<u>Intersections</u>
Open Access Stuff

Stuff?

I'm catching up on a range of items I'd tagged as "oa-general," meaning they didn't fit neatly into an existing category. It may be easier to say what this roundup is *not* about: big deals, creative commons licenses, the colors of OA, economics, libraries, peer review, "predatory" or a set of overarching OA issues. It's also not about PlanS or Plan S; I'm continuing to ignore that.

The Basics

Open Access Without Tears

This "Library Babel Fish" column by Barbara Fister appeared October 8, 2015 at *Inside Higher Ed*, and it's as applicable and worth reading in January 2019 as it was in October 2015. The tease: "You can make your work open access without sacrificing quality or prestige."

Fister considers the situation for scholars:

> Let's…say you've wondered whether your work will ever make an impact when the list price for your article in a Google search is $37.50 or the book you published about poverty is being sold at the astonishing price of $145 and you aren't sure why it costs so much. And let's say you once had a library account at a research university but now you're between jobs and your library ID just stopped working and you're beginning to wonder how long before your friends get weary of sending you PDFs.
>
> Or we could just say you're an academic. The majority of academics aren't in tenured jobs at R1 institutions.

She offers suggestions in a way I believe scholars would find more approachable than many treatments. The start of the OA journal discussion:

> **Open Access Journals** There are journals that anyone can read for free that don't require a fee from the author to publish. Some of them are highly

respected though few of them have the long histories to carry the prestige that the big-name journals have. An exception is *Cultural Anthropology*, a flagship society journal that has gone open access and is trying to develop and maintain a new funding model to keep it open. My profession's major journal, *College and Research Libraries*, has also taken the leap and even the back issues are digitized and freely available, which is awesomely great when you want to share something with others by linking to it. Ask around; keep an eye out. There may be a brash new open access kid on the block that someday will have the name recognition that journals established in the print era have. You can explore the Directory of Open Access Journals' subject lists, but people in your discipline who care about this stuff may be better guides to newly emerging reputations.

Fister considers (briefly) APC-based journals, gives (I believe) just enough coverage to questionable journals, and says this about "hybrid" journals:

> There are also "respectable" scams – journals that charge subscriptions but will, for several thousand dollars, make your article open access. This so-called "hybrid" approach is expensive and hard to justify, given the publisher is getting paid two ways for the same journal and is making a better profit margin than most hedge-fund managers.

There's a little more useful discussion of various OA models, then an excellent overview of archiving as an option. Closing:

> **In the Final Analysis** There are studies that says making your scholarship open access will increase its visibility and the chances it will be cited. That's nice – but that's not why I personally am committed to open access. I just think scholarship is worth sharing, and it's a shame to limit its potential audience to those who are in a position to pay or have affiliation with an institution that can pay on their behalf.

The academic, economic and societal impacts of Open Access: an evidence-based review

As this is written, the most recent version of this *F1000Research* paper by Jonathan P. Tennant, François Waldner, Damien C. Jacques, Paola Masuzzo. Lauren B. Collister and Chris. H. J. Hartgerink (henceforth "the authors" or "they") appeared September 21, 2016; it's tagged as version 3.

The abstract:

> Ongoing debates surrounding Open Access to the scholarly literature are multifaceted and complicated by disparate and often polarised viewpoints from engaged stakeholders. At the current stage, Open Access has become such a global issue that it is critical for all involved in scholarly publishing, including policymakers, publishers, research funders, governments, learned societies, librarians, and academic communities, to be well-informed on the history, benefits, and pitfalls of Open Access. In spite of this, there is a general lack of consensus regarding the potential pros and cons

of Open Access at multiple levels. This review aims to be a resource for current knowledge on the impacts of Open Access by synthesizing important research in three major areas: academic, economic and societal. While there is clearly much scope for additional research, several key trends are identified, including a broad citation advantage for researchers who publish openly, as well as additional benefits to the non-academic dissemination of their work. The economic impact of Open Access is less well-understood, although it is clear that access to the research literature is key for innovative enterprises, and a range of governmental and non-governmental services. Furthermore, Open Access has the potential to save both publishers and research funders considerable amounts of financial resources, and can provide some economic benefits to traditionally subscription-based journals. The societal impact of Open Access is strong, in particular for advancing citizen science initiatives, and leveling the playing field for researchers in developing countries. Open Access supersedes all potential alternative modes of access to the scholarly literature through enabling unrestricted re-use, and long-term stability independent of financial constraints of traditional publishers that impede knowledge sharing. However, Open Access has the potential to become unsustainable for research communities if high-cost options are allowed to continue to prevail in a widely unregulated scholarly publishing market. Open Access remains only one of the multiple challenges that the scholarly publishing system is currently facing. Yet, it provides one foundation for increasing engagement with researchers regarding ethical standards of publishing and the broader implications of 'Open Research'.

The article is decidedly worth reading. It's also on the long side (about 12,400 words plus about 4,600 words in the lengthy reference list) and I'm not prepared to discuss it in detail.

The article covers a lot of ground, and I don't find a lot to disagree with. Here's part of the discussion regarding one argument against OA:

Some traditional publishers and some academics have argued that public access to research is not required because research papers cannot be understood by non-specialists (cyber.law.harvard.edu/hoap/Open_Access_(the_book) - see Section 5.5.1). However, citizen science initiatives already indicate the general public *is* interested in and understands the research. Whereas this understanding and engagement is highly variable, and strongly dependent on a range of extrinsic and intrinsic factors, the fact that a high level of public interest in science already exists is of relevance. These publishers and academics argue that specialization is a sufficient reason for confining access to professional research bodies through subscriptions. Such statements conflate a lack of desire or need for access with the denial of opportunity to access research, and makes false presumptions about the demand in access to the literature (i.e., un-

met and unknown demand). Importantly, OA provides access to everyone who potentially needs or wants it, without making explicit and patronising statements or guesswork about who needs or deserves it.

Worth reading and thinking about. I won't even argue with the section on deceptive journals; it's one of the better discussions I've seen. Given the venue, the peer review appears in full, as do comments during the review rounds. You may find them revealing.

A genealogy of open access: negotiations between openness and access to research

I'm torn as to whether to mention this article, by Samuel A. Moore and published in the November 2017 issue of *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*. It's sort-of OA (the license is CC BY-NC-SA, the most restrictive Creative Commons license), and it is in scholarly English—but even the second word of the title may indicate that Moore's coming at OA from a *very* different perspective, one that appears to value theory over effectiveness.

Here's the abstract:

Open access (OA) is a contested term with a complicated history and a variety of understandings. This rich history is routinely ignored by institutional, funder and governmental policies that instead enclose the concept and promote narrow approaches to OA. This article presents a genealogy of the term open access, focusing on the separate histories that emphasise openness and reusability on the one hand, as borrowed from the open-source software and free culture movements, and accessibility on the other hand, as represented by proponents of institutional and subject repositories. This genealogy is further complicated by the publishing cultures that have evolved within individual communities of practice: publishing means different things to different communities and individual approaches to OA are representative of this fact. From analysing its historical underpinnings and subsequent development, I argue that OA is best conceived as a boundary object, a term coined by Star and Griesemer (1989) to describe concepts with a shared, flexible definition between communities of practice but a more community-specific definition within them. Boundary objects permit working relationships between communities while allowing local use and development of the concept. This means that OA is less suitable as a policy object, because boundary objects lose their use-value when 'enclosed' at a general level, but should instead be treated as a community-led, grassroots endeavour.

I admit to finding myself befuddled as I read and attempted to understand this piece, but then I'm neither a PhD nor a sufficiently sophisticated philosopher. It's clear that Moore *opposes* a unified understanding of OA. Quoting paragraph 6 (yes, they're numbered):

Clearly, this genealogy will be incomplete and somewhat oversimplified, but it will highlight the community-specific nature of open access and the need to not enclose it according to a rigid, sweeping understanding of the term. It will also highlight the hegemonic struggles involved in the development of OA and the need to ensure that the development of OA is not solely driven in accordance with the interests of more dominant groups. I will begin by detailing what I argue are the two separate approaches to OA that eventually converged in the mid-2000s, specifically those that emphasise 'openness' versus those prioritising access to research.

I struggle with the idea that access and openness are somehow opposed, but that may be misunderstanding. And consider paragraph 21:

When understood through the history of open source software, then, it is clear that *some* understandings of openness promote a neoliberal vision along the lines described above. In many respects, openness is pragmatic, business-friendly, competitive and non-centralised; it has been easily embraced and subsumed by capitalism in the same way as many instances of open-source software have. However, just because openness (and OA specifically) can be 'neoliberalised', it would be an overgeneralisation to assert that *all* instances of open projects derive from the intellectual project of neoliberalism. How, then, should we theorise openness?

I don't claim to understand "neoliberalism," but I do understand that we are supposed to greet it as a horror and affront to all that's good and true. Perhaps my own failure to properly despise pragmatism is central to my inability to fully appreciate (or understand!) this article. The more enlightened among you may be much more impressed.

The unexpected reason researchers choose open access
A relatively brief piece by Yojana Sharma on October 25, 2017 at *Nature Index*, with this curious tease: "Open-access publishing held to the same standards as paid subscription journals."

Offhand (before rereading the piece) that seems like a non sequitur: well, yes, OA journals follow the same standard as subscription journals. Perhaps this makes more sense in the context of the abstract for the article in question (which is paywalled and thus not open to discussion or linking here):

While there is significant progress with policy and a lively debate regarding the potential impact of open access publishing, few studies have examined academics' behavior and attitudes to open access publishing (OAP) in scholarly journals. This article seeks to address this gap through an international and interdisciplinary survey of academics. Is-

sues covered include: use of and intentions regarding OAP, and perceptions regarding advantages and disadvantages of OAP, journal article publication services, peer review, and reuse. Despite reporting engagement in OAP, academics were unsure about their future intentions regarding OAP. Broadly, academics identified the potential for wider circulation as the key advantage of OAP, and were more positive about its benefits than they were negative about its disadvantages. As regards services, rigorous peer review, followed by rapid publication were most valued. Academics reported strong views on reuse of their work; they were relatively happy with noncommercial reuse, but not in favor of commercial reuse, adaptations, and inclusion in anthologies. Comparing science, technology, and medicine with arts, humanities, and social sciences showed a significant difference in attitude on a number of questions, but, in general, the effect size was small, suggesting that attitudes are relatively consistent across the academic community.

One of the authors of the study reports that "Peer review is as important in open-access journals as in paid subscription journals"—which seems neither surprising nor noteworthy. This might be a *bit* more noteworthy:

> "We found a significant proportion of responses that say open-access journals are cited more heavily than subscription journals," Sbaffi says of the global survey of academics — 40% of whom were from the UK — carried out by publishers Taylor & Francis in March 2014. "In the hard sciences they believe this to be truer than in the social sciences."

