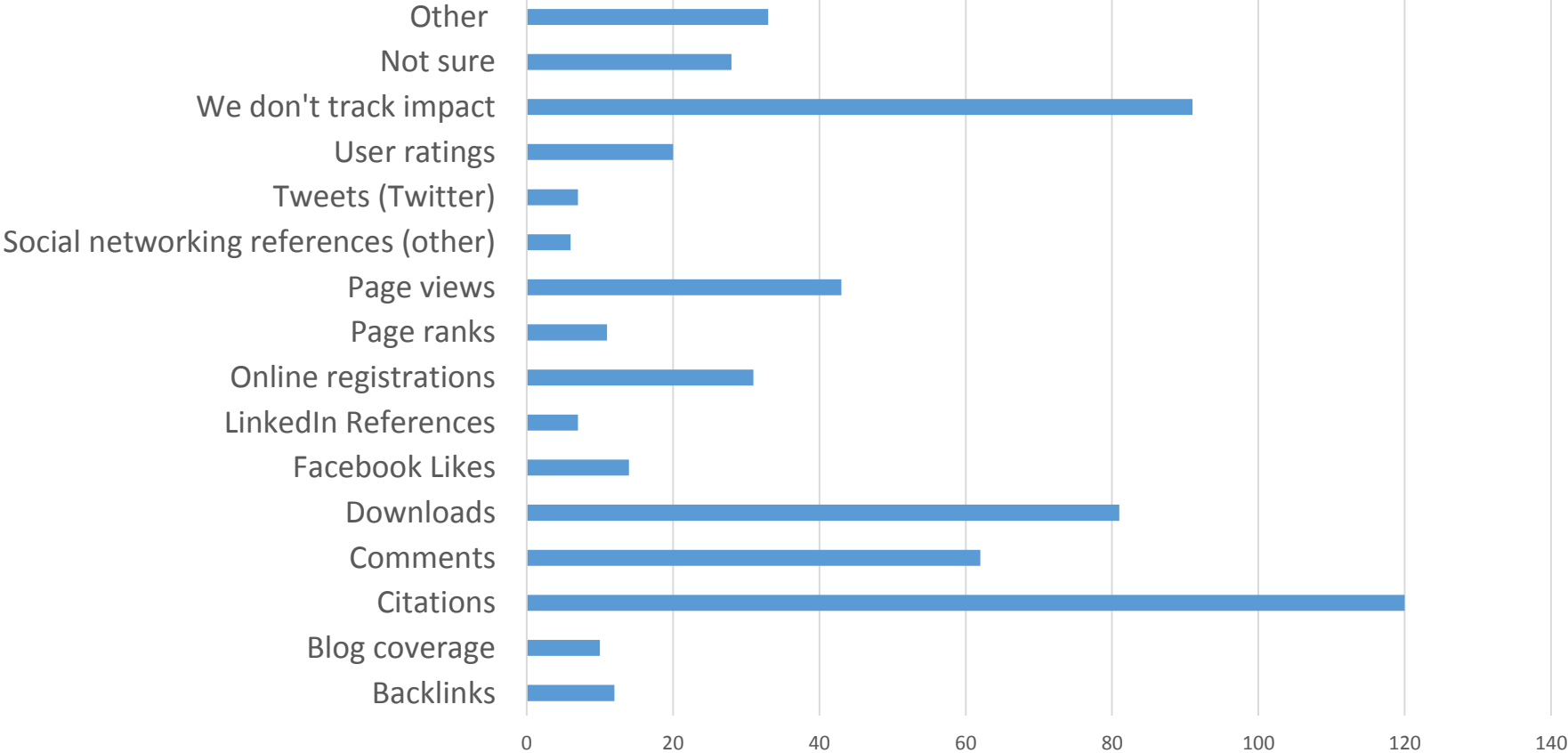
How Articles are Selected for Journal



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Tracking Impact



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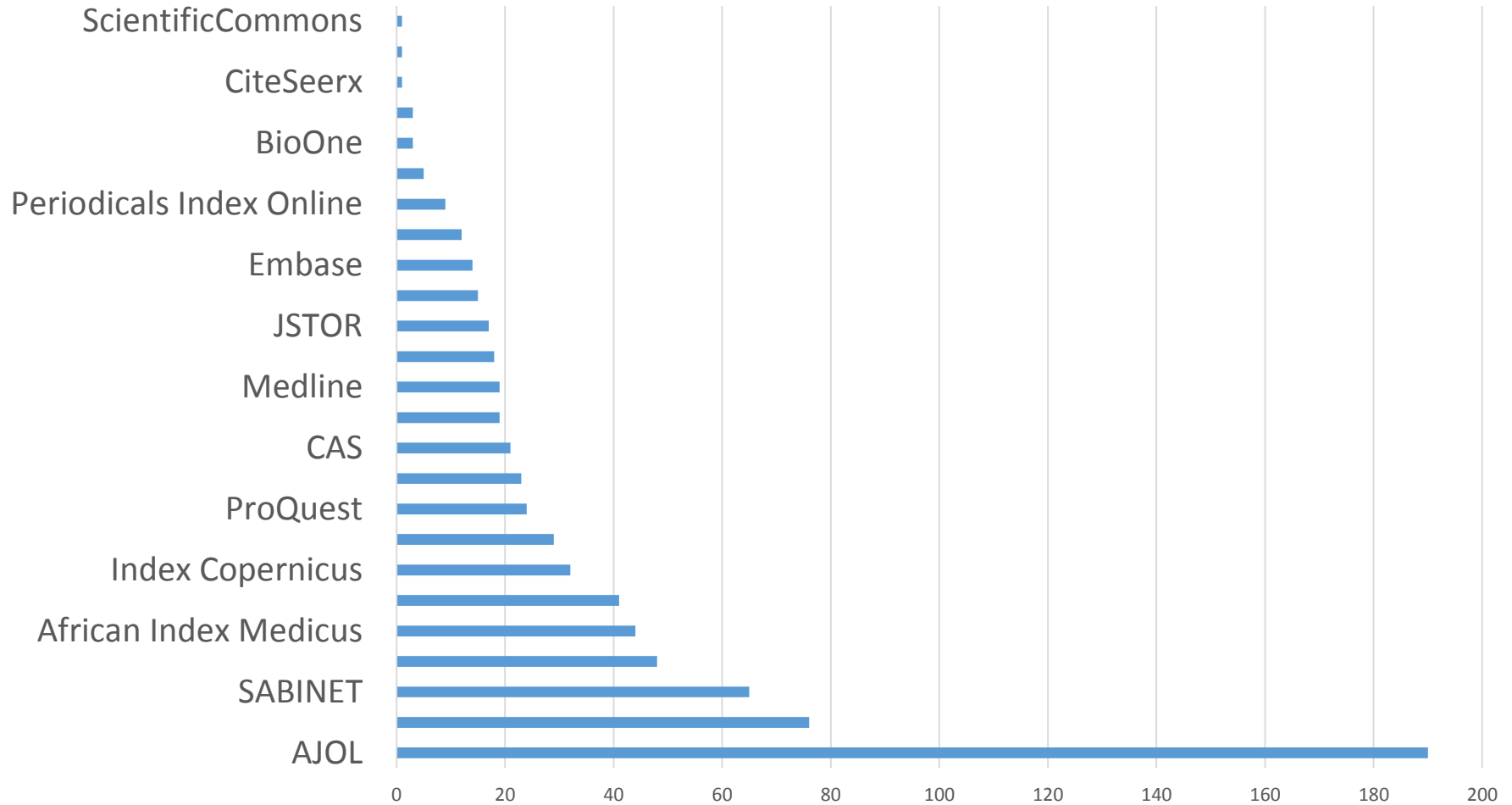
Print and Online Access



