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## Journal tendering for societies: A brief guide

Prepared by the Association for Learning Technology (ALT)

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## 1 About this guide

### 1.1 Rationale

Hundreds of societies publish journals in collaboration with publishers. Some may be considering how and whether to renegotiate or go out to tender. Some may be considering whether they can/should/wish to change the business model of the journal (e.g. by a move to Open Access). Other societies may be considering using an external publisher for the first time. This guide, based on our experience, is written for all of these.

In their negotiations with publishers learned societies – especially smaller ones – may have difficulty articulating their requirements and assessing the publishers’ offerings. This is true where they wish to compare the newer models with typical “conventional” models, or simply compare different conventional offerings. The reasons are complex and include:

- lack of knowledge of the publishing industry on the part of the society’s executive staff (who cannot always find the time to acquire the knowledge);
- the “author/research funder pays” models, which, whilst becoming more prevalent in the domains of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), appear (but may not actually be) rather less feasible in other domains.

This guide draws on the experience of *one* learned society, the Association for Learning Technology (ALT)<sup>1</sup>, in reviewing the publishing arrangements for its journal *Research in Learning Technology*, between September and December 2010.

This version of the guide has been the subject of pre-publication consultation within the learned society and scholarly publishing communities<sup>2</sup>. It would benefit from further revisions once it has been subjected to broader and more sustained scrutiny, and a further version, taking account of any such post-publication feedback received, is planned later in 2011.

### 1.2 ALT’s experience

Our journal has been published since 2004 by one of the main journal publishing companies. The original six-year publishing agreement provided for an automatic multi-year roll-forward one year before its expiry. Towards the end of 2008, ALT agreed a one-year extension to this agreement, in order to prevent an automatic three-year roll-forward and to provide breathing space for us to consider our publishing options thoroughly, through a competitive re-procurement process. Staff changes and the extended absence of our publications manager prevented us from running the procurement process during 2009, and so we agreed a further one-year extension to the publishing agreement with the publisher.

In mid October 2010 we issued a request for proposals (RFP) for a new publisher<sup>3</sup>. We had interest from six publishers who asked questions about our intentions. We then received four proposals: one which offered an Open Access model only, one which offered both Open Access and conventional publishing as discrete alternatives,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.alt.ac.uk/>. ALT is Registered Charity 1063519.

<sup>2</sup> See Section 7 for a list of most of those who commented.

<sup>3</sup> The RFP is available at <http://repository.alt.ac.uk/836/> (accessed 5/3/2011)

and two which offered approaches that included an Open Access component. Three of the proposals were from big publishers. After evaluating the proposals, ALT's Trustees decided in December 2010 to make the journal, which has been renamed *Research in Learning Technology*<sup>4</sup>, a fully Open Access journal with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012.

### **1.3 Genesis of this guide**

Although there is much discussion within the research information community about the advantages of Open Access, and the costs to the public sector of conventional publishing, the practicalities of transition – whether to Open Access or simply to an improved conventional publication model – are much less adequately documented. In addition, there is no easy way for learned and scholarly societies to learn from each others' experiences of making and acting within a publishing agreement.

Specifically, when writing the RFP we found there was little advice available on approaches to take. We were also unable to find a good road map for handling the journal retendering process overall, including evaluating publishers' responses and making judgements between offerings that relate to contrasting models (conventional and Open Access) with very different business drivers. This is in stark opposition with say procuring computer hardware where there are many guides available, through JISC and otherwise.

Having started from scratch, we have gained valuable insights into the process of procurement. Moreover, the reactions of others – including publishers – to the way in which we have handled the process suggest that these insights, properly reflected on and recorded, will be of value to the rest of the community and, in particular, to other learned and scholarly societies. This, then, is the purpose of this guide, and the reason why JISC asked us to produce it.

The intended audience is anyone with responsibility within a learned society for one or more scholarly journals (including those considering whether or not they wish to join with a publisher for the first time). The guide's relevance will vary depending on factors such as the society's field of work, its size, the commercial success of its journal(s), and, as we indicate below, its appetite for change.

