



HSLG Journal Club

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Paper

Ma L, Buggle J and O'Neill M, "Open access at a crossroads: library publishing and bibliodiversity", Insights, 2023, 36: 10, 1–8; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1629/uksg.613>



Background

Health Sciences Libraries Journal launch –

- What is library publishing, what can it achieve and what are the obstacles and issues involved in it (see the latest issue of Health Sciences Libraries Journal)
- New [cOAlition S strategy 2026-30](#) released November 2025
- [Cambridge University Press report](#) (Oct 2025) giving views of over 3000 researchers (including librarians) on OA and academic publishing
- Led me to reflect on the current position of OA and future directions

Context: Cynics or realists?

From [Publishing futures: Working together to deliver radical change in academic publishing](#)

- Librarians were pessimistic about OA
- Only 24% (vs. 44% overall) felt that OA publishing had resulted in 'reduced costs to individuals or institutions'
- 63% agreed that OA had 'increased fraudulent publishing activity' (vs. 42% overall).
- 75% thought that it had 'enabled publishers to charge for both reading and publishing the same content' (vs. 46% overall).
- 27% (vs 13% overall) believed it would take more than 15 years to achieve a majority OA future.



Bibliodiversity

- “Bibliodiversity calls for an inclusive and diverse scholarly communication landscape”
- Plurality of authors and works representing different cultures, languages, genres
- Article contends that commercial publishers and the gold open access model chokes bibliodiversity and doesn’t allow for a true OA environment.



Problems with OA

- “transformative agreements do not resolve the serial crisis concerning the limits and allocation of library budgets” – Work in the favour of large publishers and side-line small publishers
- Access to scholarly literature controlled by “commercial research infrastructure” eg. copyright retained by publishers.
- ‘Scholarly publishing is largely market-driven rather than scholar-led’ - publishing is a market, and quality is by no means the sole (or even the main) driver of which content gets published.
- Gold OA model means authors without funding cannot make their work openly accessible. Research comes from well-funded countries and institutions. Marginalises those from global south and less prestigious institutions.



Gold OA

- Indexing services and large commercial publishers seen as arbiters of quality – stifles bibliodiversity
- Publishers want content which will get citations – May sideline research not in this category
- Also means research is very English centric – Citations and impact much less likely in local language
- APC's limit who can publish, majority from higher income countries and institutions
- Researchers who cannot afford APC's have work marginalised. Research from other areas less likely to be published, less read and even deemed as lesser quality.



Green OA

“green open access with no embargo period, especially with the facilitation of institutional repositories, can support bibliodiversity and sustainable knowledge production and scholarly communication.”

- Embargo period typically 6-12 months. Commercial publishers unlikely to allow second free version from time of print.
- The green open access option is viable for small publishers, and IR allow for preservation and dissemination.
- Green OA supports bibliodiversity – scholar led publications allow for different voices and greater breadth of content.
- Why is Green OA not prioritised? – Money! With APC's publishers have a revenue stream they are not going to give up



Library publishing

- Library publishing definition has changed to "the set of activities led by academic and research libraries and library consortia to support the creation, dissemination, and curation of scholarly, creative, and/or educational works." (<https://librarypublishing.org/>)
- Less third level specific and allows that other libraries might be involved
- Institutional repositories closest to traditional functions of a library – preserve and disseminate but don't create.



Library publishing

- Library publishing expanding supported by communities of practice (IFLA Library publishing group, LAI Library publishing group)
- “supports bibliodiversity by preserving and disseminating the scholarly output of their communities and by filling gaps in the current scholarly publishing system”
- Not so concerned with citations and selling subscriptions – Allows different voices and greater scope of content
- “majority of library-published books and journals are indexed on the DOAJ and DOAB”
- Usually have diamond OA - do not apply APC's or other author fees.



Challenges of library publishing

- Funding – Costs infrastructure (hosting, IR) training, Percentage of University library budgets
- Scaling – Skills deficit – Librarians may not have experience in editing, peer review, copyright, preserving content
- Acceptance – Researchers may have doubts about quality of OA journals and their production process – Need to publish in prestigious, high impact factor journals for career progression - leading to hesitance among researchers to publish in newer, library-supported venues



Discussion

- From a library perspective, what does an ideal OA environment look like?
- Is this OA vision feasible under current conditions?
- Is small scale library publishing a viable option? (Content, funding, skillset)
- Can we break out of metrics-based research assessment? How can we advocate for this?



Further reading

Library publishing:

- Dunne, M., Herlihy, B. and O'Callaghan, J., 2025. The Anatomy of a Journal: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. *Health Sciences Libraries Journal*, 1(2), pp.12-19. <https://doi.org/10.33178/hslj.1.2.4>
- Duffy, J. (2024). The Potential of Library Publishing Services to Transform Scholarly Communication in Ireland. *International Journal of Librarianship*, 8(4), 42–50. <https://doi.org/10.23974/ijol.2024.vol8.4.343>

Further reading

Open Access:

- [Coalition S Strategy 2026-2030](#) (November 2025)
- Sever, R., Eisen, M. and Inglis, J., 2019. [Plan U: Universal access to scientific and medical research via funder preprint mandates](#). PLoS biology, 17(6), p.e3000273.
- Arning, U., 2025. [Scholar-led publishing and diamond open access: The professionalised role of libraries](#). IFLA journal, 51(1), pp.61-66.
- Cambridge University Press, October 2025 [Publishing futures: Working together to deliver radical change in academic publishing](#)
- Ma, L., 2023. [The platformisation of scholarly information and how to fight it](#). LIBER Quarterly: The Journal of the Association of European Research Libraries, 33(1), pp.1-20.
- Beck, E., & Withorn, T. (2025). The Myth of Open: Academic Libraries' Role in Open Movements and Its Contention with Capitalism. Journal of Open Initiatives in Academic Libraries, Vol 1(1), 4-23. <https://doi.org/10.58997/8r0vnx27>
- Mahony, J., 2024. [Towards an all-Ireland diamond open access publishing platform: The PublishOA.ie Project—2022–2024](#). Publications, 12(3), p.19.