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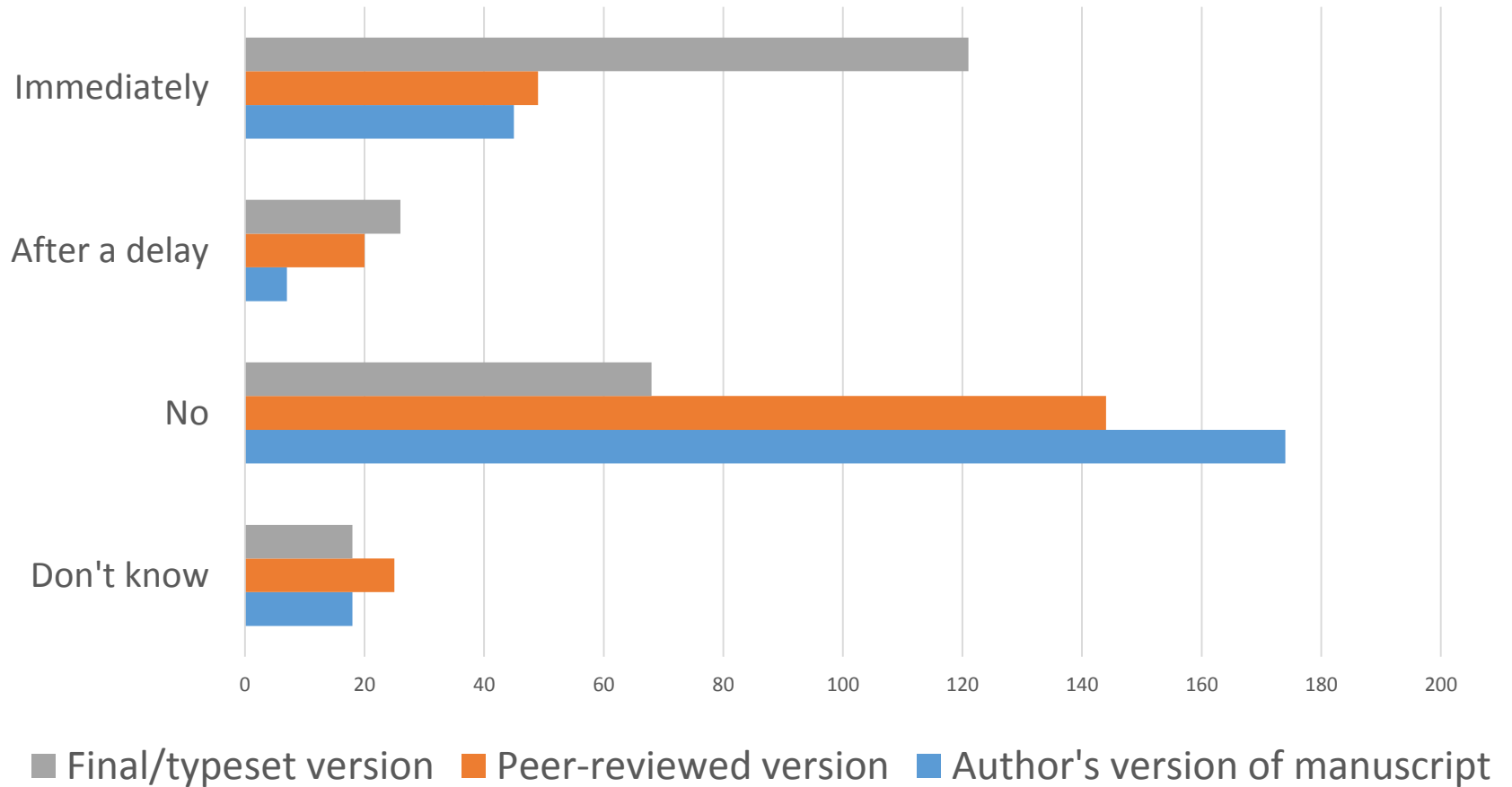
Inclusion in Indexes, Directories, Aggregators