### **1.4 Disclaimer**

Responsibility for this guide rests with ALT. It is provided with no warranties of any kind. Individuals or organisations who use the guide do so at their own risk, and neither ALT nor JISC shall be liable for any losses or damages arising from use of the guide or of reliance being placed upon it.

## **2 Procuring a new publication agreement: issues to consider before you start**

The operation of a society journal is usually entirely at the direction of the society, subject to any associated contracts (which are anyway time-limited). Any decision as to the journal's nature and format is usually entirely within the control of the society's governing body even taking into account any editorial freedom delegated to the Editor or to an Editorial Board. In this section we summarise some of the main issues that

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<sup>4</sup> The renaming stems from decisions taken in early 2010 to revise the aims and scope of the journal and to strengthen and internationalise the journal's editorial board.

you should consider before making the decision to re-procure a publication agreement, of whatever model, and suggest some possible courses of action for each one.

### **2.1 Your current publishing contract and its renewal date**

Publishing agreements typically run for several years, with automatic roll-forward (i.e. renewal), and offer limited opportunities for renegotiation other than at set points. For example, a five- or six-year agreement might roll forward automatically if it has not been renegotiated or terminated 12 months before the end of its current term<sup>5</sup>.

**Action:** Your team must be mindful of the key dates defined by the current publishing agreement, so that you instigate any renegotiation or re-procurement early. Ideally, six months is the optimum period needed to run a procurement, provided this leaves you enough time after agreeing any change then to manage the transition from one publisher to another. This means that, if the society wishes to negotiate an improvement to its publishing agreement as an alternative to re-procurement (and trying to do so is not necessarily the best move – an alternative would be to include the incumbent publisher in the bidding process), you should start that process *at least 12 months* before the date when the agreement will automatically roll forward. This should give you sufficient leeway so that, if the negotiations fail, you can switch to re-procurement. See also section 4.1. In any event you should always carefully check the termination conditions of the current agreement, which may not be as clear as they should be, and may involve some form of penalty clauses, especially in old/longstanding agreements.

### **2.2 The role of the journal in relation to the society**

Different journals serve different purposes for the learned societies that own them, and so it is important that the publishing arrangement should reflect and support the role that the journal plays within your society. For example, the journal may<sup>6</sup>:

- serve as the voice of the society itself (conversely, it may be somewhat peripheral to the society's day-to-day activities);
- act as a substantial and absolutely crucial source of income (conversely, it may be a "labour of love," barely breaking even or, perhaps, running at a loss);
- be closely interlinked with conferences organised by the society;
- exercise sufficient influence in the field that libraries are required to subscribe to it (conversely, it may not have the impact that the society wishes, and it may therefore be looking for a way to increase that impact and visibility, for example by changing its publication model);
- be the sole journal published by the society (conversely, be one of several publications).

**Action:** Consider the role of the journal within your society, and where your journal sits in relation to its competitors. Which publishing model might best reflect that role?

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<sup>5</sup> Agreement terms and conditions vary widely between different journals. Two other common types are: i) a five/six year period with a rolling period thereafter, always for one year, and always with one year's notice; ii) a fixed period, thus requiring renegotiation. We make no assumption as to what the best option is.

<sup>6</sup> The list here is indicative of the kinds of issues that should be considered.

To what extent would a change of publishing model undermine a crucial source of income for the society, and how might this be mitigated?

### **2.3 Disposition or appetite of the society, staff, the board, and the editors**

The work and general disruption involved in procurement in this area should not be underestimated, and publishers are commercially savvy businesses with power and experience on their side.

**Action.** Ensure that all of the key actors in the society who will be involved in the procurement are:

- fully committed to the endeavour;
- have a shared understanding of why it is important and what will be involved;
- are aware that one option will be for the society to sever its relationship with the current publisher. (The same point applies if a society is considering going with a publisher for the first time.).

### **2.4 Why are you doing this?**

**Action:** Consider whether a change of publishing model is a critical consideration for your society, or whether you are mainly seeking improved support for the journal – or a better deal generally – from the publisher<sup>7</sup>.