This bit may be troublesome, though—specifically the last sentence:

> Respondents expressed the strongest support for open access with peer review that includes "a rigorous assessment of the merit and novelty," of their article, "with constructive comments for its improvement even if this takes a long time." There was some support for accelerated peer review with fewer revisions, but little support for peer review that excludes a judgement on novelty value.

I can't argue with a finding that scholars believe articles *should* be judged for novelty (so much for replication, but let's have more arsenic-based life!), since I'm not a scholar—but that does seem at odds with the supposed high regard for megajournals that review for good science, not novelty. Then again, that "high regard" note comes in a paragraph that's odd on several counts:

> Some 10,000 open-access publications are now indexed in the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#), with several good-quality open-access substitutes for subscription journals in many fields, says Bo-Christer Björk, professor in information systems science at Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki, Finland. Björk pointed to a number of open-access journals that are highly regarded by academics, such as *PLOS Medicine*, *PLOS Biology* and *Scientific Reports*, published by Springer Nature, which also

publishes the Nature Index. Each journal publishes more than 20,000 articles a year, compared to around 100–200 in typical subscription journals. (The Nature Index is editorially independent from its publisher.)

First, since it takes exactly nine keystrokes to determine the current number of *DOAJ* journals (eight for the URL, one for the Enter key), why would you ask a professor for the number? Second, the list of journals that supposedly publish more than 20,000 articles per year is almost entirely wrong: *PLoS Biology* published 200-300 articles per year between 2013 and 2017 and *PLoS Medicine* published 555 to 923. There are only two OA journals that published more than 20,000 articles in any year prior to 2018: *PLoS ONE* (not mentioned in the piece, with 21,150 articles in 2017 and more in each preceding year since 2012) and *Scientific Reports* (which only hit the 20,000-article mark in 2016). The next-largest journals all fall below 5,000 articles per year.

It might be interesting to look further at the UK study (was it actually carried out by a subscription publisher?), but since it's off limits to the hoi polloi, "might be" is the suitable term.

Scholarly publishing is broken. Here's how to fix it

This piece, by Jon Tennant at *aeon* on—well, I don't see a date, but I tagged it on July 3, 2018—is a combination of brief explanation and call to somewhat revolutionary action: get rid of the whole concept of journals and articles. I might republish the whole thing, but it uses a CC BY-SAME license, and since I don't use a SAME clause, that would technically be a violation of copyright. Also, of course, *aeon* would appreciate the visits and chances to beg for a donation.

I'll quote a couple of paragraphs to give a sense of Tennant's style and proposed solution. First, the lead:

> The world of scholarly communication is broken. Giant, corporate publishers with racketeering business practices and profit margins that exceed Apple's treat life-saving research as a private commodity to be sold at exorbitant profits. Only around 25 per cent of the global corpus of research knowledge is 'open access', or accessible to the public for free and without subscription, which is a real impediment to resolving major problems, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Then the heart (or at least start) of his solution:

> If we diversify our thinking away from the superficial field of journals and articles, and instead focus on the power of networked technologies, we can see all sorts of innovative models for scholarly communication. One ideal, based on existing services, would be something much more granular and continuous, with communication and peer review as layered, collaborative processes: envisage a hosting service such as GitHub combined with Wikipedia combined with a Q&A site such as Stack Exchange. Imagine using

version control to track the process of research in real time. Peer review becomes a community-governed process, where the quality of engagement becomes the hallmark of individual reputations. Governance structures can be mediated through community elections. Critically, all research outputs can be published and credited – videos, code, visualisations, text, data, things we haven't even thought of yet. Best of all, a system of fully open communication and collaboration, with not an 'impact factor' (a paper's average number of citations, used to rate journals) in sight.

I'll quote one more extract, because it feels a *bit* like Brembs' former "librarians should throw themselves under the bus" approach:

How will we fund scholarly publishing? Well, it's a $25 billion a year industry: I'm sure libraries can spare a dime.

I don't believe Tennant's really saying "just gut libraries to pay for it," especially since he later asserts (perhaps too optimistically) that "it is feasible to achieve 100 per cent open access in the future while saving around 99 per cent of the global spending budget on publishing." On the other hand, he doesn't suggest that libraries could use at least a large part of that 99% to shore up non-journals acquisitions and all the other things libraries do; instead, he thinks the money should be spent on "research, grants for under-privileged students and minority researchers, improving global research infrastructure, training, support and education." But never mind…

Do his figures make sense? Would this "ideal" system of scholarly communication be more accessible to non-scholars? I dunno. I do know it's an interesting and ambitious approach.

History

The battle for open access is far from over
On October 18, 2015, when this title appeared over Virginia Barbour's piece at *The Conversation*, it read as true enough. In December 2018, frankly, it reads as an understatement. Barbour is the Executive Officer for the Australian Open Access Support Group, a coalition of nine Australian universities and the Council of New Zealand University Librarians. She wrote at the start of the eighth Open Access Week and looks back at 15 years of discussion and action on OA.

Why progress has not been universal can probably be traced back to the origins of open access. Back in 2003, the only major open access publishers were PLOS and BioMedCentral. Meanwhile, traditional publishers were largely ignoring OA.

Yet, one view was that we were heading for a world where everything is published in open access journals. This was to be funded by publication fees – a model called "gold open access". In a world where journals

still charged hefty subscription fees, this [proved hard to implement uni-laterally](#), even though some countries, such as the UK, tried.

I honestly don't believe there was ever a time when most OA supporters thought open access journals should all be funded by publication fees, and she's simply wrong in saying that's what gold OA *is*.

The rest of the piece is interesting, if brief and vastly incomplete. The last portion is tricky. Barbour notes Elsevier's offer of free access to its journals for a small number of Wikipedia editors (of course, most links to Elsevier content resulting from these free accounts would be useless because paywalled).

> Elsevier's donation was [greeted by fury](#), with some OA advocates (dubbing it "Wikigate") arguing it was a betrayal of Wikipedia's principles, and would also only maintain the status quo as espoused by Elsevier.

> In response, [Wikipedia](#) argued it was being pragmatic. It is "writing an open-access encyclopedia in a closed-access world", and it was in everyone's interests to have Wikipedia editors have access to as wide a set of material as possible.

> This debate illustrates nicely the compromises that open access publishing is now facing. There won't be one neat answer as to how we make the academic literature more open, and perhaps in retrospect that's to be expected.

> But it does mean we are moving from a time of pure advocacy into a time where pragmatism and negotiation will be crucial to make open access a reality.

That's the end of the article. There are several dozen comments, some good, some counterfactual, some simply attacks on OA although rarely stated as such.

Open Access 2015: A Year Access Negotiators Edged Closer to the Brink
This lengthy, carefully-done piece by Hilda Bastian appeared [February 1, 2016](#) at *Absolutely Maybe*.

> It's the year many negotiators got seriously tough on double dipping – charging for both the ability to read (via subscriptions) and for publishing (author processing charges, or APCs).

> [Last year](#) it was France getting tough on the toughest negotiator: Elsevier. This year, the Netherlands took it right to the brink of cutting Elsevier loose. It was summed up by a January headline: "Dutch universities dig in for long fight over open access".

> Coming into the new year, other nations were taking up positions about the future they want to see too – for example, major **[Austrian science funders](#)** plumped for a non-commercial open access future.

And some universities and consortia of universities set up open access publishing operations – like the University of California Press' **Collabra**. Here's an explanation the thinking behind the system developed by 5 Dutch universities: **OPuS**.

That's the opening. The rest is a month-by-month rundown of events Bastian found particularly significant. I don't feel the need to comment on specifics; just note that this is here and provides an excellent way to catch up on a year in the history of OA.

While you're at *Absolutely Maybe*, read the more recent installments:

Open Access 2016: A Year of Price Bargaining, Preprints, and a Pirate
Same author, same blog, published February 7, 2017. The opening:

> A few years ago, **I wrote** that open access (OA) publications were gaining momentum. Based on **a study** of 2006 to 2010 in the biomedical literature database, PubMed, our access to publications was apparently growing somewhat steadily.
>
> It seems to have stalled after that. With a push towards 100% open access for publicly funded research in major European countries and some academic institutions, though, this could turn out to be a long lull, not a plateau. It's starting to look as though accessibility of publications increases in waves, with those waves arriving in different intervals, geographically and by academic discipline: 2020 looks like the year to watch now.
>
> To get a rough idea of how much reader access there is for biomedicine, I ran some searches in PubMed. It's not precise, for a few reasons. Because NIH-granted research is deposited in full in PubMed's repository, PubMed Central, it means there are articles from some journals without the whole journal contents. On the other hand, the search for articles available in full text in PubMed **underestimates** how many articles are out there for free somewhere online. The contents of PubMed aren't only research: access requirements tend to apply only to research reports. And the estimations of country of authors are very incomplete.
>
> Only 27% of PubMed records added in the last 11 months had full texts. That's strongly affected by public access requirements at the NIH and elsewhere that only require availability of full texts 12 months after publication. I looked at publications to the end of 2015 to see what happens after that embargo expires.
>
> The level of accessibility for publications from 2005 is (23%). In 2010 it was up to 33%, but in 2013-2015 it had leveled out to about 40%. That varies by country, with less public access in some areas of becoming a bigger proportion of the literature. It's 53% for papers listing at least one author in the USA and 48% with at least one in the UK. For

Germany, it's around 40%, and it's 37% in China and France. (Details of my searches and the results are **here**.)

Making a big dent in that second half of literature – and the embargo – is going to take action by funders of research and libraries, at (supra)national level and at individual institutions. More of that is coming. Increasingly, the push isn't just for access to read, but for accessible data and right to data and text mining, too. The embargo isn't being challenged as widely, though.

The slow progress in accessibility of publications isn't the only problem. There's the high cost when author processing charges (APCs), which are also largely added to subscription costs instead of replacing them – and the exploitative "spam" journal industry financed by APCs.

There may be a silver lining in the cloud: the increased cost pressure introduced by APCs seems to be a force propelling funders and institutions towards deep reform. That gathered force in 2016.

Another excellent and fairly detailed summary. (There are links to 2014 and 2013 summaries at the end of the article.)

Open Access 2017: A Year of Stand-Offs, Showdowns, & Funders' Own Journals

Same venue, same author, same excellence, <u>January 9, 2018</u>. The opening:

This was the **fifth year** I tracked events in open access. Sifting through the mass of developments I collected along the way, a couple stood out.

The first is the showdown going on in Germany between the universities and Elsevier. Rolling into 2018 now, the German negotiators aim to hammer out a national access deal that's sustainable and fair for readers and academic authors – or else pay no subscription at all.

They show no signs of backing down. At year's end, **about 200** academic institutions had cancelled their Elsevier subscriptions.

