

Financial and Other Perceived Barriers to Transitioning to an Equitable No-Publishing Fee Open Access Model: A Survey of LIS Journal Editors

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About half of Library and Information Science (LIS) journals continue to charge authors to publish articles open access (OA) or do not offer OA publishing at all. To further investigate the financial and other perceived barriers preventing these LIS journals from transitioning to no-publishing fee OA models, this exploratory project surveyed lead editors for each identified LIS journal. Results indicate most of the journals have not discussed transitioning to a no-publishing fee OA model, and that finances are the main barrier. Most also indicated a lack of awareness of their journal's budget. The most popular no-publishing fee OA model was Subscribe to Open.

Introduction

Open access (OA) to research results has the potential to accelerate the progress of research and include more diverse voices in the conversation.¹ As such, it is emerging as a shared value of academic libraries, with many making significant investments in opening up research and scholarship.² However, librarians have expressed concerns regarding the equitability and sustainability of some funding models for OA employed by publishers. For example, hybrid models impose high article processing charges (APCs) on authors while still charging libraries subscription fees. This serves as a supplemental route for increasing profits for major publishers, which is unsustainable for library budgets. Models based on author's fees, whether hybrid or fully OA, are also inequitable for researchers, locking out those who do not have the benefit of an institution or grant funder that can pay increasingly expensive APCs on their behalf. A transition to OA was intended to reduce barriers to readers, but APC models are now imposing barriers on authors instead.

Transitioning the scholarly publishing system to OA is a priority for many academic librarians professionally, but as researchers themselves, librarians also have an obligation to make their own research products OA.³ Despite an increasing recognition that OA funding models

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based on charging authors a publishing fee are inequitable, not all Library and Information Science (LIS) journals have moved to a more equitable diamond (also known as platinum) OA funding model that does not charge such fees. As noted in a recent study, only 47 percent of academic librarian journals currently use such a “no-publishing fee” OA model, while 42 percent are hybrid.⁴ The goal of no-publishing fee OA is to remove financial barriers for both readers and authors, but OA publishing still has costs to account for. Journals can face significant challenges in transitioning to a more equitable no-publishing fee OA model while still covering their expenses.

This exploratory study seeks to further the goals of the *Open and Equitable Scholarly Communications: Creating a More Inclusive Future* report⁵ by exploring the funding models supporting OA publishing. The positionality of the authors is important in this context. All three authors are academic librarians with roles supporting the scholarly communication activities of researchers. As such, they are passionate advocates for more open and equitable sharing of research outputs. Furthermore, they support mission-driven publishing that is financially sustainable for libraries and barrier-free for authors, while recognizing the economic challenges of this transition for publishers. The purpose of this study is to investigate how to improve the systems of financial support for LIS journals and their associated labor, and to better understand these financial and other potential barriers that prevent them from transitioning to equitable no-publishing fee OA models. To do this, the authors surveyed editors of the publishing fee-based-OA and closed LIS journals identified in the study by Borchardt et al.⁶ The eventual goal of this research is to provide a feasible route to transitioning as many journals in this field as possible to more open, equitable, and sustainable models.

Literature Review

OA Journal Funding Models and Inequities

It is a time of significant change in journal publishing as the system transitions from a conventional subscription model to a variety of OA funding models. The availability of OA articles is rapidly increasing, while closed access articles are becoming less relevant.⁷ Funding agency requirements such as Plan S in Europe and recent government mandates such as the OSTP Memo in the U.S. are becoming more explicit, dictating that funded research be made OA immediately without embargoes.⁸ Publishers of all sizes and types are recognizing the imperative of the shift to OA. Even the oligopoly of commercial publishers that dominate the journal market are realizing that they can transition their publishing models to OA *and* maintain their extreme profit levels by charging authors exorbitant APCs.⁹ Indeed, once authors are willing and able to pay APCs they seem to have no price sensitivity, so much so that profit-driven publishers are able to price their APCs according to the prestige value of the journal title, with APCs increasing at rates three times that of inflation.¹⁰ Peter Suber has referred to this as a “prestige tax” on authors.¹¹ Privileged authors with funding are able to publish in high prestige titles and advance their careers more easily than those without such funds. While OA was originally envisioned to reduce inequities of access for readers, the focus on APC models by major profit-driven publishers is shifting the inequities in the system to authors instead. This presents barriers for unfunded researchers, especially those from low-income countries who are at risk of being even further marginalized from the research conversation.¹²