- *If you wish to change the publishing model<sup>8</sup>*, start by seeking to renegotiate the terms of the current publishing agreement, possibly asking your current publisher to model the different options; however, reserve the option to re-procure if the negotiations are unsatisfactory.
- *If you mainly seek improved support from the publisher*, then you may find that indicating to the publisher that you are contemplating re-procurement may be enough to prompt it to intensify its support for, and interest, in the journal.

### **2.5 Beneficiaries of revenue from the journal**

If the society receives a large income from the journal, then it would be superficially attractive to sit tight without reviewing the existing arrangements.

**Action:** Consider whether you wish to:

- increase royalty income for the society;
- drive down subscription costs for libraries while retaining royalty income; and/or
- improve the “wrap-around” services and support that the publisher provides with the journal;
- improve the journal’s overall accessibility to its potential readers and its overall value to the wider economy and to society.

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<sup>7</sup> Of course your overall negotiating position in any procurement will be partly determined by the relative strengths of the parties – a poor or weak journal, or one needing a lot of investment, or that serves a narrow field, will probably not be in a position to make as many demands as a prestigious profitable journal serving a big field.

<sup>8</sup> A future edition of this guide would benefit from a table spelling out some different publishing models, with a simple table showing how these models differ as regards costs, benefits, risks, sources of revenue etc.

If the answer to any of these is “yes,” then renegotiation or re-procurement may be a way by which to achieve them.

## **2.6 Esteem and impact of the journal**

The esteem in which a journal is held – including its impact factor<sup>9</sup> (if any) – is a very important consideration for many societies, for journal editors, and for authors who submit articles for publication. The publisher is only one factor in this, and normally not a major one; far more important are the reputation of the society that owns the journal, and the extent to which the journal is read and cited, the later being something that, depending on the discipline served by the journal, is not necessarily well reflected by the journal’s impact factor (if any).

**Action:** Consider issues of esteem dispassionately and logically, and do not assume that a switch to Open Access or that a change to a new publisher will necessarily have an adverse effect on the journal’s esteem<sup>10</sup>. It is in the common interest of authors, editors and publishers to achieve the largest possible impact with their publication. A course of action should be agreed with the new publisher to maximise the discoverability and reputational standing of the journal and its individual contributions, using any framework agreements that the publisher may have in place, in order to get the journal into as many relevant general and subject-specific abstracting, indexing and citation services as possible (e.g. ISI, Elsevier, etc.). With the increasing importance of bibliometric approaches to assessing the standing of research, many authors are become choosier about where they publish. A high level of indexation will contribute to a good journal’s impact even if it does not (yet) have an impact factor. Any publisher worth its salt will make strong claims about how it will ensure the journal is comprehensively indexed, but the challenge for the society is to secure evidence that other journals newly acquired by the publisher have had their indexing improved by the publisher, notwithstanding the time lag between submission of a journal for indexing and indexing beginning to happen<sup>11</sup>.

## **3 Deciding to move to Open Access publishing: practical considerations**

In this section we assume that your society has decided to explore the possibility of a move to an Open Access publishing model for the journal, having already considered issues such as the funding arrangements of research funders in the field and the attitudes/knowledge of authors. We provide a brief definition and overview of the approach, and then enumerate the practical considerations that you should take into account before starting to take active steps towards such a move.

### **3.1 Open Access publishing: an overview**

Put simply, an Open Access (OA) publication is one that anyone can access over the Internet immediately on publication without needing to have a subscription. Typically, authors of articles in OA journals retain copyright, but license their work under a Creative Commons Licence (<http://creativecommons.org/>).