The second is the emergence of research funder journals/publishing platforms based on the **f1000 research** model. The Wellcome Trust were the first cab off this rank **last year**. The goals? More speed, less cost in getting accessible research results out to the world. The model is immediate release with **comparatively low** author charge, post-publication open peer review, and indexing in PubMed and other bibliographic databases once an article passes enough peer review.

Another to watch? The Gates Foundation stepping away from the embargo that's come to characterize funders' open access policies – where articles become free to read, but only a year after publication. If this spreads, it would be a seismic shift.

I look forward to the next installment.

Tr@nsition: 10 years of Open Access

This post, by Andrew Smeall on [February 8, 2017](#) at Hindawi's blog, is a bit different: it's about the ten years since Hindawi became an all-OA publisher. It's interesting for several reasons. In 2017, Hindawi had 515 *DOAJ*-listed journals with 16,766 articles and potential revenues of just under $26 million. The post is CC-BY, and because it offers a novel view of one facet of recent OA history, I think it's worth quoting in full:

> This month marks a significant milestone for Hindawi in the Open Access community. At the end of January 2007, we sold our last subscription journals, the International Mathematics Research Notices (IMRN) series, to Oxford University Press. In the following weeks, we "flipped" our two remaining subscription journals to [Open Access](#). Since then, every article in a Hindawi journal has been freely available upon publication.

> Despite the early success of BioMed Central and the growing influence of the Public Library of Science, the decision to commit to Open Access wasn't obvious in 2007. Hindawi's small portfolio of OA journals was growing, but IMRN remained our biggest journal and our largest source of revenue. Selling the journal meant giving up more than 25% of our revenue overnight, and placing all our bets on an unproven business model.

> Hindawi was founded in May 1997. Those early years were a frustrating time to be a small, independent publisher. During that same period, publishers developed and sold the first "Big Deal" subscription bundles to academic libraries. What at first seemed like a panacea for the serials crisis transformed the relationship between publishers and libraries and shifted an increasing share of library budgets into the pockets of commercial subscription publishers.

> In our first decade, Hindawi built a small portfolio of successful subscription mathematics journals. We made early progress with IMRN, but by 2007, our efforts to increase readership felt increasingly fruitless. As the cost of each Big Deal increased, we had to fight to maintain the small subscription bases we had. We were the runt of the litter: we grew, but the appetites of subscription publishers' Big Deals grew faster.

> As the Big Deals got bigger, the traditional publishers' bargaining power grew. Any increase in library funding went straight into paying the annual price increases the big players demanded. Faced with losing a package of hundreds of major journals or cutting a few small titles to meet the increases, librarians chose the Big Deals, and not without good reason.

At Hindawi, we knew we could compete with the larger commercial publishers outside of institutional sales and marketing. We could offer a superior publishing experience focused on serving authors: a simpler submission system, a faster review process, and a more beautiful published article. We embraced new technologies that came with the transition to online publishing: CrossRef, XML, and online peer review. Although we couldn't outcompete the big publishers' sales networks, we felt we could beat them at author services, but none of this mattered if we couldn't reach the right readers.

During this time many smaller publishers sold out to bigger publishers. We weren't ready to give up, but we felt like we were letting our authors down. Despite our best efforts, for many of our journals the traditional subscription-based model only allowed us to distribute our authors' work to a few dozen institutions.

Open Access provided the perfect solution. OA served both goals: by making the author our customer, we could focus on providing a better publishing experience rather than selling to libraries. And by providing barrier-free access to research, we could solve the readership problem at the same time. OA provided the means for a small publisher like Hindawi to invest in the publishing experience, build a better product, and compete directly with publishers hundreds of times our size.

Ten years later, we're still an all-OA publisher, and Open Access is at another turning point in its evolution. The big publishers are looking to OA as a new source of growth, and the power of the centralized publishing oligopoly continues to increase. But Open Access is not the end game, it's part of a transition to Open Science. Open Science delivers a world where publishing takes full advantage of the internet: instant publication and distribution, open data, transparent review, interactive manuscripts. OA publishers should lead this transition, and renew their focus on improving the publishing experience, before the big publishers do it for us.

I would only add one comment: in 2017, there were *no* publishers "hundreds of times [Hindawi's] size," at least not in terms of article volume: Even Elsevier didn't publish 1.6 million articles in 2017. Otherwise—well, it's definitely the fee-based model, which has its problems, but it's also an interesting commentary.

Portico announces the trigger of 70 Open Access publications

This brief piece is just an announcement by Valeri Yaw on September 6, 2018 at *LIBLICENSE* (a discussion forum—and in this case it *does* use LISTSERV software), but it's also a notable incident: OA journals die, but good ones have agreements that assure that articles remain available after that death. Key portions:

I'm pleased to share the news that 70 Open Access e-journals formerly hosted through De Gruyter are now available through the Portico archive. The content includes titles published by De Gruyter Poland as well as six publishers in Poland, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic. [Download the full title list](#), which includes the metadata and URL for each journal.

The content for these titles is no longer available through any online platform; therefore, it has "triggered" and is available to the community via the Portico archive. These titles were originally published on an Open Access basis, and will remain Open Access through Portico.

10 years on and where are we at? COASP 2018

Let's close this section with a fascinating snapshot of another historic moment in time: the tenth Conference of the Open Access Publishing Association, as told by Dr. Danny Kingsley on [September 24, 2018](#) at *Unlocking Research*. I won't go through most of the extensive report; Kingsley writes well, and of course I wasn't there. I'll take issue with the last sentence in the first paragraph, which calls a blog post a blog, but perhaps that's a British English usage I'm unfamiliar with.

I will quote one paragraph, which I believe would apply equally well in 2013 or 2023:

In an early discussion, Paul Peters, OASPA President and CEO of [Hindawi](#) noted that similarly to movements like organic food or veganism, **the OA 'movement' is not united in purpose**. When what appear to be 'fringe' groups begin, it is easy to assume that all involved take a similar perspective. But the reasons for people's involvement and the end point they are aiming for can be vastly different. Paul noted that this can be an issue for OASPA because there is not necessarily one goal for all the members. He posed the question about what this might mean for the organisation.

Facts

Sure, it's a silly heading, but since my primary role in OA is (I believe) the uncovering and organizing of factual information—e.g., the *GOAJ* series—it's one way to summarize what are mostly fairly recent factual discussions.

Scilit rankings

This is a [site or webpage](#) rather than a document. It's run by MDPI, based on its own index created by crawling CrossRef and PubMed. It's obviously incomplete, but an interesting up-to-date source of current rankings.

Actually, the site includes a number of pages, and while it may not be authoritative, it's certainly interesting. For example (all claims gathered on December 11, 2018):

- ➢ The "market size in terms of articles" page claims that 3,355,646 journal articles were published in 2017, an astonishingly high number, of which 887,127 were OA (which, if you include all non-*DOAJ* journals, is actually fairly close to the 916,348 I show on page eight of *GOAJ3*).

- ➢ For journals, it shows 42,622 in 2017, including 10,780 OA—and since that number is almost *exactly* what I show for *DOAJ*, it raises questions about the article count (double-counting?).

- ➢ There's a white-list involved, at least for the overall ranking page.

Still not quite sure what to make of this, but it's at least interesting.

The state of OA: a large-scale analysis of the prevalence and impact of Open Access articles

This *PeerJ* article, the peer-reviewed version of which appeared [February 13, 2018](#), is by eather Piwowar, Jason Priem, Vincent Larivière, Juan Pablo Alperin, Lisa Matthias, Bree Norlander, Ashley Farley, Jevin West and Stefanie Haustein. The abstract:

Despite growing interest in Open Access (OA) to scholarly literature, there is an unmet need for large-scale, up-to-date, and reproducible studies assessing the prevalence and characteristics of OA. We address this need using oaDOI, an open online service that determines OA status for 67 million articles. We use three samples, each of 100,000 articles, to investigate OA in three populations: (1) all journal articles assigned a Crossref DOI, (2) recent journal articles indexed in Web of Science, and (3) articles viewed by users of Unpaywall, an open-source browser extension that lets users find OA articles using oaDOI. We estimate that at least 28% of the scholarly literature is OA (19M in total) and that this proportion is growing, driven particularly by growth in Gold and Hybrid. The most recent year analyzed (2015) also has the highest percentage of OA (45%). Because of this growth, and the fact that readers disproportionately access newer articles, we find that Unpaywall users encounter OA quite frequently: 47% of articles they view are OA. Notably, the most common mechanism for OA is not Gold, Green, or Hybrid OA, but rather an under-discussed category we dub Bronze: articles made free-to-read on the publisher website, without an explicit Open license. We also examine the citation impact of OA articles, corroborating the so-called open-access citation advantage: accounting for age and discipline, OA articles receive 18% more citations than average, an effect driven primarily by Green and Hybrid OA. We encourage further research using the free oaDOI service, as a way to inform OA policy and practice.

As you might expect, I have problems with this—especially the horrendous term "Bronze OA," which is to say "available to read, maybe, where

and when the publisher finds it convenient, but not to reuse." Given that this team finds this non-OA segment to be the largest, the whole article has to be approached cautiously. That it's based on what are tiny samples (given the size of the corpus), I also wonder about its reliability (cf. my experience with a claim of 420,000 "predatory" articles in 2014, based on what was, percentagewise, a larger sample).

The article's discussion of so-called "Delayed OA" is also tricky, since it would appear that it can include embargoes of any length.

I'm pointing to the article, but won't discuss it further.

Hybrid OA Journal Monitor

This is also a website, most recently checked on December 11, 2018. It includes most major subscription journal publishers, and I'm inclined to believe that it includes the vast majority of "hybrid OA."

I use this source—and other previous notes about the slow takeup of "hybrid" options—as the basis for my belief that "hybrid" represents a relatively small portion of immediate OA, almost certainly less than 10%. To wit, the 2017 total was something over 36,000 articles (as compared to some 563,000 *DOAJ* gold OA articles); even the nearly-final 2018 figure of just over 44,000 is much less than 10% of the 2017 gold OA figure.

A secondary table is revealing but not surprising: Great Britain is the big spender on "hybrid" fees, with the Netherlands, Austria and Sweden very far behind and most other countries—including the US—barely visible.

Sub-Saharan nations lead the way in open access

This summary of a *PeerJ* report, written by Dalmeet Singh Chawla and appearing January 23, 2018 at *Research* (or *ResearchResearch*), is a little difficult to interpret. To wit, "lead the way" doesn't seem to cover the entire world (where I'd suggest Brazil and some other Latin American countries might do even better)—or it could be that's accurate for *percentages* but not for OA activity. Some excerpts:

> Academics in Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia publish a higher share of their research under an open access licence than scholars in many richer nations, a report has found.