Some have argued that globally there is enough library acquisitions money invested in current subscriptions to fund a complete “transformation” of the system to support OA pub-

lishing services instead — without authors needing to pay APCs from their own funds.¹³ This idea has resulted in the development of new OA funding models known as Transformative Agreements (TAs) (also known as “Read & Publish” or “Publish & Read” agreements), where the library pays APCs on behalf of the authors at their institutions while also receiving the conventional “read” access to the journal content by the publisher.¹⁴ TAs have received considerable criticism from librarians and others who predict that they will perpetuate the power imbalance in the current system, further entrenching and enriching profit-driven legacy publishers while excluding poorer institutions (and their authors) who cannot afford to subscribe to these deals.¹⁵ They do not transform the system but instead entrap libraries into another form of the “Big Deal” that will be even more difficult to cancel due to their likely popularity with authors. Legacy publishers are using TAs to prolong and validate their current business model and practices, thereby stalling the establishment of a more transparent and competitive alternative marketplace for OA publishing services.¹⁶

TAs implicitly endorse the inequitable APC model, and there is a broader tendency to conflate OA publishing with APCs, but other models exist.¹⁷ For example, Subscribe to Open (S2O) is a model based on subscription-like payments by current subscribers; if enough subscribers sign on to this model then the content for the year becomes OA.¹⁸ This model is considered more pragmatic and simpler to implement than other models because journals can convert their publications one year at a time and libraries do not need to vastly change their acquisitions processes.¹⁹ S2O is also considered more inclusive and equitable because no authors will encounter APC barriers, and it is more financially sustainable for libraries because for this model to work, publishers’ subscription prices need to be close to their actual publishing costs with reasonable yearly price increases.²⁰ But there are challenges too. If the publisher does not receive enough subscribers for the year, the content will remain behind a paywall, resulting in yearly uncertainty as to whether articles will be OA. This uncertainty presents a challenge for authors needing to comply with immediate OA policies from funders, but S2O publishers can alleviate authors’ concerns by allowing no-embargo green OA archiving in repositories.²¹

While S2O may be the best-known no-publishing fee OA funding model at the moment, there are multiple innovative models experimenting in this space. Of the twenty-seven different approaches to funding OA publishing outlined by Wise and Estelle, only three relied on APCs.²² Laakso, Solomon, and Björk also identified multiple options for converting subscription journals to OA and noted that there is no single solution that will work for all journals.²³ For example, cooperative infrastructure and funding models, such as that of the Open Library of the Humanities (OLH), have proven successful in humanities and social sciences publishing. These models enable multiple no-publishing fee OA journals to share infrastructure and other publishing services on one platform while also sharing a funding approach to cover these expenses. The funding approach is generally to elicit financial support or sponsorship from libraries through yearly memberships.²⁴ There are many varieties of this kind of cooperative arrangement and much flexibility, as outlined by John Willinsky.²⁵ Pure sponsorship models also exist, such as the long-running SCOAP³ initiative,²⁶ as well as the more recent LYRISIS Open Access Community Investment Program (OACIP) and Jisc Open Access Community Framework (OACF) initiatives.²⁷ These consortia provide the structure for no-publishing fee OA journals to make detailed pitches to potential library sponsors interested in supporting values-aligned OA publishing.²⁸ LYRISIS and Jisc provide the logistical support for solicit-

ing and collecting the funds, while the journals maintain their independence in selecting the appropriate infrastructure and services to manage their publications with the funds collected. Libraries are natural allies in financially supporting these kinds of cooperative initiatives, and they can also be active partners by providing in-kind support through hosting and other services that can significantly reduce expenses for journals.²⁹ The Library Publishing Coalition (LPC) is a federation of more than eighty university libraries in the U.S. and Canada dedicated to advancing such library publishing services.³⁰ A combination of cost reduction of journal processes, a reliance on in-kind library publishing services and the volunteer labor of scholars in the community, as well as other supplementary sources of income such as subsidies, endowments, and advertising is another means for small, scholar-led journals to transition to a no-publishing fee OA model.³¹