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.webcitation.org/5xFFHvWBO> - last accessed 17/3/2011

<sup>10</sup> See *The Open Access citation advantage – studies and results to date*, by Alma Swan. <http://www.webcitation.org/5xRRkyidz> - last accessed 24/3/2011

<sup>11</sup> A good and free tool to assess the relative 'impact' of a journal, and to compare it over time, is Harzing's “Publish or Perish” which can be downloaded from <http://www.harzing.com/>



You can find a directory of OA journals at <http://www.doaj.org/>. They vary according to the type of Creative Commons Licence that they use: indeed, there is debate within the OA world over whether licences that license only non-commercial use, or restrict users from making derivative works, are fully “open.” ALT’s own journal, *Research in Learning Technology*, will publish articles under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike licence<sup>12</sup>, which permits commercial re-use as well as the making of derivative works. In contrast, the recently launched *Scientific Reports*, from Nature Publishing, offers authors the choice between the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported<sup>13</sup> and the Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported licence<sup>14</sup>, both of which are rather more restrictive.

**Note:** It is beyond the scope of this guide to offer advice regarding the Creative Commons licence that a particular scholarly journal should use if it moves to OA.

### **3.2 Business models**

There are two main business models for OA publishing:

- “learned society pays”
- “authors or their employers/sponsors pay” – i.e. through submission fees<sup>15</sup> and/or publishing fees.

Alongside these there are several overlapping methods to secure income to cover the costs of publication including sponsorship, sale of printed issues, sale of journal supplements, and advertising. Note also that some publishers offer a hybrid Open Access model under which authors or their employers can choose to pay a publishing fee for a specific article, which is then made freely available.

During a procurement the key tasks for the society are to:

1. model carefully, cautiously, and in detail, the costs and income under different publishing models, and
2. scrutinise carefully the revenue and royalty projections suggested by bidders.

### **3.3 Dependence on royalty income**

If royalty income is large, then a move to OA may prove problematic for the society, whatever its preferences or support for the openness agenda. If royalty income is small, then the barriers to change in publishing model may be relatively small, since the journal is, and is likely to remain, something of a labour of love.

### **3.4 Policy and preferences of the society**

The society’s own policy on OA is obviously a central consideration. Our impression is that there many societies who broadly hold the position that “in principle we are in favour of OA, but we cannot see how to translate this into reality”, and that furthermore there are concerns – reportedly sometimes fuelled a little by publishers – at possible loss of membership if low-cost exclusive access to the society’s publications for members is replaced by free but no longer exclusive access.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.webcitation.org/5wF19oBaW> - last accessed 4/2/2011

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.webcitation.org/5xFCCINWO> - last accessed 17/3/2011

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.webcitation.org/5xFCIweBt> - last accessed 17/3/2011

<sup>15</sup> See “*Submission Fees – a tool in the transition to open access*”, by Mark Ware. Available via <http://www.webcitation.org/5xRSW1Q38> - last accessed 24/3/2011.



### **3.5 Perspectives of the editors**

Editors may be more knowledgeable about publishing issues than other officers, but may not necessarily share the same views as the society's staff and trustees about preferred publishing models: from an editor's point of view, issues of journal esteem and editorial workload are likely to be very important considerations. Therefore, in considering a move to Open Access, two particular issues may be:

- whether or not the society can weather an editorial resignation if an editor is unable to endorse that move;
- having strategies to ensure the editorial team of the journal are engaged with and support the move.

### **3.6 Views of the editorial board**

The views of the editorial board are also important, and the board (and any cognate groupings within the society) should be consulted at an appropriate point in the process – and certainly before taking any firm decision to continue to publish conventionally or to switch to OA.

### **3.7 Attitudes of authors**

The society is likely to have anticipated concerns in the field when formulating its policies; nevertheless, it is important to ascertain the extent to which authors would actively seek to have their work published in an OA journal or, conversely, would actively avoid it. Interestingly, within the educational technology community, where there is a strengthening awareness of, and focus on, openness in general, ALT had been aware for some time of authors who were unhappy about their work being published anywhere other than in OA journals<sup>16</sup>.