> According to the study, posted ahead of peer review on PeerJ Preprints on 11 January, the African continent is also the most varied when it comes to open access publication.

> The analysis only looked at a subset of African countries, however they include the continent's most scientifically productive nations.

> Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia sport some of the world's highest percentages of research published in open access platforms: 58, 55, and 55 respectively in 2016.

And, indeed, a bit later comes the "percentage, not output" bit:

Allan Ahmed, a science policy researcher at the University of Sussex in the UK, notes that even though Africa's open access rates are high, the continent's global share of open access papers remains low because of its low output compared with other continents. African nations are producing valuable research, he says, but dissemination of their work has been poor. One problem, he explains, is that scholars in these nations get easily put off from negative referee comments during peer review and don't put enough effort into getting their research out there.

There are other caveats, such as reliance on World of Science and oaDOI. There's neither a link to the article or a title, so I didn't check further.

The World's Approach toward Publishing in Springer and Elsevier's APC-Funded Open Access Journals

This scholarly article by Hajar Sotudeh and Zahra Ghasempour appeared in [Volume 79, Number 2 (2018)](#) of *College & Research Libraries*—a no-fee gold OA journal published by ACRL, one of the largest divisions of the American Library Association.

Here's the summary:

Purpose: The present study explored tendencies of the world's countries—at individual and scientific development levels—toward publishing in APC-funded open access journals.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Using a bibliometric method, it studied OA and NOA articles issued in Springer and Elsevier's APC journals during 2007–2011. The data were gathered using a wide number of sources including Sherpa/Romeo, Springer Author-mapper, Science Direct, Google, and journals' websites.

Findings: The Netherlands, Norway, and Poland ranked highest in terms of their OA shares. This can be attributed to the financial resources allocated to publication in general, and publishing in OA journals in particular, by the countries. All developed countries and a large number of scientifically lagging and developing nations were found to publish OA articles in the APC journals. The OA papers have been exponentially growing across all the countries' scientific groups annually. Although the advanced nations published the lion's share of the OA-APC papers and exhibited the highest growth, the underdeveloped groups have been displaying high OA growth rates.

Practical Implications: Given the reliance of the APC model on authors' affluence and motivation, its affordability and sustainability have been challenged. This communication helps understand how countries at different scientific development and thus wealth levels contribute to the model.

Originality/Value: This is the first study conducted at macro level clarifying countries' contribution to the APC model—at individual and scientific-development levels—as the ultimate result of the interaction between authors' willingness, the model affordability, and publishers and funding agencies' support.

It's an interesting study but an odd one—limited in value by the age of the data (2011 was a *long* time ago in OA terms) and its focus on only two admittedly large publishers. Even in the summary, I question "exponentially growing," but never mind.

Still, it's distressing to see this sentence in the second paragraph of the introduction:

In Gold OA journals, authors are required to pay the APC, while in the hybrid ones they choose to pay for the open accessibility of their papers.

The first clause was never true in general, and particularly so in 2011, when 55% of articles in DOAJ-listed OA journals did *not* involve APCs. In fact, at least for *true* OA journals in *DOAJ*, both Springer and Elsevier were relatively small players in 2011, with 2,921 and 2,360 articles respectively—and only 554 of Elsevier's OA (in gold OA journals) articles involved APCs at all.

Part of my confusion may be due to the article's wording, to wit:

The study was conducted using a bibliometric method based on a publication analysis approach. The purposeful sample consisted of the papers published in the OA journals of Elsevier and Springer from 2007 to 2011, identified by analyzed at first, last, and corresponding author levels separately.

As described earlier in the paper, the two publishers are the highest ones in terms of the number of hybrid journals published. They are also among the pioneers in proposing and adopting the model since 2004 and 2006, respectively. The time span of the study begins, therefore, with 2007 to ensure at least one year of familiarity of authors with the model. However, the verification of the journals having adopted the APC model showed that many of them failed to attract any OA papers since 2007. Consequently, to avoid any inconsistency in the sample, we eliminated from the study those journals that had not applied this model throughout the mentioned time period or had failed to realize at least one OA-APC paper in 2007.

APCJ Identification: Through searching in Sherpa/Romeo, Springer Author-mapper and Science Direct in late 2012 and early 2013, 576 OA-APC journals published by Springer and 47 ones published by Elsevier from 2007 to 2011 were selected. In this way, the final purposeful sample included 623 APC journals copublished by Springer and Elsevier. It should be mentioned that the journal collection mostly consisted of those proposing the hybrid model; just 6 Gold APCJ were

found in the collection, accounting for less than 1 percent of the total journals and less than 10 percent of the OA papers identified.

In other words, these are mostly *not* OA journals: they are subscription journals that may have some OA articles. And, as is almost always the case when looking at "hybrid" journals, the percentage of OA articles was very low—about 4.7%. Notably, Springer accounted for nearly 95% of the OA papers found (18,654 over five years).

I won't go through the whole paper. I find it odd that *universities* are credited with authoring papers, as opposed to scholars. There's interesting data here on its own terms. For example, of the 11 universities with the most OA papers, nine were in the Netherlands, one was in Germany and one was in the US—but that one, actually the multicampus UC system, accounted for more than three times as many papers as the next most productive.

The country tables are interesting but, in one case, a bit silly. In terms of *volume* of papers where funders paid APCs (almost always in hybrid journals), the Netherlands beats the US 5,321 to 3,836—but the more interesting figure may be next to that: for the Netherlands, that was 48% of all papers in those publishers' hybrid-and-OA journals, while for the US it was just over 4%. (The silly part? The country with the highest "Normalized OA Share" is Honduras: of *two* papers in these journals, one [that is, 50%] was OA via APC.)

Given the limitations of the study, I find it difficult to lend too much credence to the conclusions, *especially* because they seem to assume that the *only* model for OA is APC-based. That's simply not true, and in the long run an APC-based model may be unworkable. Which does not doom OA, of course, although it might doom so-called "hybrid" OA.

How open is open access research in Library and Information Science?
This scholarly article by Wanyenda Leonard Chilimo and Omwoyo Bosire Onyancha appeared [in Volume 84, No. 1 (2018)](#) of the *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science*—which is a Gold OA journal that charges APCs (R2,000.00, or about $142 in December 2018).

> The study investigates Library and Information Science (LIS) journals that published research articles between 2003 and 2013, which were about open access (OA) and were indexed in LIS databases. The purpose was to investigate the journals' OA policies, ascertain the degree to which these policies facilitate OA to publications, and investigate whether such texts are also available as OA. The results show that literature growth in the domain has been significant, with a total of 1,402 articles produced during the eleven years under study. The OA policies of the fifty-six journals that published the highest number of articles were analysed. The results show that most articles (404; 41%) were published in hybrid journals, whereas 272 (29.7%) appeared in OA journals. Some 143 (53%) of

the articles published in hybrid journals were available as green OA copies. In total, 602 (66%) of all the articles published were available as OA. The results show that the adoption of OA for research articles on that very subject is somewhat higher than in other fields. The study calls on LIS professionals to be conversant with the OA policies of the various journals that may publish their research.

Given the natural interest in OA among librarians, it's not surprising that there were so many articles—and while it's reassuring that 66% of the articles were available, it's a bit unfortunate that only 30% were in gold OA journals.

The tables need to be viewed with care. Table 2, for example, does *not* show how many gold and green OA articles appeared in each of 56 journals—it shows how the journals score on an "OA spectrum" scorecard. (The table's also curious in that it shows *Information Technology and Libraries*, which has always been published by LITA, an ALA division, as having Boston University as a publisher.

Reading the rest of the article, I realize that the abstract and conclusions need to be viewed carefully. Table 3 contains the most interesting information. Specifically, of 909 articles finally included in the analysis, 272 were in gold OA journals and, thus, immediately available. If I'm reading the table right, only 71 were OA at time of publication in "hybrid" journals, with another 74 in "delayed OA" (another questionable term).

An interesting study.

News & Views: Evaluating Quality in Open Access Journals
Take this August 27, 2018 report by Dan Pollock and Ann Michael at *Delta Think* with the same grain of salt you should apply to most studies (including mine!), and let's say right up front that viewing journal "quality" as a matter of citation metrics (JIF or other) is questionable—as, indeed, the authors clearly state:

> For better or for worse, citation-based metrics are widely used as a proxy measure of journal 'quality'. The discussions about the merits and difficulties of this practice have been well-rehearsed elsewhere, so we will not cover them here. Whatever changes might happen in future, and for all the faults of the current methods, Impact Factor is currently used as the de facto benchmark. So, when discussing perceptions of journal quality in the current market, it seems reasonable to analyze patterns in such citation-based metrics.

That huge caveat aside, the report tries to deal with a difficult question, as posed in its beginning:

> It's not uncommon for us to hear a society or association voice strong reservations about starting an open access (OA) journal based on a fundamental belief that open access is synonymous with low quality. "A

fully open access journal will dilute our brand" is one refrain; "We don't want to start a 'journal of rejects'" is another.

This month we decided to dig into the data to see if this belief is well founded: On average, are fully OA journals lower, equal, or superior quality to their subscription siblings?

They don't really answer that question. What they do is measure *rates of growth* for number of OA journals in high "impact" categories, and there—at least for JIF and SNIP—the answer seems clear: the number of higher-impact gold OA journals is growing much faster than among non-OA journals. For the early years (2011-2013, say) that can be explained in part by the small-number issue: rapid growth in gold OA journals didn't really take off until 2005 or so, so there were a lot *more* gold OA journals each year (until 2014, when growth rates started to drop sharply). But the numbers, especially for JIF, are consistently fairly high through 2017.

For all three metrics, the percentage increase of 'high quality' journals year-on-year is growing faster for fully OA journals than for non-OA journals and the indices as a whole. In other words, fully OA journals appear to be accounting for an increasing share of the top performers. (The notable exception is for SJR from 2016-17, although the top fully OA journals had a growth spurt in the previous year, so the trend holds.)

The rest of the article digs deeper—for example, showing that the percentage of high-JIF journals (3 or more and 4 or more) is, *especially* since 2014, growing much faster than the percentage of OA journals in JCR itself.

The conclusions?

What does this all mean? The data show that an increasing number of fully OA publications are attaining higher impact factors at faster rates than their subscription and hybrid counterparts.

Determining the causes of this observation is difficult. Many studies claim the existence of an Open Access Citation Advantage, which would increase citation-based metrics and therefore 'quality' simply by virtue of increased traffic. (Although, there are arguments against this and even arguments for a possible OA citation disadvantage.) Alternatively, we could be seeing evidence of fully OA journals maturing, with their general quality 'catching up' to the average and therefore attracting more citations.