Answers with >1 response



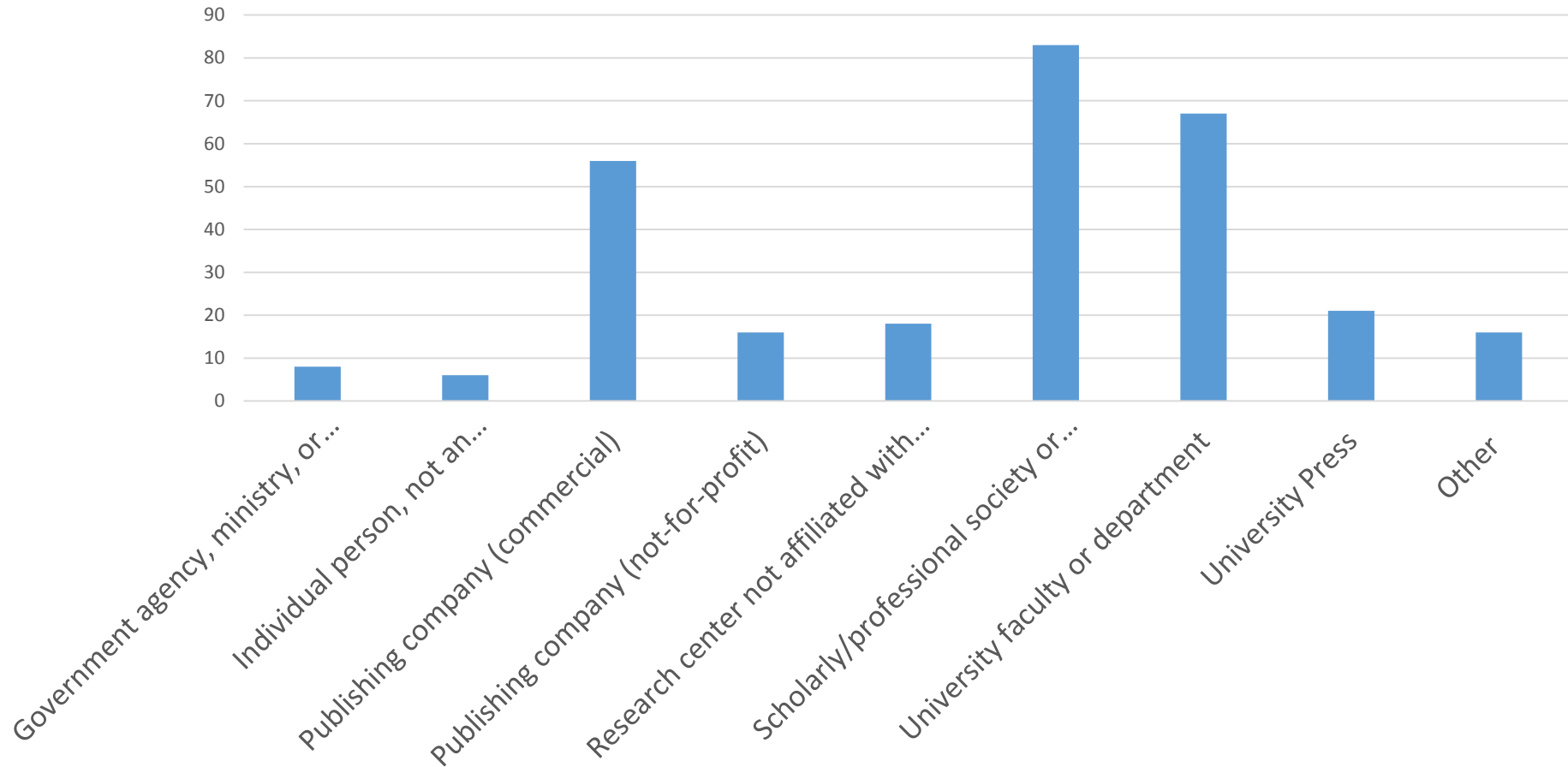
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Permission to Deposit Articles or Manuscripts into Repositories