### **3.8 Financial considerations: “funder/author pays” versus “society pays”**

In STEM subjects, and in particular in medical research, funding bodies are becoming much more strongly focused on OA publishing by researchers whose work they fund. More recently, the other main research councils have followed suit, with Open Access publishing fees legitimately included as indirect costs in grant applications. However, in “softer” subject areas awareness of this development is less well developed. Alongside this, much published research here is carried out outside the framework of grant-funded research. Consequently, the willingness of authors or their employers to pay a publishing fee is less clear, and a “society pays” OA model may be the best way forward – provided, of course, that this is financially sustainable. For example, ALT's initial expectation was that a move to OA would be impossibly challenging from a financial point of view. However, when we undertook the necessary financial modelling we discovered that a move to a “society pays model” was sufficiently feasible for us to make the switch with confidence. Had our journal been one from which ALT was making substantial royalty income, the switch would have carried more risk.

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<sup>16</sup> By encouraging the open agenda overall, JISC has raised awareness generally about OA and has influenced thinking in the area.

## 4 The procurement process

We now move to the procurement process itself. A clear timetable will be needed, broken down by stages, and a good way to represent this is in a Gantt chart such as the one shown in Figure 1 below. This will help you to manage the process in the same way as any project. Figure 2 below provides an indicative overview of our recent procurement process. For the avoidance of doubt, note that, before a decision is taken on the preferred publisher, outline agreement needs to exist on as many as possible of the key financial issues, including levels of commission or royalties from publishers and details of any separate additional charges for specific services, such as online hosting, storage of print issues, production of journal supplements or depositing OA papers in repositories.

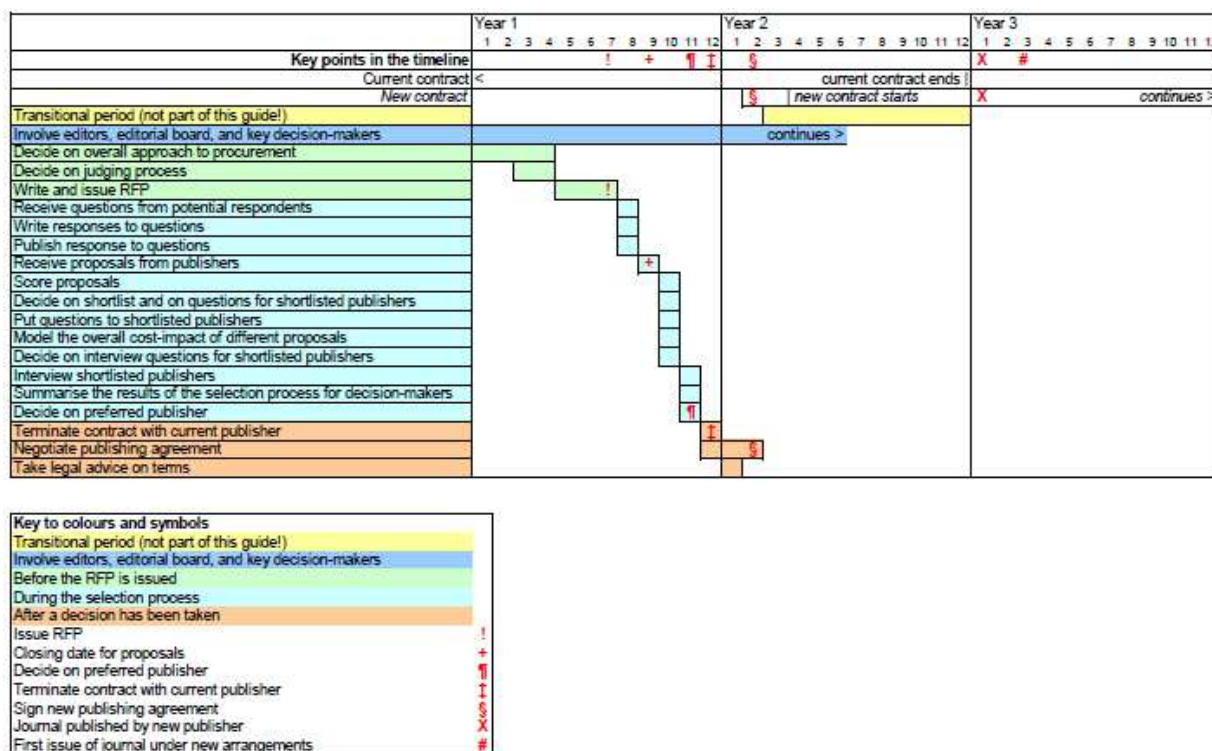


Figure 1 Indicative procurement Gantt chart

The process falls into three broad phases:

1. preparing to issue the request for proposals (RFP);
2. the selection process itself; and
3. following up the decision to change publisher and/or publishing model (if this is the chosen course of action).