But one thing is clear: there is nothing preventing an OA journal from being 'high quality', and based on this data, a fully OA journal's Impact Factor now appears more likely to be above average for its field.

As is the case with any publication, a journal's quality is dependent on the mission and objectives of its owner and how those objectives are executed and communicated. OA journals do not dilute journal brands if they maintain the same brand promise as the flagship publication.

The data seem to indicate that an increasing number of fully OA journal owners and editorial teams are choosing the 'higher quality' path for their publications.

This seems like a worthwhile analysis, clearly and fairly reported. Citation factor on a journal basis may be a chump's game—but even in that game, gold OA is looking better and better.

Progress

Some of these may be (or have been) a trifle optimistic, but there's nothing wrong with a little optimism…

Open Access at the tipping point
Paolo Mangiafico wrote this on October 13, 2015 as a guest post at *Scholarly Communications @ Duke*. Unfortunately, much as I'd like to publish the whole brief and charming piece, there's no explicit CC license on the blog (!) so I won't. It was written at the end of Open Access Week and based on a press release from *Nature* regarding licensing in their OA journals.

> Even though *Nature* neglects to mention in this release that they are bringing in a lot of money from open access through high article processing charges (they aren't doing this just to be nice) I still think it's an important milestone because it shows that open access is becoming the norm, even in mainstream, high visibility journals. I'm optimistic that this is another indicator that we're on our way to some kind of tipping point for open access, where other effects will come into play.

> One of the statistics given in the press release is that the percentage of authors choosing CC-BY licenses in Nature Publishing Group's open access journals rose from 26% in 2014 to 96% in September 2015. Just last year, a study by Taylor & Francis indicated that, when asked (or at least when asked with the leading questions in the T&F study), authors were more likely to choose other CC variants, yet in *Nature* open access journals the choice of CC-BY is now nearly unanimous. Maybe "choice" is too strong a word – they appear to have achieved this primarily by setting CC-BY as the default. Just as in the past when signing over all your rights to a publisher was the default (and, unfortunately, in many journals still is), it seems that few authors realize they can make a change, or see a strong reason to do so. What this signals is the power of setting a default.

That final point is vital. As explained, Duke has an OA policy that is *not* a mandate—but the default is open.

> What makes me optimistic about the figures in the *Nature* press release is that they point to an environment where even in high visibility journals open access is no longer that thing only your activist colleague does, but is

something that many people are doing as a matter of course. And as the percentage of authors making their work open access grows, suddenly [various decision-making heuristics and biases](#) start to tip in the other direction. Pretty soon the outlier will be the scholar whose work is not openly available, either via "green" repositories or "gold" open access journals, and I think momentum toward almost universal OA will increase.

Our work isn't done, of course. Even with open access as a default, the next challenge will be to manage the costs. So far the shift to OA has mostly been an additional cost, and the big publishers who made big profits before are continuing to make big profits now via these new models. Even as OA becomes prevalent, and scholars see it as the norm, we'll still have to work hard to find ways to exert downward pressure on author processing charges and other publishing costs, so that open access doesn't just become another profit center that exploits scholarly authors and their funders and institutions. We need to do better to surface these costs, and to put in place mechanisms and perhaps shift to supporting other publishers and other models that will keep costs down.

Good stuff, and a real sign of progress.

Open Access Progress: Anecdotes from close to home
This [May 16, 2016 piece](#) by Cameron Neylon at *Science in the Open* is strictly anecdotal, as the title says. It's also brief, charming and has a CC 0 (public domain) license, so I'm quoting the whole thing.

It has become rather fashionable in some circles to decry the complain about the lack of progress on Open Access. Particularly to decry the apparent failure of UK policies to move things forward. I've been guilty of frustration at various stages in the past and one thing I've always found useful is thinking back to where things were. So with that in mind here's an anecdote or two that suggests not just progress but a substantial shift in the underlying practice.

I live with a chemist, a group not known for their engagement with Open Access. More than most other disciplines in my experience there is a rigid hierarchy of journals, a mechanistic view of productivity, and – particularly in those areas not awash with pharmaceutical funding – not a huge amount of money. Combine that with a tendency to think everything is – or at least should be – patentable (which tends to rule out preprints) and this is not fertile ground for OA advocacy.

Over the years we've had our fair share of disagreements. A less than ideal wording on the local institutional mandate meant that archiving was off the menu for a while (the agreement to deposit required all staff to deposit but also required the depositor to take personal responsibility for any copyright breaches) and a lack of funds (and an institutional decision to concentrate RCUK funds and RSC vouchers on only the

journals at the top of that rigid hierarchy) meant that OA publication in the journals of choice was not feasible either. That argument about whether you choose to pay an APC or buy reagents for the student was not a hypothetical in our household.

But over the past year things have shifted. A few weeks ago: "You know, I just realised my last two papers were published Open Access". The systems and the funds are starting to work, are starting to reach even into those corners of resistance, yes even into *chemistry*. Yes it's still the natural sciences, and yes it's only two articles out of who knows how many (I'm not the successful scientist in the house), buts its a quite substantial shift from it being out totally out of the question.

But around about the same time something that I found even more interesting. Glimpsed over a shoulder I saw something I found odd…searching on a publisher website, which is strange enough, and also searching only for Open Access content. A query raised the response: "Yeah, these CC BY articles is great, I can use the images directly in my lectures without having to worry; I just cite the article, which after all I would have obviously done anyway". It turns out that with lecture video capture now becoming standard universities are getting steadily more worried about copyright. The Attribution licensed content meant there was no need to worry.

Sure these are just anecdotes but they're indicative to me of a shift in the narrative. A shift from "this is expensive and irrelevant to me" to "the system takes care of it and I'm seeing benefits". Of course we can complain that its costing too much, that much of the system is flakey at best and absent at worst, or that the world could be so much better. We can and should point to all the things that are sub-optimal. But just as the road may stretch out some distance ahead, and there may be roadblocks and barriers in front of us, there is also a long stretch of road behind, with the barriers cleared or overcome.

As much as anything it was the sense of "that's just how things are now" that made me feel like real progress has been made. If that is spreading, even if slowly, then the shift towards a new normal may finally be underway.

Yeah, OK, there are a few typos. Hey, it's a blog post. It's also 635 words well worth reading.

The Rising Demand for Open Access

This post, by Betty Roche on January 8, 2018 at Roche's eponymous blog, discusses *demand* for OA with a specific focus, that of a physical therapist trying to be as effective as possible with limited resources.

As we grow professionally, we begin to learn it isn't necessary to read every single published item in a full journal. (While at the same time

no longer feel guilty about skipping a journal article because it has no interest to us.) Becoming an expert requires **patient-driven learning**. Patient-driven learning focuses on the population the physical therapist typically treats. After enough years in practice, we very soon learn that patients are people and people are a bit messy and complex. The people we treat may have various concurrent co-morbidities. We begin to notice little things that make each person unique. The unique factors drive us to ask very pointed questions.

> How does this factor impact outcomes of care? Do I need to consider any additional interventions to address the unique component? In light of the unique factor, do I need to also refer the patient to a different professional?

Many of us practice in a very busy environment. If we truly adopt patient-driven learning, then that means we are searching for answers in our non-productive clinic time or even during our own personal time. If the majority of clinicians are like me, then at that moment I'm in a focused zone of problem-solving. To not reach a definitive answer in the time I've allotted myself means I need to remember to circle back at another point in time to bring closure to specific patient driven learning moment. Lack of open access is a factor that tends to leave me failing in my patient-driven learning mission.

In wondering why researchers aren't more attuned to the need for people to *use* their research, Roche does make one unfortunate statement:

> We all know the peer review process in open access may not be as comparable as a traditional peer reviewed journal.

Other than that, it's an interesting, focused piece.

Why open access publishing is growing in Latin America

This interesting (if slightly curious) piece by Victoriano Colodrón appeared June 19, 2018 at *Times Higher Education*—and I'm bending my "only cite stuff you can read" rule because *THE* seems *frequently* readable.

> The move towards open access publishing in scientific research is certainly a global one. However, Latin America or *Iberoamérica*, a larger community that includes Spanish- and Portuguese-language countries in both Europe and the Americas, is using the OA publishing model to a far greater extent than any other region in the world. Iberoamérican scientists especially are committed to the movement as a way to ensure that society benefits from their research.

I believe the second sentence is true and important. Curious point one: is "Iberoamérica" actually the appropriate term for two European countries and a whole bunch of Latin American ones? *Wikipedia* seems to be split on the issue (the Talk section is interesting). To see how tricky this can be,

consider: if large numbers of native Spanish or Portuguese speakers are the criteria, then the United States is part of Iberoamérica, since its more than 40 million native Spanish speakers puts it in fifth place in the world, behind only Mexico, Colombia, Spain and Argentina.

It's likely that most Latin American online scholarly journals are already gold OA, and about 94% of the gold OA journals don't charge APCs. This article also points out rapid growth in repositories—and that Latin America also does a healthy amount of OA book publishing.

Here's the paragraph I found most curious:

> Ultimately, the great diversity of publishing practices and institutional approaches account for the skyrocketing OA movement in Latin America, although regional economic constraints also play a role. Some believe traditional subscription models may restrict meaningful access to scientific knowledge in this part of the world.

It strikes me that *anybody* in *any part* of the world with any awareness of scholarly journals at all should at least admit that "traditional subscription models may restrict meaningful access to scientific knowledge"—except, I suppose, for those who feel that access to knowledge by other than The Elite is meaningless.

Open Insights: What's to Be Done? Thoughts on Moving the Open Access Conversation Forward

This set of musings by Michael Roy was posted on at the *OLH Blog*—and I call it a set of musings because that's essentially how Roy describes it in an acknowledgment footnotr:

> These ideas, written as much for myself as for anyone else, are certainly incomplete and in need of refinement.

They are also well-stated and worth reading. The perspective is academia—what faculty, administrators, technologists and librarians can do to move OA forward and make it more effective.

He offers six general ideas, with commentary on each: get and stay informed about OA; understand the connections of OA to tenure and promotion guidelines on campus and more broadly; keep track of how you spend your money; invest wisely; invest more and/or invest differently; and be personally Open. I won't quote most of the expansions but I will quote portions of the tenure & promotion section:

> Some publications are more important (read: higher prestige) than others. In other words, books published by certain publishers and articles published in certain journals are considered more important than the books and articles published in what are deemed less important places. The fact that we currently associate quality with certain journals and certain book publishers means that it is hard to convince authors to

publish in new venues that are experimenting with new business models and new ways of evaluating quality… At a local level, we need to have conversations about how our tenure and promotion guidelines are contributing to maintaining the current system of scholarly communication, and if that's okay. In other words, do our current promotion and tenure practices create bad incentives for scholarly communication, and which realistic reforms to our local tenure and promotion procedures might create better incentives? And because the current and future leaders of disciplines and scholarly societies come from our own institutions, we need to encourage these leaders who are on our campuses to have these very same conversations within their own fields, and for those on our faculty who care deeply about these issues to get involved in their own scholarly societies to advocate for reform.