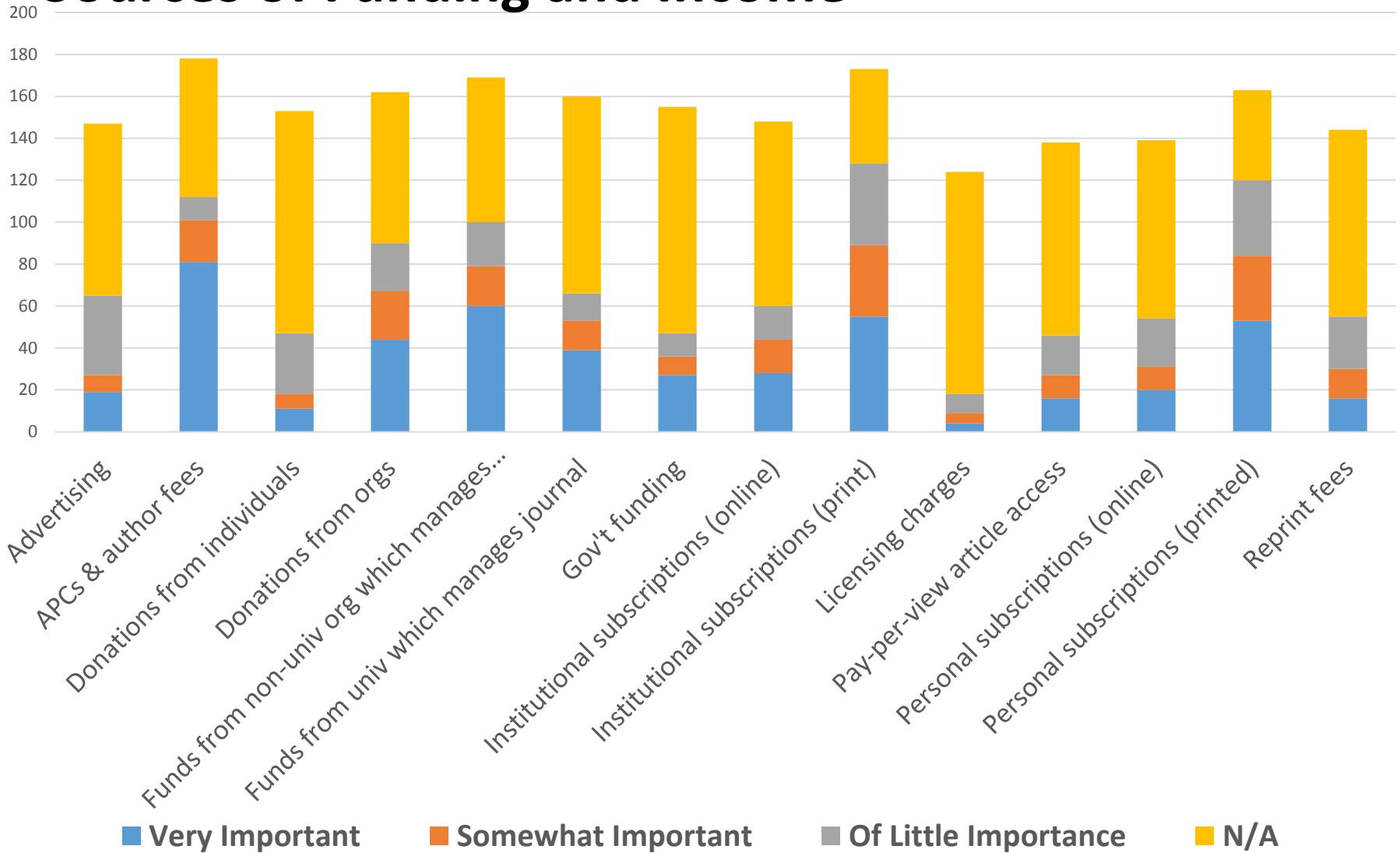


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Which type of organization publishes the journal?