The next three sections of this guide discuss these phases in turn.

### 4.1 Preparing to issue the RFP

During the first phase, the main challenge is to produce an RFP that:

- meets the society's needs;
- presents the society effectively; and
- provides potential respondents with sufficient detail to understand your requirements.

The existing publishing agreement must define the timetable. For example, if an agreement rolls forward automatically unless it is terminated by a certain date, then the procurement process must start early enough to allow all stages to be completed by that termination date (see also section 2.1).

Similarly, after termination of the current publishing agreement the journal will remain with the current publisher for a period defined by that agreement. This is typically 12 months. During this period the journal will be in transition, in preparation for the new publishing arrangements to take effect<sup>17</sup>.

**Writing the RFP.** Although the journal editor(s) should be as closely involved as possible, it is probably unrealistic to expect them to lead the writing effort. Therefore the work is likely to fall to a senior member of the society's staff or, if the society is small, to key lay personnel. Depending on the society's financial position, it may be worth obtaining assistance on a consultancy basis<sup>18</sup>, which might be of value across the whole of the procurement process; however, the society's decision-makers must retain control of the overall procurement process.

**Deciding the selection criteria.** A strong selection process results in suppliers providing evidence against which the society can judge their offering. For this reason, we recommend that you decide on the high-level criteria for judging proposals *before* you decide on the specific requirements of the RFP<sup>19</sup>. In this way, evidence provided by respondents is likely to map relatively clearly to the selection criteria, making it easier for you to score the proposals than might otherwise be the case.

**Allowing bidders to pose questions during the bidding period.** This is another key decision to make before you issue the RFP – and, indeed, before you decide how long to allow bidders for submission of their proposals. Do you want to allow potential bidders to pose questions before the submission deadline and, if yes, do you want to publish the society's responses to these questions for all potential bidders to see? The principal benefits of this two-stage approach are that:

1. The society will begin to learn about the attitude and professionalism of bidders through this question-and-answer process itself.
2. Potential bidders will achieve much greater clarity regarding the society's requirements. This should result in the quality of responses being higher than might otherwise be the case: some will not submit and those that do will better understand what is required.

**Determining how much time to allow for responses.** If a question-and-answer stage is included in the process, then the *minimum* period between RFP issue and the deadline for receipt of submissions should be six weeks. The society's response to questions posed by potential bidders should be issued, say, three weeks before the closing date.<sup>20</sup> Of course the timetable needs to fit with the society's own processes and for some societies the six week period suggested may be insufficient.

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<sup>17</sup> Managing the transition, especially if this involves a different publishing model, will place its own demands on the society; and will be the subject of a future guide.

<sup>18</sup> With the benefit of hindsight ALT would possibly have sought the support of a consultant for our procurement process.

<sup>19</sup> The criteria used by ALT are in the RFP we issued in 2010. The RFP is available at <http://repository.alt.ac.uk/836/> (accessed 5/3/2011)

<sup>20</sup> ALT ran the RFP phase of its procurement over a period of a calendar month, which was only just sufficient – hence our recommendation of six weeks.

**Other guidelines to include in the RFP.** It is advisable both to set a maximum length for responses, of say 50pp, and to emphasise the need for clear, apposite responses that directly address each requirement (rather than responses that are worded in a very general manner, or which are based on generic templates).