If there's one thing that's become clear from scholar comments about PlanS, it is that fixed notions of tenure and promotion may represent the largest barrier toward broader OA adoption.

The piece ends with four elements toward social change that Roy picked up from Bryan Stephenson, and in the spirit of attempted optimism that drives this whole roundup, I'll quote those four in their entirety:

Proximity: We need to be close to those we are trying to help. We need to understand what change will mean for everyone involved in that change, and to listen and include in particular the ideas and perspectives of those who have historically been excluded from designing the system.

Re-framing: The manner in which a problem or opportunity is framed greatly influences how you approach solving that problem or pursuing that opportunity,

Discomfort: Changing a system is hard. There are people and institutions who don't want the system to change. If it were easy and in everyone's interest, it would have changed a long time ago. As much as it might be unpleasant to be involved in conflict, as much as it might not feel good in the short run, the history of real change always involves discomfort.

Hope: Anger at wrongs and injustice is necessary, but to sustain change requires hope. We have to believe that change is possible, and we need a positive vision for a better future that will fuel the work and keep us coming back year after year to make it so.

Indeed.

Roles

The significance of this subheading may (or may not) become evident in the discussions that follow.

PolEcon of OA Publishing I: What is it publishers do anyway?
Cameron Neylon posted this on September 30, 2015 at *Science in the Open*.

> There is no statement more calculated to make a publisher's blood boil
> than "Publishers? They just organise peer review" or perhaps "…there's
> nothing publishers do that couldn't be done cheaper and easier by aca-
> demics". By the same token there is little that annoys publishing reform
> activists, or even most academics, more than seeing a huge list of the
> supposed "services" offered by publishers, most of which seem unfamil-
> iar at best and totally unnecessary, or even counter productive at worst.

> Much of the disagreement over what scholarly publishing should cost
> therefore turns on a lack of understanding on both sides. Authors are
> unaware of much of what publishing actually involves in practice, and
> in particular how the need for safeguards is changing. Publishers,
> steeped in the world of how things have been done tend to be unaware
> of just how ridiculous the process looks from the outside and in de-
> fending the whole process are slow, or in some cases actively antago-
> nistic, to opening up a conversation with authors about which steps are
> really necessary or wanted, and whether or not anything can be easily
> taken away (or equally added to the mix).

Having seen the huge list(s) more than once, and wondered at the assur-
ance that these were all Necessary and Valuable Tasks, I thought Neylon's
take would be refreshing—and it is, *especially* because he doesn't minimize
the roles of publisher or the plausible costs of those roles. For example,
here's the first paragraph under "Production and Publication":

> This process has plenty of bits that look as though they should be
> cheap. Getting identifiers (around $1 an article) and hosting (surely
> next to nothing?) look as though they should be cheap and at one level
> they are. The real cost in minting a DOI however is not the charge from
> Crossref but the cost of managing the process. Some publishers are very
> good at managing this (Elsevier have an excellent and efficient data
> pipeline for instance) while small publishers tend to struggle because
> they manage it manually. Hosting also has complications; the commu-
> nity expects high availability and rapid downloads, and this is not
> something that can be done on the cheap. High quality archiving to
> preserve access to content in the long term is also an issue.

The whole piece seems fair-minded, including areas where there may be
diseconomies of scale (e.g., managing peer review). It's not a never-ending
list of stuff; it's a series of thoughtful discussions, and how conversations
on lowering costs might proceed. The conclusion:

> It's easy to say that much of what publishers do is hidden and that re-
> searcher are unaware of a lot of it. It is only when things go wrong, that
> scandals break, that the curtain gets pulled back. But unless we open
> up an honest conversation about what is wanted, what is needed, and

what is currently being missed we're also unlikely to solve the increasingly visible problems of fraud, peer review cartels and ethical breaches. In many ways, what has not been visible because they were problems at a manageable scale, are growing to the point of being unmanageable. And we can tackle them collectively or continue to shout at each other.

The comments are also worth reading.

Open access megajournals: The publisher perspective (Part 2: Operational realities)

This article—by Simon Wakeling, Valérie Spezi, Claire Creaser, Jenny Fry, Stephen Pinfield and Peter Willett—was published September 4, 2017 at *Learned Publishing*, and although the journal is subscription, the article is open access.

> This paper is the second of two *Learned Publishing* articles in which we report the results of a series of interviews, with senior publishers and editors exploring open access megajournals (OAMJs). Megajournals (of which *PLoS One* is the best known example) represent a relatively new approach to scholarly communication and can be characterized as large, broad-scope, open access journals, which take an innovative approach to peer review, basing acceptance decisions solely on the technical or scientific soundness of the article. Based on interviews with 31 publishers and editors, this paper reports the perceived cultural, operational, and technical challenges associated with launching, growing, and maintaining a megajournal. We find that overcoming these challenges while delivering the societal benefits associated with OAMJs is seen to require significant investment in people and systems, as well as an ongoing commitment to the model.

The article refers to a Part 1, apparently published on the same date, and it took some Binging to find that article, since the link in the references is circular, leading back to Part 2. (Possibly a typo, since the two URLs differ only in the final digit.) I needed to see the earlier piece to see whether there was a definition of *megajournal* that made sense to me, since without such a definition, the Part 2 article (mostly observations from interviews) is hard to make sense of.

After skimming through Part 1, I find that I am not enlightened. Clearly, some use "megajournal" as a synonym for "dumping ground," a journal devoted to publishing articles with sound science that were rejected by a publisher's more "selective" journals. That strikes me as an awful definition. But if you look at size and breadth as measures, there were at most three OA megajournals in 2017—multidisciplinary journals with at least 2,000 articles—and only two if you set the lower limit at 5,000 articles: *Scientific Reports* and *PLoS ONE*. (The third, *Nature Communications*, clearly *values* itself highly since its 2017 APC was three times as high

as either of the others, but—or perhaps as a result—it published fewer than 5,000 articles in 2017 and fewer than 4,000 in 2016).

As a result, while you may find this grant-funded article or pair of articles interesting, I don't see much point in analyzing it in depth, as it seems to be based on a category of journals with almost no members.

Megajournals, megamyths

While this essay by Lenny Teytelman, published October 4, 2017 at *protocols.io*, is interesting and worth reading, it also involves a definition of "megajournals" I find mystifying, as most of those included are not all that large or all that interdisciplinary.

The five myths and commentaries are interesting. To wit (without the commentaries, which pretty clearly undo each myth):

- These journals have led to an explosion of the number of published papers. It's now impossible to stay on top of the literature.

- Megajournals do not do peer review (or, they do "peer review light").

- Given the author-pays business model, these journals have an incentive to publish everything, so even if the reviews are bad, they publish to make more money.

- The megajournals are full of disasters and retractions.

- We have enough journals; megajournals improve nothing and suck up oxygen from good existing journals.

I do recommend this piece: it's short, lively and to my mind fairly convincing. Even if there are only 2.5 actual megajournals…

Directory of Open Access Journals

Items here relate, one way or another, to *DOAJ*, beginning with what you might think of as the Great Cleanup, Great Purge or Great Strengthening.

Directory of Open Access Journals Introduces New Standards to Help Community Address Quality Concerns

Caralee Adams wrote this news piece on March 15, 2015 for SPARC. It's a fairly long piece that provides good insight into the change in *DOAJ* criteria and why it's important. A few excerpts and notes:

> After all the hard work that scholars put into their research, they are eager to have the papers reporting on their work widely read. Many understand that publishing their article in an Open Access journal provides them with the opportunity to reach the widest possible audience. However, lingering concerns about the quality of open access journals have kept some academics from fully embracing the innovative publishing model.

> The Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), a comprehensive international database of more than 10,000 Open Access journals, recently implemented a rigorous new vetting process that aims to raise the bar of quality for the journals it lists and filters out publications that are tarnishing the image of Open Access.

On January 1, 2015, there were 10,944 (I believe) *DOAJ* journals. On January 1, 2016, after the cleanup, there were 9.366. But of course journals can be restored and new journals keep being added: as of December 14, 2018, there are 12,380, so it's likely that *DOAJ4* will begin with a base of close to 12,500 journals(and, unfortunately, nearly certain that there will be some that can't be fully analyzed).

> "Over the years, the demands and expectations from stakeholders have become more complex," says [Lars] Bjørnshauge [managing director of DOAJ]. "You don't only want to know if a journal is open access. Nowadays, when you have all the open access mandates from research funders, governments, and universities, these organizations want to know more…what kind of license the journals use, do they apply article processing fees, and what the archiving arrangements are."

> Along with the need for more detail was a call for more transparency, adds Bjørnshauge. Readers wanted to know details about the editorial board, the peer review process, and all the elements that reflect a high-quality journal.

> "There are publishers entering this new market with unethical business practices," he says. "Being able to ask for information and display that information in the public makes the whole business more transparent. Through this service, Bjørnshauge says the hope is to get "shabby publishers out of the market."

> However, for journals that don't initially make the new cut, all is not lost. Bjørnshauge and the DOAJ advise them on changes they can implement so that they can eventually become part of the directory. "It is part of our mission not to stigmatize publishers, but to help them do a better job," he says. "If a journal doesn't match our criteria, then we try to help them address those issues."…

> "Addressing the scholarly community's legitimate concerns over the quality of Open Access journals is critical for the movement to succeed," notes Heather Joseph, Executive Director of SPARC. "The actions that the DOAJ are taking in close coordination with OASPA provide an important new safeguard, and helps raise the quality bar."

> The DOAJ developed the new application over the course of a year, reaching out to its advisory board as well as a series of well-known international experts for feedback. A draft was circulated for public comment and the community responded with nearly 150 comments…

In time, Bjørnshauge anticipates having an established directory of certified high-quality journals will help advance the Open Access movement.

"I hope that this contributes to the strength, credibility, and attractiveness of open-access journal publishing," says Bjørnshauge. "My vision is that researchers will find it just as attractive to publish in open access as in traditional, subscription-based journals."…

There's more, and it's historically useful background.

Criteria for open access and publishing

This article by Tom Olijhoek, Dominic Mitchell and Lars Bjørnshauge appeared November 16, 2015 at *ScienceOpen*. The abstract:

This article gives an overview of the history and current status of the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). After a brief historical overview, DOAJ policies regarding open access, intellectual property rights and questionable publishers are explained in detail. The larger part of this article is a much requested explanation on how DOAJ uses its new set of criteria for the evaluation of open access journals and the rationale behind choosing the seven extra criteria that qualify for the DOAJ Seal. A final section is devoted to the extended possibilities that DOAJ will be offering shortly to scholars and publishers for searching the database and for uploading metadata. The result is a renewed DOAJ that offers a more robust platform, a more stable database and enhanced services to allow the upload and collection of metadata.

