Academia Europaea
19 88
ACADEMIA EUROPAEA
CARDIFF KNOWLEDGE HUB

BRIEFING SERIES

Diamond Open Access model: what impact on research?

INTRODUCTION

Open Access publishing has been a great success and continues to grow. At the same time, with escalating Article Processing Charges (APCs) under the Gold Open Access Model, attention has been turning to the Diamond Model, where scientific articles are not subject to APCs. Diamond journals, owned and managed by universities, learned societies and other not-for-profit organisations, represent a large percentage of open access publishing output.

At our webinar on 28th March 2022, an expert panel explained and discussed these latest developments in Open Access publishing and what it means for researchers, research-intensive institutions, learned societies and other publishers.

You can watch a recording of the webinar on our YouTube channel.

Key themes

Defining Diamond Open Access. 'Diamond' and 'Platinum' refer to the same model, but Diamond has gained more traction. These are publications that do not charge fees to either authors or readers. They are often community-led and owned, and not-for-profit. They are diverse (for example, multilingual and multicultural) but often small-scale, quite isolated and therefore relatively invisible.

Learning more about the sector. A study on Diamond was published in 2021. It revealed a large number of Diamond journals, somewhere between 17-29,000 in total. Around 60% are in the social sciences and humanities, but they are also represented in science and medicine. Collectively, they account for around 45% of Open Access publishing and 8-9% of total publishing output (almost the same as APC Gold, with a share of around 10-11%). The study identified a number of challenges, including technical capacity, management, visibility and sustainability. The main recommendation was for more dialogue and commitment from and between stakeholders, such as universities, funders, libraries, university presses, learned societies and government.

From study to action. An action plan has been launched to strengthen this thriving Diamond OA ecosystem. The plan is open to endorsement by any organisation or individual. The main action points centre on efficiency, quality standards, capacity building and sustainability. This will be achieved by aligning and building common resources for the ecosystem, whilst still respecting diversity. The process is being taken forward under the DIAMAS project, funded by Horizon Europe.

Open and equitable science. The initiative to nurture Diamond OA can be placed within the broader context of transitioning to open science and new forms of research culture and assessment. The UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (2021) is a legal instrument, designed to influence national legislations and practices. It is based on 4 key pillars – open scientific knowledge, open science infrastructures, open engagement of societal actors, and open dialogue with other knowledge systems. The way we now assess researchers, which is tied to traditional forms of publishing in high-impact journals, should change. Instead, we should reward researchers for engaging with wider society. A UNESCO core value is equity, and we should think in terms of 'open and equitable science'. Publishing may need to open up even more, through services like open reviews and preprints.

A role for libraries. Libraries can increase awareness of Diamond OA and help to fund its development. Academic libraries should rethink the way they allocate their budgets, by prioritising Diamond OA or at least ensuring that there is a defined allocation towards it.

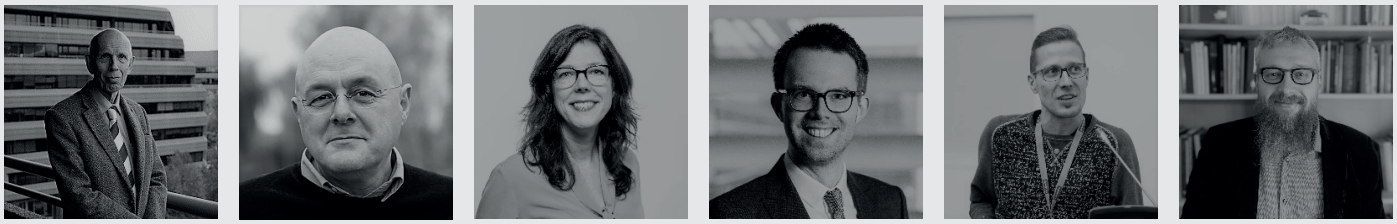
Diamond OA in practice. Articles in Diamond OA journals (like other OA articles) can often enjoy a high number of citations. There are different kinds of Diamond OA venues. For example, the Beilstein Journal of Nanotechnology is funded by the Beilstein Institute and open to all authors, while Open Research Europe (ORE) is a funder platform open to EC-funded researchers. ORE facilitates both preprint and open peer review as part of its publishing process, with the advantage of being able to continuously update an article as new work is done.

Changing research assessment. A key challenge is the prestige of existing journal brands, which hold early career researchers hostage; systemic revision is needed to research assessment. A recent report by the Initiative for Science in Europe, The Centrality of Researchers in Reforming Research Assessment, brings the researcher's perspective to the fore. LERU has also recently produced a vision on the future of recognition and rewards of academics. Research funders around the world are reflecting on their role and looking for alternative approaches to responsible research assessment. Bodies like the European Commission, the EUA and Science Europe are really engaging, and there is considerable momentum for change. Diamond OA journals should be able to compete in terms of levels of service. Prestige should be based on the quality of the article itself, and funders have committed not to use journal impact factors in assessing research proposals. The goals of research are broader than journal-based outputs, and the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and new types of evaluation are important in this regard.

Towards sustainability. Open Access is becoming linked to Article Processing Charges (APCs), and Diamond can challenge that. Costs for Diamond OA should not be high. Diamond OA does rely on volunteers, but so do many commercial journals. Volunteer involvement can be made more visible, through open peer review and preprint publishing within stable infrastructures. What matters is that the governance and continuity of journals goes on, independent of the individuals involved.

A global community-led initiative. Collective funding programmes can redirect current subscription fees into Diamond OA and also support Diamond OA book publishing. We need a system that radiates trust. A number of funders are already supporting the transition to a fully Open Access world. Recent initiatives to achieve this transition without costs to authors will create a more equitable system for the future.

PANELLISTS



- Professor Ole Petersen MAE, Academic Director of Academia Europaea Cardiff Knowledge Hub (Chair)
- Professor Johan Rooryck MAE, Executive Director, Coalition S
- Professor Sarah de Rijcke FYAE, Professor in Science, Technology, and Innovation Studies & Scientific Director at the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (CWTS), Leiden University
- Dr Bregt Saenen, Senior Policy Officer for Open Science, Science Europe
- Professor Toma Susi FYAE, University of Vienna, Member of the Scientific Advisory Board, Open Research Europe
- Professor Demmy Verbeke, Professor of Open Scholarship and Head of KU Leuven Libraries Artes

This event was a partnership between Academia Europaea Cardiff, KU Leuven Libraries and the Young Academy of Europe.

The information and opinions expressed in this briefing document do not represent the views and opinions of Academia Europaea and its board of trustees. This document is a summary of ideas discussed at the webinar.