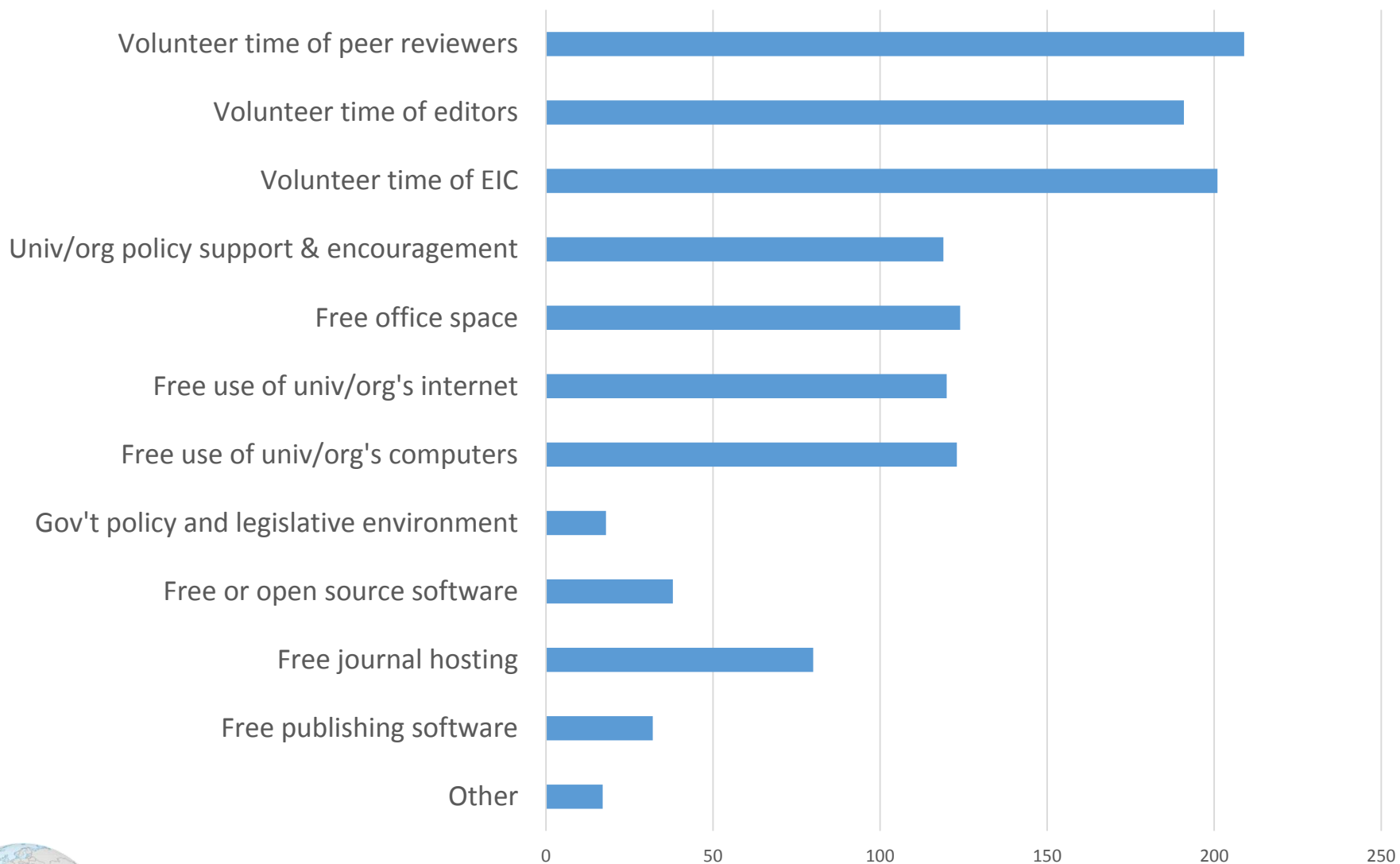


Sources of Funding and Income

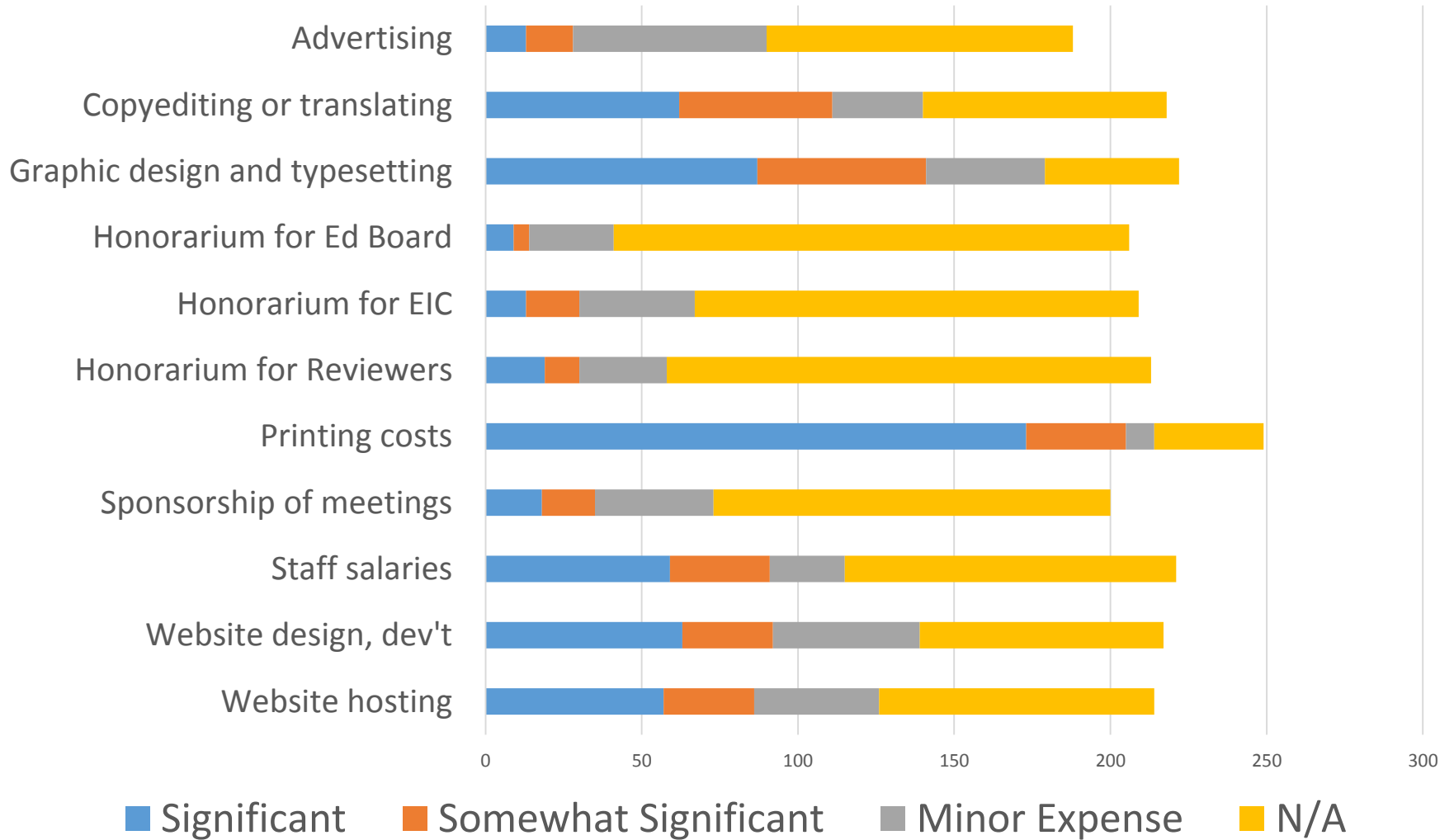


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What sources of non-financial support or resources does the journal receive that allow the journal to operate?



Main Expenses

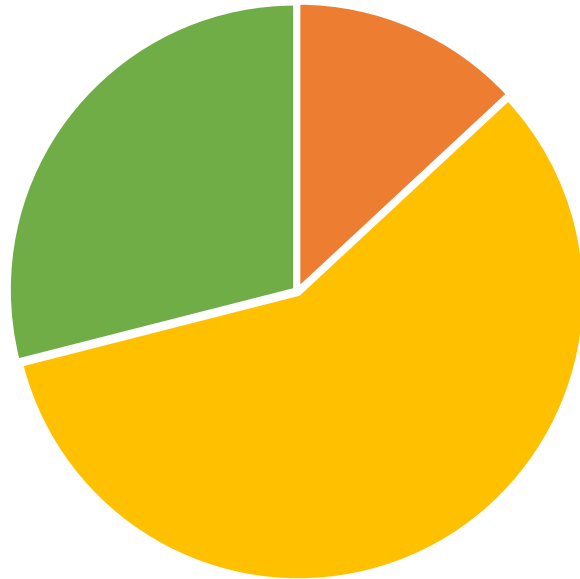


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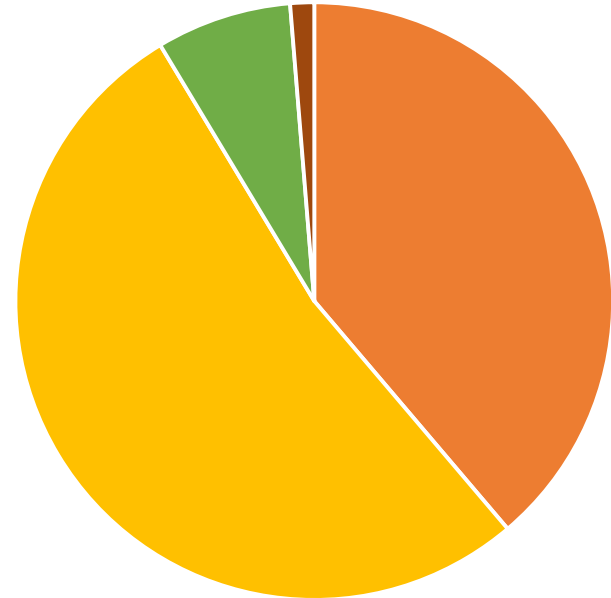
Economic Status

Current Status



- Generating a surplus (13%)
- Breaking even (58%)
- Operating at a loss (29%)