It's a fairly long, detailed article including a "potted history" of *DOAJ*, some notes on questionable and hybrid journals, and detailed notes on the new criteria. I will quote the "hybrid" section:

Why doesn't DOAJ index hybrid journals? After all, they play a role in open access publishing and are often journals with that traditional merit of 'high prestige'. Those journals are often linked to publishers of reputation and even quality; indeed, they have become the "traditional" publisher's answer to getting a foot into the open access market.

Despite evidence on the internet to the contrary (do a search on "Directory of Open Access and Hybrid Journals"), DOAJ has never indexed hybrid journals. DOAJ was set up to list journals that were not based on a subscription model in any way.

Publishers argue that the hybrid model is just a transition state on the way to full open access but of this we are doubtful. Some see hybrid journals as means of allowing publishers to generate income from the payments of APCs on top of subscription revenues, resulting in the socalled "double dipping". Publishers say that subscription rates are adjusted depending on the percentage of open access content, but lack of transparency on the breakdown of publishing revenues makes it difficult to provide strong evidence for this. Some publishers have recently

launched new offsetting models where payments for hybrid open access and access to already-published content is an integrated package. It remains to be seen whether these inventions will do much in the way of promoting open access.

That strikes me as an excellent discussion (I love "but of this we are doubtful"). Definitely worth reading as background for what *DOAJ* has become.

A Clean House at the Directory of Open Access Journals

This commentary by Margaret Heller appeared November 30, 2015 at *ACRL TechConnect*. Heller discusses the cleanup and that it had begun before the Bohannon "sting" that some believe caused it to happen.

Heller attempts to categorize journals that didn't make it through the cleanup, and notes that in more than half the cases the cause was *not* misconduct but either disappearing or ceasing publication. The conclusion:

The work that DOAJ is doing to improve transparency and the screening process is very important for open access advocates, who will soon have a tool that they can trust to provide much more complete information for scholars and librarians. For too long we have been forced to use the concept of a list of "questionable" or even "predatory" journals. A directory of journals with robust standards and easy to understand interface will be a fresh start for the rhetoric of open access journals.

Unfortunately, Heller's final sentence is a bit too optimistic.

Walt Crawford updates his analysis of DOAJ data

Somebody at DOAJ posted this piece on August 25, 2016 at the *DOAJ News Service*. It's flattering, but I'll quote the portion that surprised me:

What did DOAJ learn from Walt's analysis? We hadn't realised quite how heavily Japan had been hit by the removal: 73% of the Japanese journals indexed in DOAJ were wiped from the Directory. We have since determined that most of those are on J-STAGE and have started a targeted campaign to get as many of those journals to submit new applications as possible. Singapore, Bangladesh and Nepal were also heavily hit. We also learned that journals published by universities and colleges suffered heavy losses. We are looking into this area with our DOAJ Ambassadors to see if we can find out why these losses were so great.

It was and is great to know that *DOAJ* has benefitted from my work—which would, of course, not be feasible without *DOAJ*.

Improvement of editorial quality of journals indexed in DOAJ: a data analysis

This article by Andrea Marchitelli, Paola Galimberti, Andrea Bollini and Dominic Mitchell appeared in the January 2017 *JLIS.it*, an Italian gold OA librarianship journal. The abstract:

In 2013, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) expanded and updated its inclusion criteria and its journal evaluation process, ultimately removing a large number of journals that failed to submit an updated application. The present study examined the results of the new process and its capability to improve the quality of the directory and the reliability of the information contained in it. A dataset of 12.595 journals included in DOAJ, since its launch in 2003 until May 15th 2016, was examined and compared to other data. The number of journals deleted from DOAJ during this period is 3776; the majority of them (2851 journals) were excluded because publishers failed to complete the reapplication on time; 490 had ceased publication or were otherwise inactive; 375 were excluded for ethical issues; 53 because they were no longer open access or the content was embargoed, the final 7 were removed for other reasons. The top five countries in terms of the percentage of journals removed are: Japan (74% of journals removed); Pakistan (60%); Canada (51%); United States (50%); and Mexico (49%). Our study has shown that 158 of the removed journals are included in Beall's lists; 1130 journals indexed in DOAJ are included in Scopus and/or JCR. Our analysis demonstrates that, thanks to the new acceptance criteria, to the improved screening process performed by national groups under the direction of the new management, there is a noticeable quality improvement of the journals indexed in DOAJ.

The piece is thorough and seems well-done; it's another useful datapoint.

Policy updates: open access statement and user registration
A very brief but significant item, posted August 9, 2016 on the *DOAJ News Feed*, noting two worthwhile changes in *DOAJ*'s requirements—one of which took care of one of the only areas I had taken issue with DOAJ on.

Open Access Statement

Until recently, DOAJ has insisted that journals state very clearly on their web site a full and detailed open access statement, preferably one that follows closely the Budapest Open Access Initiative definition.

From 8th September, DOAJ will accept a short open access statement—even as short as 'This journal is open access.'—but ONLY in combination with a Creative Commons licensing statement, or equivalent licensing statement, on the same page and, preferably, in the same paragraph. As always, this statement must be on the journal web site and not held on a different site. If the licensing statement is not on the same page as the open access statement then the extended open access statement complying with BOAI definition will be required.

User Registration

From August 2016, DOAJ no longer accepts journals that require users to register to view the full text. This change was put into effect immediately. As DOAJ reviews journals that are already in DOAJ, as part of

their regular update work, they will remove those journals that require registration and notify the publishers.

It's the second one—although the first is also a useful simplification. To my mind, if you can't read it anonymously, it's not really OA.

DOAJ's Mission (updated March 2018)

This piece, posted by Dom Mitchell on March 7, 2018 on the *DOAJ News Service*, is an interesting close reading of the DOAJ mission:

> DOAJ's mission is to increase the visibility, accessibility, reputation, usage and impact of quality, peer-reviewed, open access scholarly research journals globally, regardless of discipline, geography or language. DOAJ will work with editors, publishers and journal owners to help them understand the value of best practice publishing and standards and apply those to their own operations. DOAJ is committed to being 100% independent and maintaining all of its services and metadata as free to use or reuse for everyone.

That's the statement; the rest is exegesis. Well done, worth reading.

DOAJ Strategy for 2018 to 2020

We'll end this section with a look to the future: *DOAJ*'s strategic objectives for 2018-2020, as set forth in a report posted by Dom Mitchell on December 21, 2017 and last updated (as of December 14, 2018) on October 11, 2018. The document lists objectives for funding and sustainability; functionality, stability and scalability; and education and outreach.

It's a relatively brief document, worth reading directly.

General

Items that seemed worth noting but don't fit into one of the other six groupings. "Miscellany" is an equally apt title.

Getting Found: Indexing and the Independent Open Access Journal

This article by Katie Fortney and Linda Suk-Ling Murphy appeared July 26, 2016 in *West J Emerg Med* or, for those who aren't hip to the abbreviations, the *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine: Integrating Emergency Care with Population Health*. (For the record: it's in *DOAJ*; article volume seems to have peaked in 2014 at 232, but after dropping to 149 in 2016 recovered to 192 in 2017.)

> Running an independent journal takes much effort, even if only focusing on managing the process of moving articles through the process of submission, review, and publication. Yet publishing an article is not the only goal. Even a great article has little impact unless it can easily be discovered for people to read and cite. Without visibility, even a journal

with a terrific editorial board will not get the high quality submissions its editors seek.

The *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine: Integrating Emergency Care with Population Health* (*West*JEM) gets ten times the submissions as a decade ago, and has seen its readership climb. In 2008, *West*JEM averaged 2,907 combined article views and downloads per month. In 2015, the monthly average was 130,000 [Figure]. Without the support of a large publisher, and charging a $400 article processing fee, the journal's resources are limited. So what has led to the journal's success? The journal fills a need in an active and growing field, and its editorial board pursues savvy strategies to build strong and sustainable relationships with professional organizations and academic departments.

One crucial piece according to Mark Langdorf, Editor-in-Chief and UC Irvine Professor of Clinical Emergency Medicine, is getting the journal indexed in all major medical databases, and finding sufficient resources.

It took the journal three applications over five years to be indexed in MEDLINE. The article is mostly a set of worthwhile tips for journal editors on getting an OA journal ready for the index submission process—a set of tips worth reading on its own. The tips actually come from a librarian, and I think it's worth quoting the paragraph regarding that:

Unsurprisingly, working with citation indexes can be a challenge for the journal editorial board. For *West*JEM, its board includes one unusual member: UC Irvine Health Sciences Librarian Linda Murphy. Librarians spend a great deal of time working with citation indexes and often get asked which ones are the best to use and why. They compare the features, scope, and coverage of citation indexes before deciding which to recommend to users engaged in education, research, or patient care. With increasingly tight budgets, librarians have to determine which indexes provide the most cost-effective usage. Because of this multifaceted customer/recommender/user role, librarians are more likely to be able to get the attention of citation indexes and speak their language. Murphy, says Langdorf, has played an essential role in *West*JEM's indexing success. It is not uncommon for indexing services to ignore messages from the editor and managing associate editor, only to respond when the librarian inquires.

I wonder whether more society- and university-published journals have reached out, or should reach out, to the appropriate librarians?

Prevalence and citation advantage of gold open access in the subject areas of the Scopus database
This article by Pablo Dorta-González and Yolanda Santana-Jiménez was most recently posted at arXiv.org on September 11, 2017. The abstract:

The potential benefit of open access (OA) in relation to citation impact has been discussed in the literature in depth. The methodology used to test the OA citation advantage includes comparing OA vs. non-OA journal impact factors and citations of OA versus non-OA articles published in the same non-OA journals. However, one problem with many studies is that they are small -restricted to a discipline or set of journals-. Moreover, conclusions are not entirely consistent among research areas and 'early view' and 'selection bias' have been suggested as possible explications. In the present paper, an analysis of gold OA from across all areas of research -the 27 subject areas of the Scopus database- is realized. As a novel contribution, this paper takes a journal-level approach to assessing the OA citation advantage, whereas many others take a paper-level approach. Data were obtained from Scimago Lab, sorted using Scopus database, and tagged as OA/non-OA using the DOAJ list. Jointly with the OA citation advantage, the OA prevalence as well as the differences between access types (OA vs. non-OA) in production and referencing are tested. A total of 3,737 OA journals (16.8%) and 18,485 non-OA journals (83.2%) published in 2015 are considered. As the main conclusion, there is no generalizable gold OA citation advantage at journal level.