Barriers to Journals Flipping to a No-Publishing-Fee OA Model

Although many models and options exist for flipping subscription or publishing fee-based OA journals to a no-publishing fee OA model, there are barriers (or perceived barriers) to this transition. It was noted early on in the shift to online (and OA) publishing that some larger scholarly society publishers generate a significant surplus from their subscription journal sales to libraries that can then fund society activities.³² Many smaller societies have entered into copublishing arrangements with large publishers. This benefits small societies by enabling their access to editorial services and a new revenue source, but the downside is that they lose control and in-depth knowledge of their operations and finances in the process.³³ So, the transition to a no-publishing fee OA model would present financial uncertainties for societies that have come to rely on the income from their subscription publications or that simply no longer have full control or understanding of their finances. Indeed, financial uncertainty and the need for ongoing, reliable funding for staff salaries and technical support was the most common barrier to transitioning to OA raised by editors of small scholar-led journals in a study by Morrison.³⁴ Some societies also fear losing members (and their membership dues) if a key perk of membership, a subscription to the society journal, is lost when the publication becomes OA.³⁵ Maintaining the financial sustainability of a journal that converts from subscription to OA is a challenge, but it also depends on what “sustainability” means to the journal in question. As Matthias, Jahn, and Laakso point out,³⁶ to a small scholar-led journal sustainability might mean breaking even, whereas to a large commercial publisher this likely means a continual increase in profits over time.

Scholars in various areas differ in how much they embrace OA; these barriers in research culture make the shift to OA publishing uneven across disciplines.³⁷ Lack of buy-in from important stakeholders in a particular discipline may also be a barrier, though it is probably just as likely that stakeholders in other disciplines are pressuring journals to flip to OA.³⁸ Sometimes the barrier may be the publisher itself: editors and editorial boards might strongly support a transition to OA or more reasonable APCs for OA, but the publisher in control of the journal actively resists. This has resulted in some editorial boards resigning en masse in protest and establishing competing OA journals with the same scope as the original. One of the most high profile resignations was that of the editorial board of the Elsevier journal *Lingua* in 2015 to start *Glossa*.³⁹ This trend continues to the present with the recent resignations of more than forty editors from the prominent Elsevier journal *Neuro-Image* over excessively high APCs; these editors have now formed the competing journal

Imaging Neuroscience from MIT Press.⁴⁰ SPARC has designated this phenomenon “Declaring Independence” and has created a guide for editors seeking to do this,⁴¹ while Peter Suber maintains a list in the Open Access Directory tracking these occurrences in chronological order.⁴² Therefore, the type of organization (i.e., scholarly society, professional publisher) that owns or controls the journal may be a determining factor in whether and how it can convert to a no-publishing fee OA model. It is common for the transition to OA to happen when journals switch publishers.⁴³

The present study seeks to determine the particular or perceived barriers that publishing, fee-based OA journals in LIS encounter when considering a transition to a no-publishing fee OA funding model. It is the hope of the authors that this information may lead to targeted solutions or support that will alleviate these barriers, resulting in more equitable no-publishing fee OA publishing options for authors in the field of LIS and furthering the goals of the *Open and Equitable Scholarly Communications: Creating a More Inclusive Future* report.⁴⁴

Methods

Journal Identification

Using a list of librarianship journals from a previous study that was adapted from the San Jose State University’s LIS Publications Wiki, the research team identified a subset of journals that either use an APC model or have no OA publishing model.⁴⁵ The authors included a few additional journals they were aware of. The final set of journals included forty-one APC model publications and one closed (subscription-only) publication chosen for analysis.

Survey Development and Testing

A fifteen-to-eighteen question survey (depending on the chosen skip logic) was developed in Qualtrics. The full survey is included as appendix A. The survey asked about the editor’s relationship with the journal, history with OA conversations as a part of the journal, perceived financial or other barriers to implementing a fully open model, and personal perceptions regarding OA. Some questions in the survey presented multichoice fields with an “Other” category, while others used open-ended text boxes, such as questions regarding the name of the journal, years of editorship with the journal, and journal budget. One open-ended question asked participants for any additional information they felt the authors should know regarding OA and their journal. The final question asked for optional emails to be contacted for follow-up. In developing the survey, the authors drew on several similar surveys cited earlier to assist with question formulation, such as Wise and Estelle’s study of OA funding models.⁴⁶ The survey was tested with one editor of an LIS publication not included in the study, and changes to the survey were made in response to their feedback.