## **4.2 The selection process**

Whether or not you make public the RFP, you will want to ensure that potential and relevant bidders know about it. Therefore, you may wish to send the RFP to a range of publishers for consideration, and to encourage those of your members who have connections in the publishing world to do the same. This will have the added effect of letting potential bidders know that the society is serious about the procurement exercise and not just “going through the motions.” However, the downside of this “more the merrier” approach may be that it creates unnecessary work through having a large number of irrelevant or substandard proposals to consider. If this issue is of concern then an alternative would be to sound out candidate publishers informally and encourage them to respond. There may also be issues of confidentiality: specifically, you may need to share confidential information with bidders, in which case you would need to only issue the RFP to bidders who had signed a simple confidentiality agreement. This points to a two stage process as outlined above.

**Publishing responses to bidders’ questions.** One effective way is to use a “cloud” service such as Google Docs, which permits those involved in the society to collaborate on the responses to questions, and when they have been finalised, to publish the complete set of responses as a non-editable document on the Web<sup>21</sup>. (However, the confidentiality issue referred to above may apply here also.)

**Scoring and short-listing.** Scoring – assuming that you use a scoring system – begins once the deadline for responses has passed. The process will depend on the number of proposals received. If, as part of the RFP, you ask potential bidders to indicate well before the closing date if they are intending to respond, then you will have a good idea of how many proposals you will need to score. If a large number of responses seems likely, you may want to introduce a two-stage short-listing process in which outlying proposals can be speedily eliminated with minimal scrutiny. You may also consider running a final contest between the top two proposals.

Whether you opt for a one-stage or a two-stage short-listing process, there is merit in having a wide range of scorers, so that different perspectives within the society – e.g. editorial, business and strategic – can have an influence on the judging process.

You will need to draw up clear instructions for scorers to follow (see section 6). In addition, it can be valuable to run a briefing session for all scorers, possibly before you send them the proposals for consideration. If your budget is limited, or if scorers are too geographically dispersed or too busy to attend a face-to-face briefing, then consider a telephone or computer-mediated conference.

**Between short-listing and interviewing.** During the short-listing process, questions are almost certain to arise about specific features of particular shortlisted proposals. You may wish to probe the issues at interview, and therefore it is wise to send the relevant questions to each shortlisted supplier before the interview itself. (Expect to send different questions to different suppliers.)

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<sup>21</sup> For example, you can find ALT’s responses to questions from potential bidders during our 2010 re-procurement at <http://www.webcitation.org/5wT3jFVcp> (accessed 13/2/2011).

At the same time, you should begin modelling the business impact of a change in publisher on a comparative basis, although it is likely that the modelling will not be completed until after the interviews.

**Making the final decision.** Depending on what authority has been given to the interview panel, it may be necessary to produce a summary of the results of the selection process for approval by the society's key decision-making group (for example, the board of trustees). Ultimately the foundation for making a judgement between proposals should be those criteria specified when drawing up the RFP, whilst being mindful of the fact that the process of considering proposals can influence the society's assessment of the relative importance of different criteria.

### ***4.3 Following up the decision to change publisher and/or publishing model***

In this phase the society will switch its attention to the detail of the new publishing agreement, although key aspects of the new agreement will have been laid bare during the selection process, with draft publishing agreements likely to have featured in publishers' responses to the RFP, and also figured in your consideration of competing proposals.

ALT's experience in this phase leads us to suggest that you should not rush things. You will need to allow time for adequate input from key people in the society, and for both the society and the publisher to take external advice. We strongly recommend that you allow a period of *6-8 weeks* in order to complete negotiations on the publishing agreement.

**Legal advice.** The majority of societies will want to take legal advice on the agreement at an appropriate point, and since you may need to reference the advice in a legal process in the future you will probably need to pay for it, and to get it from a specialist. How you approach this will depend on factors such as:

- the society's size and degree of caution;
- whether the society customarily seeks, and acts on, legal advice; and
- whether the staff responsible for publications have a professional background in publishing.