I won't critique the article in general (I'm a little saddened that the authors say there was no source of information on APCs for a couple thousand *DOAJ* journals, since *GOAJ2: Gold Open Access Journals 2011-2016* and the accompanying database both provide that information and are freely available, but this is par for the course). It may be worth noting that most *DOAJ* journals aren't in SCOPUS.

Perhaps worth noting that OA allows people who aren't themselves researchers to benefit from published research—but, of course, that won't up the citation count and the sacred impact factor.

My reflection on my journey in open access or Can you be a librarian without being an open access advocate?
Aaron Tay posted this on [October 22, 2017](#) at *Musings about librarianship*, and while I have a simple answer to the question, the post is interesting and worthwhile, partly because it's structured as a long blog post rather than a terse summary.

I'm mostly saying "read it." (My direct answer to the question: Yes, of course, and some librarians are clearly *anti*-OA at least in practice, while many more don't think about it.)

Tay was surprised at being labeled a "hard core OA advocate" because he didn't see himself that way. (Neither do I.)

Full disclosure: I'm mentioned more than once and have been active with Tay in LSW for some time.

Again, I won't critique in detail (this essay is already too long!), but will add a couple of notes.

Today, I think Open Access is inevitable, though the form it might take is still unclear. Will we be in a world where there is near universal access but no cost savings because publishers have recaptured all subscription fees in APCs? Or will we be in a world where Green OA plays a significant role (perhaps supported by strong global repository network of subject/institutional/preprint servers as envisioned by Confederation of Open Access Repositories) or perhaps something totally different?

That's the first paragraph of one section—and while I disagree with Tay (I don't believe full OA is inevitable or even likely, at least in my lifetime) I respect his reasoning.

Gold open access: the best of both worlds

This relatively brief "Point of View" by M. A. G. van der Heyden andT. A. B. van Veen appeared in the January 2018 *Netherlands Heart Journal* (a Springer publication that is *now* OA), and the abstract is good but I have trouble with the details. The abstract:

Gold open access provides free distribution of trustworthy scientific knowledge for everyone. As publication modus, it has to withstand the bad reputation of predatory journals and overcome the preconceptions of those who believe that open access is synonymous with poor quality articles and high costs. Gold open access has a bright future and will serve the scientific community, clinicians without academic affiliations and the general public.

What's my problem? You can probably guess.

[G]old OA, in principle, runs via the traditional journal publication cycle of peer review in which the accepted paper will be made freely available but at the expense of a so-called article processing charge (APC).

And this doubling-down near the end:

Although all OA journals have an APC, not all are charging the authors, such as *Netherlands Heart Journal* or *Journal of Biomedical Sciences*. These journals obtain their revenues from external sponsors and the Taiwan Ministry of Science and Technology, respectively.

That's nonsense, and meretricious nonsense. If the authors meant to say "all OA journals have costs," they should have said so—but when there are no author-side processing charges, *there are no APCs*. Period.

Open access in a time of illness

Martin Paul Eve posted this on April 7, 2016 at his eponymous blog. It's important because it's one of the times when the most fundamental argument for OA strikes home—and to an OA advocate. It's so good and so important (along with being well-written and brief) that, since Eve uses a

CC BY license, I'm going to quote the whole thing (you may want to click through the first link to read the harrowing bsckground):

> I noted, on Twitter, how pleased I was to discover that there was good information available online about my current condition. I want, here though, to offer a few words to the ridiculous arguments that are sometimes brought against open access. Namely, that there isn't a public for this material because it is specialized in both its wording and its content.
>
> This is total nonsense and I really can't stand it. First, know this: my institution, although prestigious and well-regarded in many ways, does not have a medical school. As a result, I do not, therefore, have access to all the papers that detail my condition. Second, make no mistake: I can read a scientific/medical paper and understand it. I have a Ph.D. in English literature, I have been teaching myself statistics, I'm an industry-certified computer programmer. To read an article in a remote field takes me much longer – and it varies from paper to paper – but I can understand what is being said even when I might not presume to be able to challenge material within.
>
> So when I encounter articles like "Long-term outcomes of internal carotid artery dissection", which is where we eventually got to in my case (with a range of potential etiologies, all of which remain speculative), it is a joy. All of the teams at the Royal Free Hospital were fantastic, but I was dealing with neurology, vascular team, rheumatology, and stroke team. Each brought its own disciplinary perspective and sought to clarify what had happened to me in its own known terms. This often meant that the right hand didn't know what the left was doing in between multidisciplinary team meetings. This led to, in my view, a very disconnected clinical experience where I was bounced from one team to another, with different narratives emerging from each at different times. At a time of despair, this access didn't even feel like a luxury. It felt *necessary* for me to keep myself sane and healthy between teams and to understand what was going on, what the likely prognosis would be, and what it was going to look like on the other side. For me to be able to seek out some common causes in the literature and feel some sort of patient-led conversation was taking place was heartening and got me through.
>
> Please don't tell me, then, that it's OK because everyone who needs access to the literature has it. I can't get everything I wanted and, spending weeks in a hospital, I could hardly "go to the library". I've been lucky to find a few pieces spread here and there. It's a real shame, for instance, that I can't get hold of this case study, which looks extremely interesting (but of course might not be), without paying for a subscription. And I'm not going to pay one-off fees every time on the off-chance that something turns out to be of use. There's another deeper worry, though. My experience of working at different institutions also leads me to worry about the level of access my clinicians have. I have *never* had full

access to every article I needed in my field at any institution. And I don't know what my clinicians don't know when someone, like me, turns up with a rare condition.

What I'd like to close with here is that when worlds collide, interesting things happen. I remain dedicated to facilitating open access in the humanities disciplines, even when nobody *needs* this in a life-threatening circumstance, although I have argued that such circumstances do exist (in *Open Access and the Humanities*). But for me, the patronizing arguments that either everyone who needs it already has access or that there is no audience for OA can easily be countered by stories like this. We need open access. It makes the web a *far* better place, one where patients can turn to find high-quality material that can help them make sense of their conditions, one where others can turn to help them make sense of their worlds and cultures.

Finally, I'll just note that so far I am recovering slowly but well. Thank you so much for all the well wishes. I am hoped to make a return to good health (see the study to which I linked above) and I will continue my work at the University of London and on the OLH. I am currently up to walking for about an hour and a half. My mental faculties seem to be on good form, at least to me.

Any time someone says "everybody who needs access to articles has it" or something of the sort, hand them a copy of this.

Should access to scientific literature be free?

I wouldn't normally cite a student newspaper, but this piece by Tina Bohin, Clara Thysen and Spencer Y. Ki, [February 18, 2018](#) in *The Varsity*, struck me as noteworthy. It's a debate of sorts, with a pro-OA and anti-OA essay.

The pro-OA section seems well thought out, but then I would say that, wouldn't I? The first two paragraphs:

Accelerated discovery, public enrichment, and improved education: these are the benefits of open access, as described by *PLOS*. *PLOS* is an open access journal founded in 2001 and is one of over 11,000 journals that publishes peer-reviewed scholarly articles free of charge for readers and with no restrictions on use and dissemination.

Without open access, readers face paywalls. These barriers, which are put up by subscription journals to generate revenue and offset the costs of publishing, affect students, researchers, entrepreneurs, medical practitioners, and the public in their ability to access knowledge.

The anti-OA piece, on the other hand, combines erroneous statements with a conclusion that suggests that at least one college sophomore already has his elitist credentials firmly in place.

The errors? He assumes the usual "OA means authors pay" and seems to believe that authors typically pay *submission* fees, which is really rare. He dismisses other forms of funding—and winds up with this astonishing close:

> How is the public affected by the paywall versus open access debate? Some suggest that removing paywalls improves the public's science literacy by making peer-reviewed science more accessible. This solution, however, is subpar. Making something financially accessible does not make it intellectually accessible.

> "People who aren't physicists aren't able to read particle physics papers; that's absolutely true. [And] the same thing is happening in the humanities," explained Dr. Emanuel Istrate, Director of Academic Programs at U of T's Impact Centre. "We need to do way more to involve the public… in what we're doing… Just giving out PDFs is not a real solution; it's a bandaid solution."

Dr. Istrate, meet Professor Eve (earlier).

PLoS stays afloat with bulk publishing

I didn't realize when I tagged this "news" piece that it was really a Moldy Oldy, dating back to 2008—but it appears that I never commented on this hit piece by Declan Butler, published July 2, 2008 at the *nature* news site.

> Public Library of Science (PLoS), the poster child of the open-access publishing movement, is following an haute couture model of science publishing — relying on bulk, cheap publishing of lower quality papers to subsidize its handful of high-quality flagship journals.

How does Butler know *PLoS ONE* papers are "lower-quality" and "bulk, cheap publishing"? Because the editorial model referees for soundness of science and writing rather than "importance."

Butler doesn't even seem to want to admit that the journal *is* a journal:

> But its financial future is looking brighter thanks to a cash cow in the form of *PLoS One*, an online database that PLoS launched in December 2006. *PLoS One* uses a system of 'light' peer-review to publish any article considered methodologically sound.

Note this conjunction—with those actually involved in the journal saying the papers are fine, and someone else going so far as to label *PLoS ONE* "substandard":

> The board members who Nature spoke to were generally positive about the overall quality of the papers they had received to review and the referees reports they solicited.

> "There's so much in PLoS One that it is difficult to judge the overall quality and, simply because of this volume, it's going to be considered

> a dumping ground, justified or not, says John Hawley, executive direc-
> tor of the free-access Journal of Clinical Investigation. "But nonethe-
> less, it introduces a sub-standard journal to their mix."

Even at a ten-year remove, that's something!

When did Open Access stop being about Open Access?
I'm citing James Phimister's [November 15, 2018](#) piece at *LinkedIn* mostly because of Phimister's remarkable definition of OA:

> Open Access is the making of scientific published research publicly
> available in some form, at some time at, following publication.

Given that definition, if commercial publishers set up their systems so that papers become freely available when copyright runs out, then *we've achieved 100% open access* and we can all go home. For that matter, since nothing in that definition requires *continuing* availability, a publisher could have a rotating schedule that makes one-30th of its articles available one day each month, and Hey! OA!

This is, of course, nonsense. And it goes on. Phimister deals with the inconvenient fact that most gold OA journals don't charge APCs thusly:

> In contrast most commercially viable Open Access publications charge
> authors, or their institutions or funders, to publish. It is, simplistically,
> a pay-to-publish model.

I'm not sure when it became a requirement for scholarly publishing that it be *commercially* viable, but hey…

And he closes with:

> [T]he Open Access movement has shifted, and if you have been along
> for the whole ride, I doubt you have noticed the change. Collectively, I
> think we have normalized the deviance. Open Access is no longer about
> Open Access, it is about harming publishers. And that is a shame.

Something's a shame here.

Masthead