Survey Distribution

The survey targeted editors, editors in-chief, and/or editorial boards of the 42 identified publications. In the case where an editor was responsible for more than one journal, they were asked to only submit one response. Two survey responses were received from editors responsible for more than one journal, and their responses were recorded only for the journal mentioned in the survey response.

Survey responses were solicited via direct email to 45 journal editors between October 18 and November 7, 2022. Twenty-one qualified responses were received representing a total of

20 journals, for a journal response rate of 54.7 percent: two responses from two editors from the same journal were received. One duplicate entry (two responses from a journal where only one editor was contacted) was removed.

This study was approved by American University's Institutional Review Board and University of Nevada, Reno's Institutional Review Board.

Survey Analysis

Raw survey results were downloaded from Qualtrics. Two authors compiled, analyzed, and tabled non-open-ended survey results using Google Sheets. Those two authors also independently reviewed all fourteen open-ended comments to identify prominent themes and viewpoints expressed. These authors discussed their independent reviews to reach a consensus on their analysis. All three authors discussed the aggregated survey results to agree on an interpretation of the survey results, which also informed the choice of survey quotes used.

Results

Background Information

The average length that editors had served in that role with their journal was 5.7 years, or a median of 4.5 years. The average length for how long they had worked with the journal overall was 8.9 years, or a median of 8.5 years.

Eight of the journals in the survey are associated with a society, and 12 are published solely by a publisher.

Decision Making

Eleven journals have not yet had a conversation about transitioning to a no-publishing fee OA model, while two are currently discussing it and one discussed it but opted not to transition. Of the journals that have not discussed transitioning, three are society journals. For the two discussing a transition, one is a society journal. The one journal that opted against transition is a society journal. The remaining six journals chose Other. The comments for Other noted that some of them offer other OA options, that the editor has no say, and that the journal has explored doing a special issue as entirely OA but ultimately chose not to. Perhaps the most interesting comment from those who chose Other, however, was a journal that indicated it has opted to move toward no-publishing fee OA and is undertaking that process.

The publisher was the most common group (fourteen) that editors noted would have a say in whether a journal transitions to no-publishing fee OA; three of these are associated with a society. The editor of one publisher-owned journal who did not choose publisher instead selected Other, noting in a comment field that they were not sure who would be involved. The editorial board was the next most common group (seven) to have a say, followed by editor(s) and the society executive board (six each), and a society committee (2).

Finances

Finances were named as the main barrier preventing twelve journals from transitioning to a no-publishing fee OA model and as one of several main barriers for another six journals. One editor noted that finances are somewhat important but not a main barrier for their society journal, and another did not answer this question.

Editors indicated that 12 journals depended on subscription income for supporting journal or organization activities and that two journals had no other source of funding. Five editors chose Other, indicating in open comments a lack of knowledge of the journal's finances, that the journal both had no other source of funding and relied on subscriptions for journal/organization activities, that the problem was more an issue of offering benefits to society members, and that the publisher was considering a new funding model of charging by the article.

Editors were asked what the top three barriers were to transitioning to a no-publishing fee OA model other than finances. The most common option selected was publisher contracts that limit this (six), followed by lack of clarity concerning who the decision makers were and lack of demand from authors (five each). Seven editors selected Other, but no open text field was provided for this option (table 1).

