ISSUES BRIEF

Funding Support for Open Access Journals

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Overview

Academic libraries have an important role to play in helping to ensure that scholarly publishing is sustainable, and that the public has access to research results and knowledge. In addition to running institutional repositories, and funding publisher's open access (OA) article processing charges (APCs), libraries have increasingly begun funding OA journal operations directly from collection and operating budgets. The following report details attempts to "flip" subscription charges in this manner, and provides recommendations on ways that libraries can continue to support the publication and discovery of OA content into the future.

What's Happening Locally

Open access journal initiatives currently supported by COPPUL members include:

- **Coalition Publi.ca**: A new partnership between the Public Knowledge Project, Érudit and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) seeking to support OA to Canadian scholarly journals in the social sciences and humanities.
  (**Érudit** is a not-for-profit publishing platform based in Quebec. A majority of its hosted content is in French or bilingual.)
  - Each are supported by many COPPUL members through CRKN.
- **DOAJ** (Directory of Open Access Journals): Its mission is to increase the visibility, accessibility, reputation, usage and impact of quality, peer-reviewed, OA scholarly research journals globally, regardless of discipline, geography or language. Members provide financial support.
  - COPPUL members include *MacEwan University, Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, University of Regina & University of Saskatchewan*.
- **Knowledge Unlatched**: Uses a crowd-funding model to cover the cost of making books OA. Recently they included a select number of academic journals.
  - Members include: *MacEwan University, Mount Royal University, Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, University of Manitoba, University of Northern British Columbia, University of Saskatchewan, University of Victoria, & Vancouver Island University.*
- **Open Library of the Humanities**: Publishes journals that are supported through library consortial funding rather than charging authors an APC.
  - Supporting institutions include: *MacEwan University, Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, & University of British Columbia.*

- **Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics (SCOAP3)**: An international collaboration between libraries, research centres, and funders that is focused on converting closed access high-energy physics journals to OA at no cost to authors.
  - Supported by various COPPUL members through CRKN.

What's Happening Elsewhere

Initiatives supporting, or actively investigating sustainable OA funding models, by libraries more broadly include:

- **The 2.5% commitment**: In 2017 a short paper called for academic libraries to set aside 2.5% of non-salary budgets for OA infrastructure. 35 libraries participated in a pilot to test the idea. Simon Fraser University was one of 3 Canadian libraries that participated. This idea has some committed individuals behind it and has kept the discussion alive with updates & presentations at the CNI fall meeting and at ALA midwinter.
- **Jessieu Call for Open science and bibliodiversity**: A call from France for scientific communities, professional associations and research institutions to promote a scientific publishing OA model fostering bibliodiversity and innovation without involving APCs. Five Canadian institutions/organizations have signed the call: Université de Montréal, Université Laval, CARL, Érudit and the Association science et bien commun.
- **OA2020**: "A global alliance committed to accelerating the transition to open access." One of the goals of the alliance is to work towards moving away from journal subscriptions to supporting sustainable OA business models. The website includes useful resources such as further reading, event listings, and possible actions to take.
- **Pay it Forward Project**: This study, which included the University of British Columbia as one of the collaborators, investigated "a sustainable model of open access article processing charges for large North American research institutions".
- **Pushing back at the big publishers:**
  - *Elsevier:* Several difficult and/or stalled national negotiations with Elsevier, demanding fair pricing and OA for papers authored by researchers at licensed institutions (Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Peru, Thailand) have occurred over the past two years. The Nature News update about the German negotiations is an ongoing example. A Times Higher Ed article describes Sweden's cancellation, scheduled for June 30 2018.
  - *Springer:* In March 2018, French research organizations and universities cancelled subscriptions to Springer journals when the consortium Couperin.org was unable to negotiate an acceptable renewal. The issue is over fees; Couperin.org was pushing for a reduction in costs to offset the increasing number of OA papers, paid for by APCs.

Recommendations & Considerations

Collection Development Policies
Including support for barrier-free access to scholarly publishing in policies. For example:
- [University of Alberta's policy](#) has a statement about their commitment to OA.
- [Simon Fraser University's policy](#) has a statement about support for scholarly publishing which includes OA.

Discovery
Ensure OA content is discoverable to users. For instance, include OA journals in A-Z journal lists, activate databases of OA journals/articles in discovery layers, and suggest resources that index OA articles to your users. There are a growing number of ways to locate free and legally hosted OA journal articles outside of the traditional library website. This includes:

Browser extensions:
- **[Google Scholar Button](#)**: a Google Chrome extension that locates full text on the web or in your library's collection. Select the title of the paper on the page you are reading, and click the Scholar button to find it.
- **[Kopernio](#)**: a Google Chrome extension that searches open databases, library subscriptions (where possible), pre-print servers, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories for free PDFs.
- **[Open Access Button](#)**: searches by title, DOI, citation, PMID, or URL and links users to free and legal full text articles. If no legal source exists, it requests articles from authors. Searching can be done via its website, extension or API.
- **[Unpaywall](#)**: a Firefox/Chrome plugin that harvests and identifies freely shared papers from thousands of legal IRs, preprint servers, and publishers.

Search engines/repositories:
- **[Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)](#)**: an online independent directory of over 11,000 high-quality, peer-reviewed, OA journals.
- **[OpenDOAR](#)**: a worldwide directory of OA repositories
- **[ROAR](#)**: a searchable database of international OA repositories.

Financial Support
Consider supporting one or some of the initiatives in the "What's happening locally" section above. Some libraries still have OA author funds to pay for APCs levied by many OA journals (eg. Calgary & Simon Fraser University). However, there appears to be a trend away from such funds ([ARL SPEC-Kit 353/14](#)) and towards supporting alternative OA business models. Keep a look out for new crowdfunded or other collaborative opportunities to support OA journals that match your institution's research and teaching profile.

Library Publishing

Support initiatives that enable users to produce journals themselves that are free from commercial influence. **Open Journal Systems** (OJS) is a widely used, user-friendly open source platform for hosting journals led by the **Public Knowledge Project** (PKP) 🍁 that is partly based out of Simon Fraser University.

- COPPUL members currently hosting OJS include: *MacEwan University, Mount Royal University, Simon Fraser University, University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, University of Manitoba, University of Regina, & University of Winnipeg*.
- Members providing financial support to PKP include: *University of Calgary, University of Manitoba, & University of Victoria*.
- Development partners include: *University of Alberta & University of British Columbia*.

Learn More

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🍁 Indicates a Canadian initiative.