Anticipating Status 3-5 Years from Now

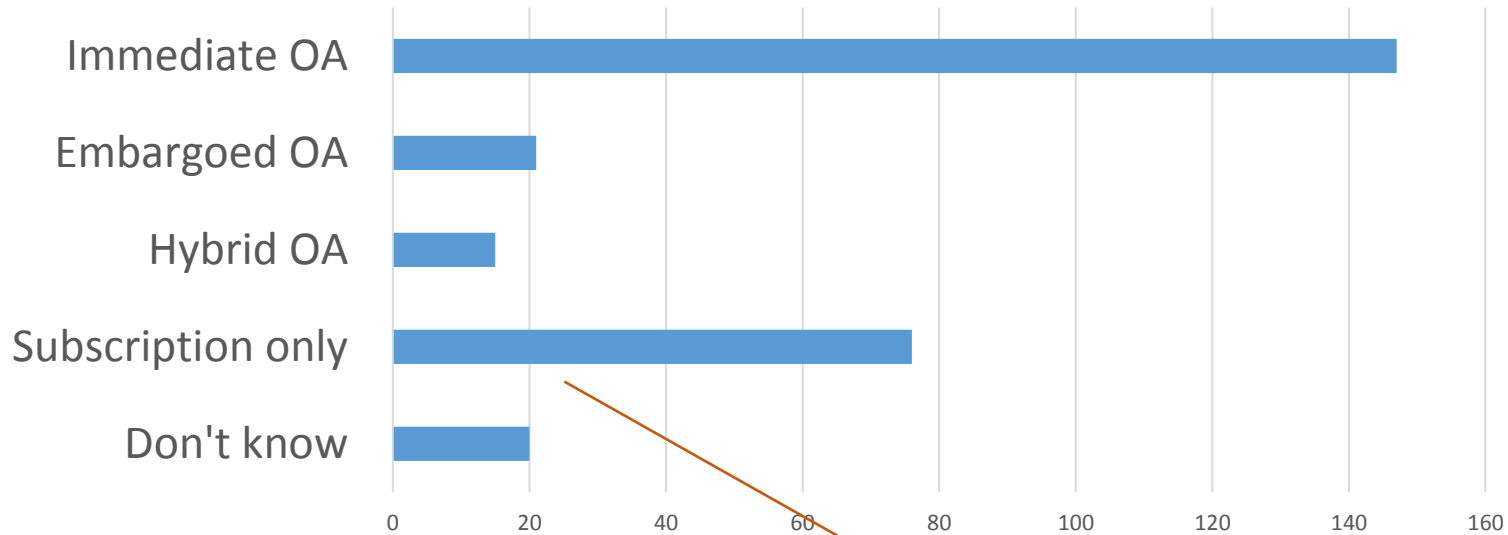


- Generating a surplus (39%)
- Breaking even (53%)
- Operating at a loss (7%)
- No longer in operation at that time (1%)

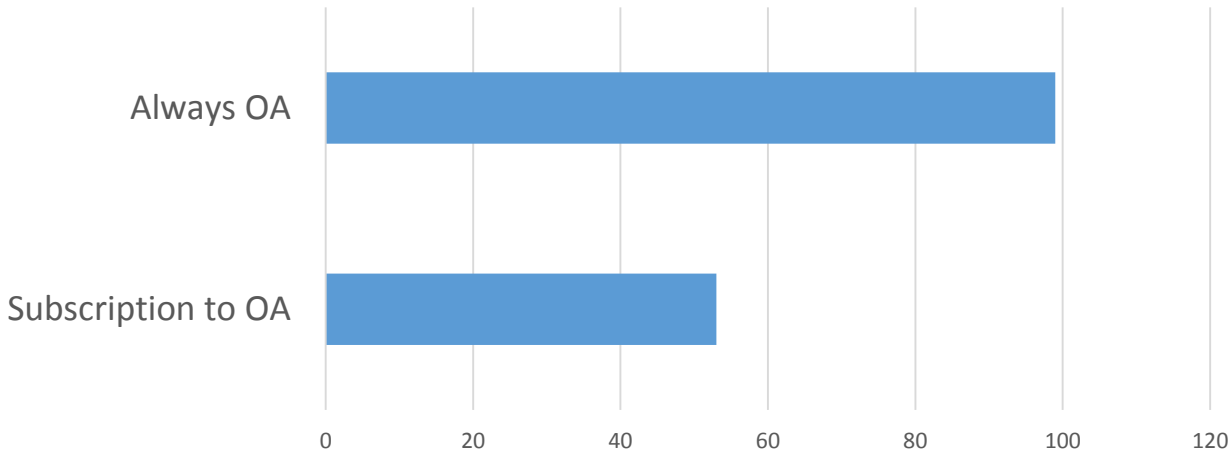


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Open Access



Of the OA Journals:



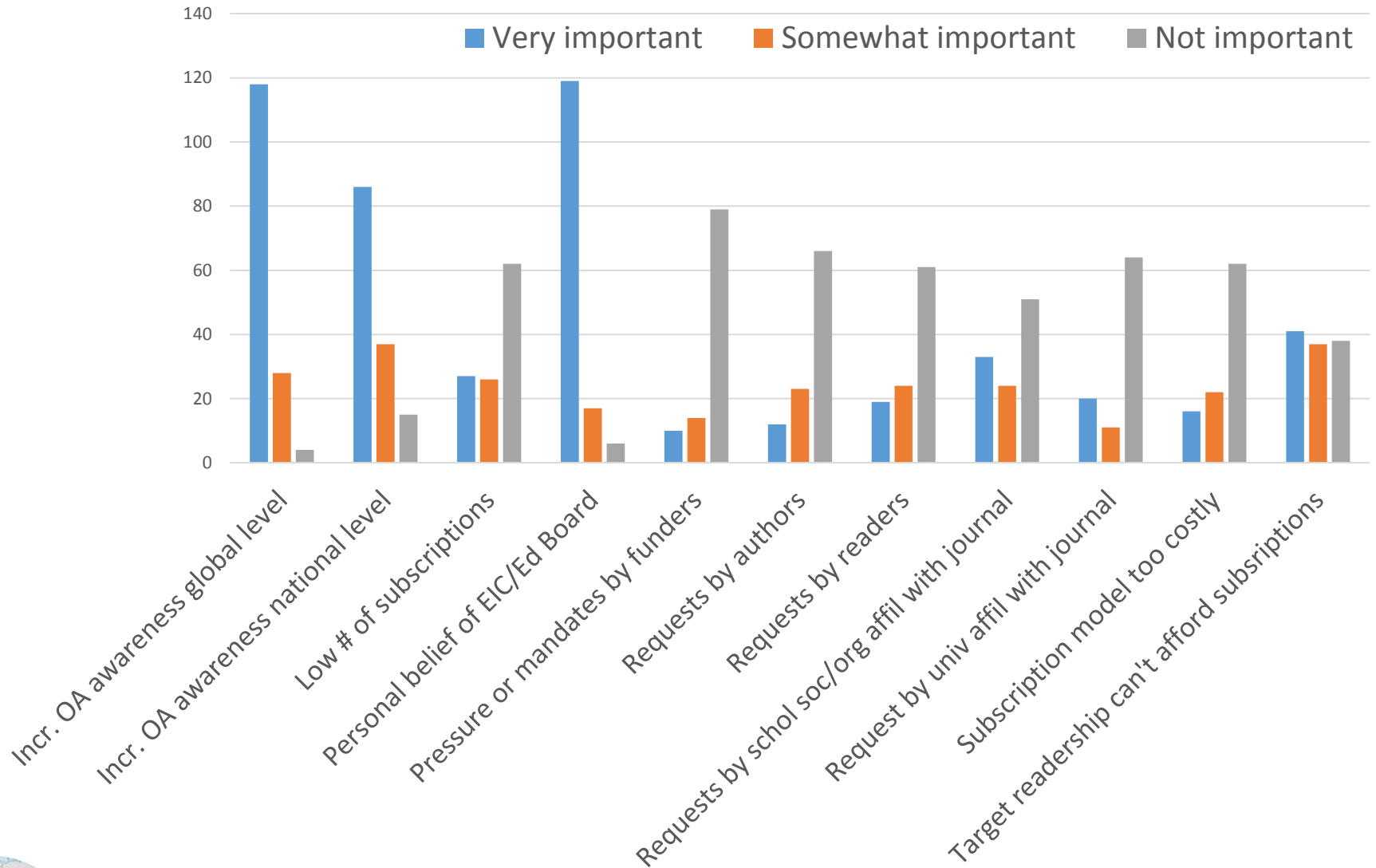
6 of these were OA at one point but transitioned to subscription