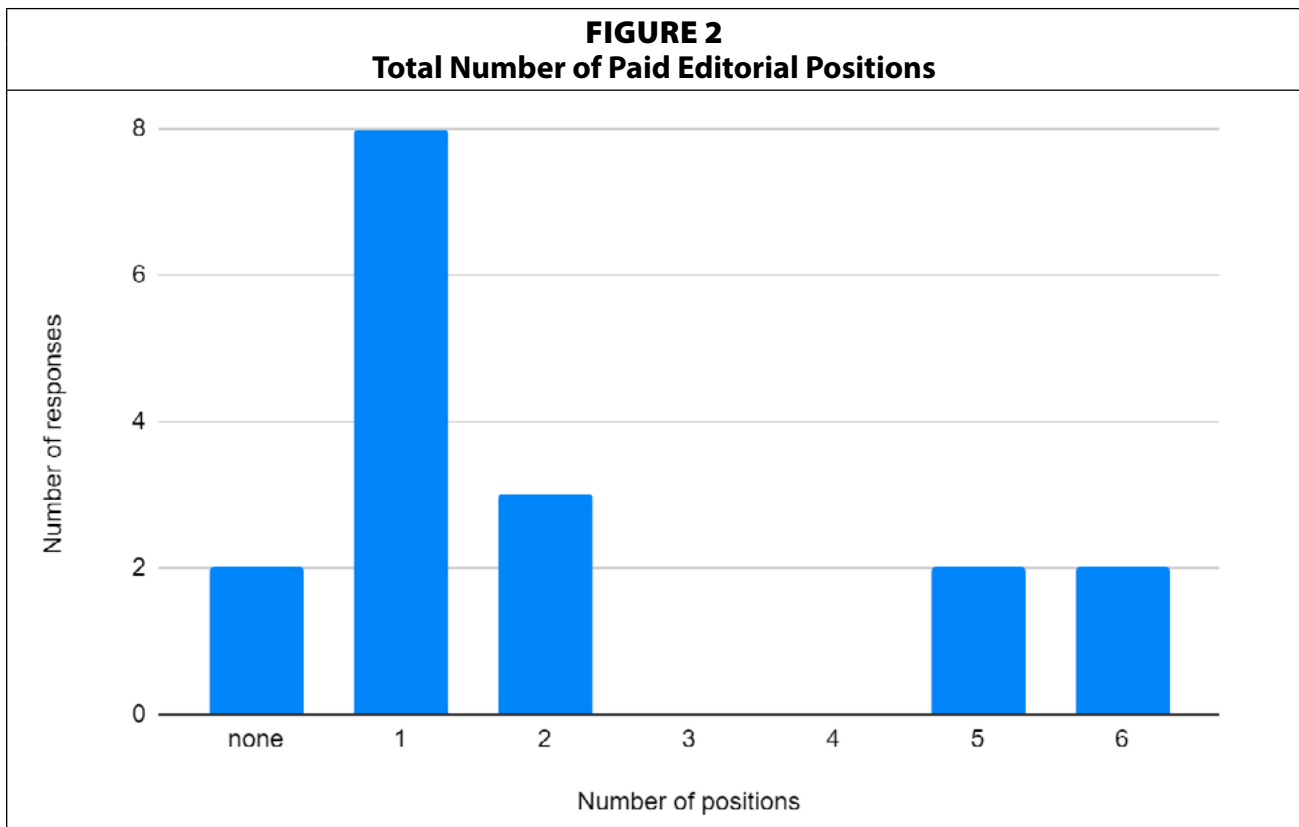
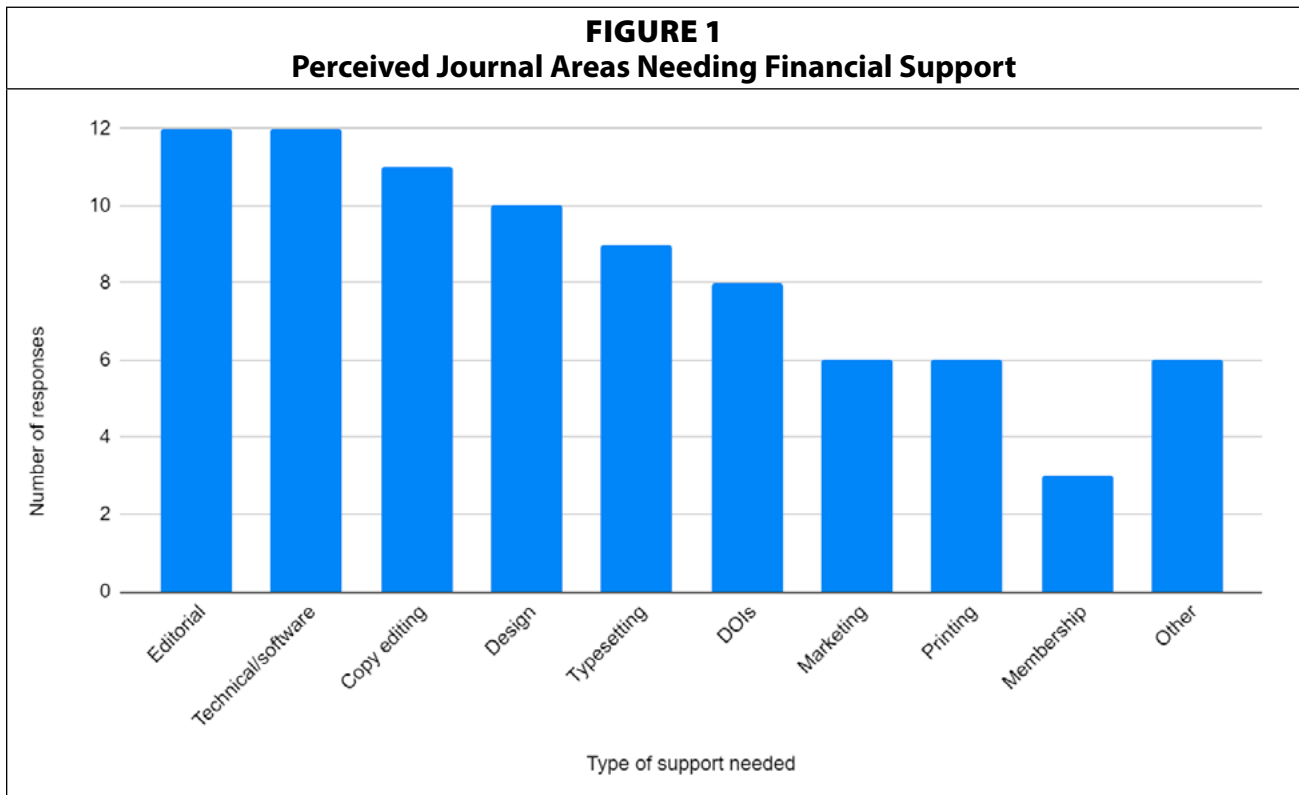
Type of Barrier	Number of Responses
Contract with publisher limits this	6
Unclear who the decision-makers are	5
Little or no demand from authors	5
Understanding / awareness / we don't understand it or know how	3
Copyright / author's rights concerns	3
Technical support	3
Time	2
Little or no demand from readers	1
Just don't like OA / not interested (or others connected to the journal don't like OA)	0
Other	7