**Detailed negotiations on the publishing agreement.** How you handle the detailed negotiations on the new publishing agreement – which will serve crucially to define the economics of your journal and your relationship with your publisher for years to come, as well as shaping the process and timing of any future move to a different publisher – will depend on factors such as:

- the extent of experience in the society's staff in this respect;
- the existence of an atmosphere of trust between the society and the chosen publisher;
- the extent to which the new and the current publisher (and the editorial/managerial staff concerned) have experience of transferring journals between each other in either direction<sup>22</sup>; and

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<sup>22</sup> In any event, most journal publishers are signatories to the TRANSFER Code of Practice - <http://www.webcitation.org/5xFD7KwAF> (last accessed 17/3/2011) - the goal of which is to establish a set of standards that would apply whenever a journal is transferred from one publisher to another. Notwithstanding this, the smoothness of the transfer will depend at least to some extent on the professionalism of the editorial/managerial staff on both sides of the transfer.

- how far the detailed terms for publication were specified in the publisher's original response to the RFP.

ALT's own experience was that negotiating the new publishing agreement, despite good will on both sides, took close to 10 weeks, with many iterations of the agreement before both sides were happy with it. We make this point to encourage others to allow sufficient time for this part of the changeover process.

## 5 A template Request for Proposals

The RFP used by ALT used in 2010 is available for download from the ALT Open Access Repository at <http://repository.alt.ac.uk/836/>. It is available in both PDF and Microsoft Word format, for societies who wish to take it as a starting point for their own.

### Notes

1. This RFP is © ALT and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England and Wales licence. Permission for commercial reuse will not unreasonably be withheld.
2. During pre-publication consultation on this guide a number of suggestions were made for additional or substitute questions for the RFP. These are included in a new appendix to the Word format version of the RFP at <http://repository.alt.ac.uk/836/>.

## 6 A framework for scoring proposals

An editable Microsoft Excel® workbook is also available for download from <http://repository.alt.ac.uk/836/>. You may find it helpful for scoring proposals and for aggregating reviewers' scores into a readable summary.

**Note:** This workbook is © ALT and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK licence.)



An illustrative screenshot from the workbook is reproduced in Figure 2 below.

Requirements	Publisher A								Publisher B								Publisher C										
	Scorer 1	Scorer 2	Scorer 3	Scorer 4	Scorer 5	Scorer 6	Scorer 7	Scorer 8	Scorer 1	Scorer 2	Scorer 3	Scorer 4	Scorer 5	Scorer 6	Scorer 7	Scorer 8	Scorer 1	Scorer 2	Scorer 3	Scorer 4	Scorer 5	Scorer 6	Scorer 7	Scorer 8	Average	Average	Average
1	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
6	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
7	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
8	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
9	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
10	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
11	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
12	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
13	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
14	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
15	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
16	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
17	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
18	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
19	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
20	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Figure 2. Screenshot from ALT scoring worksheet showing individual scorers' scores (the requirements used in the Research in Learning Technology re-procurement have been deleted – hence the blank rows).

The workbook contains a second worksheet that aggregates scores against a set of high-level criteria. In our case we decided on the following high-level criteria for judging publishers' proposals:

- Capability of the publisher
- Esteem – that is the anticipated impact of the new publisher on the esteem in which the journal is held
- Viability of the proposal – that is, the long-term sustainability of the proposal and the publishing model underpinning it
- Ethos and cultural fit of the publisher
- Publisher's vision
- Transition/“lock-in” i.e. the extent to which there might be “lock in” to a particular publisher, or difficulties in making the transition to them

Figure 3 on the next page shows how the high-level criteria worksheet might look, aggregating data from the scoresheet:



**SUMMARY**

High level criteria	A	B	C
Capability of supplier	3.38	3.88	3.98
Journal esteem	3.38	3.38	4.44
Viability of proposal	3.23	3.48	3.70
Ethos and cultural fit of supplier	3.83	2.58	2.98
Publisher's vision	3.50	2.63	3.63
Transition/lockin	2.88	3.00	3.50
	3.36	3.16	3.70

**Figure 3. Scores aggregated against the high-level criteria used in the *Research in Learning Technology* re-procurement**

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