Current State of

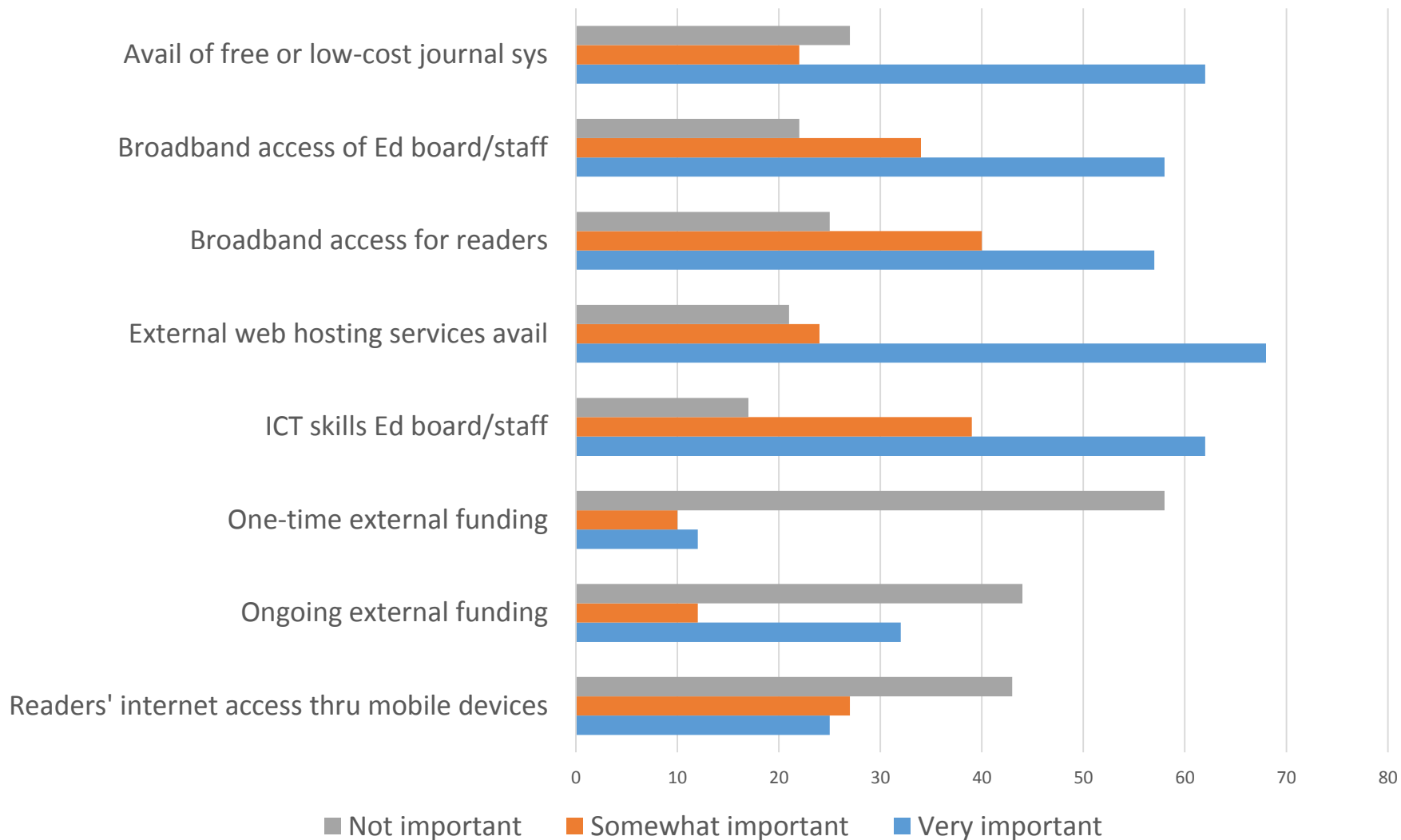
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Motivations for Becoming Open Access



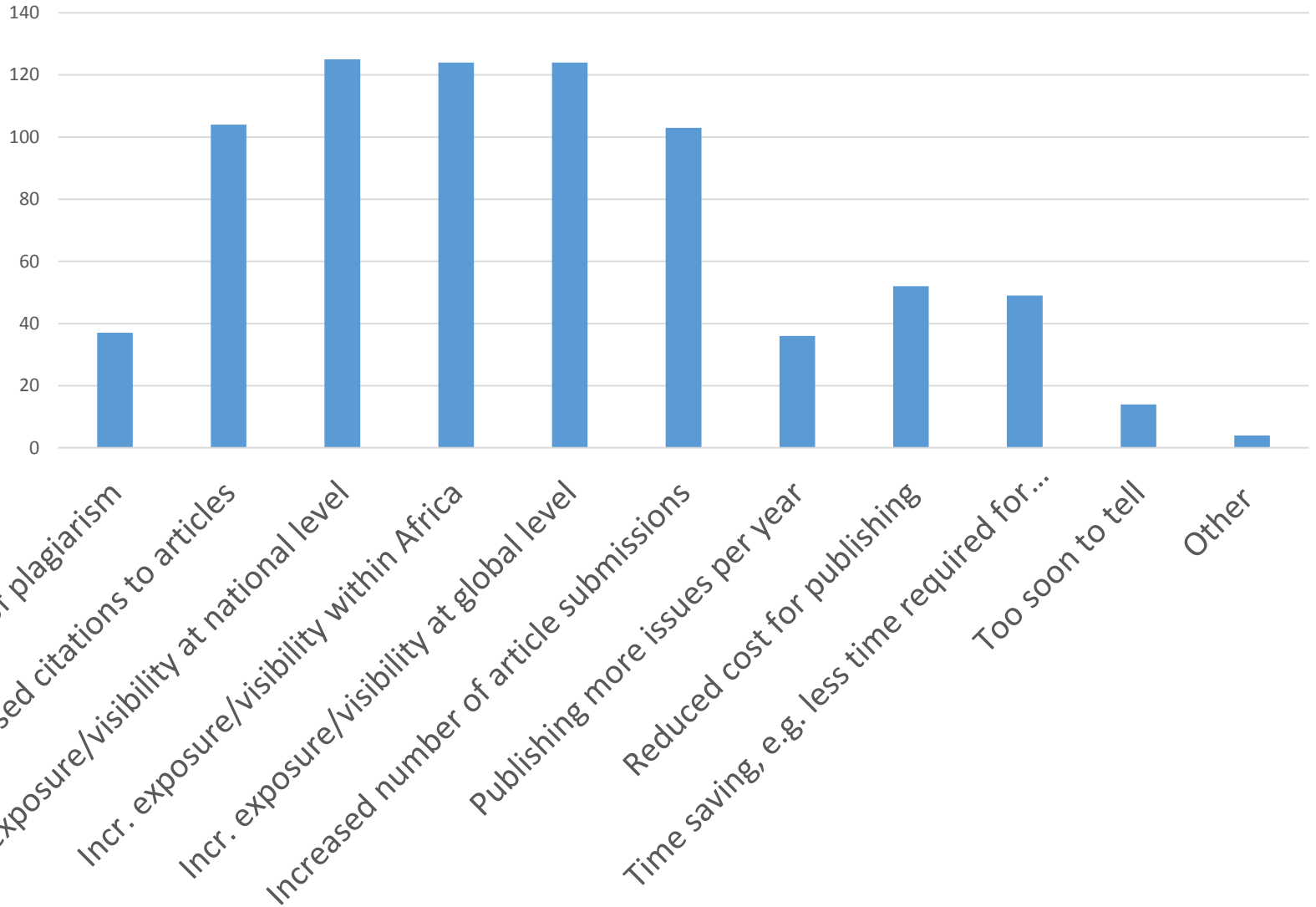
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Factors in Becoming OA



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Perceived/Experienced OA Benefits



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Preliminary impressions of key themes

- Widespread emphasis on importance of **Open Access**, but complexities are marked
- **Cost recovery** in all publishing models is difficult
 - low (or no specific) funding from African governments
 - diminishing research funding
 - too little institutional support (financial and other)
 - few subscribers
 - authors can't afford fees
- **Quantity** issues
 - Too many journals
 - Too few reviewers
 - Too many or too few article submissions



Preliminary impressions of key themes

- **Quality** issues / perceptions of problems
 - Measurement of journal quality *“impact factor fundamentalism”* and *“bias”*.
 - Stem from a lack of incentives:
 1. to authors *“top quality papers will be submitted to European and American and Australian journals first”*
 2. to peer-reviewers *“(peer-review) takes up too much time in our context. I wish there would be some way to speed this process, apart from monetary incentives.”*
 3. to editors *“producing a journal is a lot of work and it is not particularly well rewarded or supported”*

“The problem of extremely low output in Africa of quality journal articles does not lie with the journals per se, but with social and cultural systems and people living and working in conditions that are not conducive for high quality work”.



Preliminary impressions of key themes

- Huge preponderance of “scholar journals” (which cannot afford dedicated staff members) published by career academics “after hours”
- Concerns around skills in three areas:
 - Novice authors’ writing skills
 - IT skills
 - Handover of journals from founding Editor/Board



Surprises

- OA journal numbers are higher than toll-based – tentative
- Internet connectivity and ICT not often mentioned
- Low awareness of concept of “predatory OA”, but little influence, except for sharing current policies & practices more explicitly
- Frequent mention of the need for more collaboration between countries, and greater co-operation throughout the continent
 - Notably with respect to amalgamation of journals



Surprises

- From reviewers of the survey:
 - It is too long, but add the following NB questions (!)
- From correspondence ABOUT the survey:
 - A hypothesis that African journals use a subscription-based publishing model to keep low quality content from being widely assessed
- From respondents:
 - strong overall optimism about publishing in Africa (despite the challenges mentioned) *“huge potential for new insights and original research...”*



Looking forward...

- Phase two of the research: Case studies

AND THEN...

- AJOL's drafting of an OA in Africa Advocacy approach?
- An Africa-wide conference on OA in Africa??
- An African statement on Open Access?
- An African statement on dedicated public support for research communication?
- Comparison & collaboration with other developing country regions?



Hypothesis on OA in Africa tentatively confirmed...

“The place of local and regional journals needs more recognition and these titles are under more pressure than ever in the increasingly globalised and increasingly OA worlds.”



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More Information Forthcoming:
Report Available Early 2014
(Details TBA)

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