Just seven editors said they were aware of their journal's budget; five of these were with society journals. These seven were then asked to estimate their journal's annual budget. One indicated they did not know, and one did not answer. Of the remaining five who answered, the estimated budgets (converted to U.S. dollars) were \$5,000, \$12,000, \$15,000, \$40,000, and \$100,000.

The most common areas of journal operations that would need financial support in transitioning to a no-publishing fee OA model were editorial positions and technology/software (twelve each), copyediting (eleven), and design (ten) (figure 1).

Almost all of the journals (eighteen) have some paid editorial positions. The most common number of paid positions was one (eight), although two journals had up to six paid positions (figure 2). One editor who initially indicated the journal had paid positions, however, then said zero when asked how many positions were paid.

Total salaries for paid editorial positions ranged from \$1,000 to \$40,000, although four indicated they were not sure of the total salaries. Five pay between \$10,000 to \$20,000, and three pay more than \$20,000. Of those that pay more than \$10,000, three are society journals.



The most popular financial model for transitioning to fully OA was Subscribe to Open (ten). The second most popular models were advertising/sponsors, in-kind support, and volunteer labor (eight each) (table 2). Five did not answer this question.

TABLE 2
Preferred Journal Funding Model

Funding Model	Number of Responses
Subscribe to open (S2O)	10
In-kind support from an organization	8
Volunteer labor	8
Advertising / sponsorship	8
Shared infrastructure	6
Collectively organized funding mechanisms	4
Freemium models	3
Donations/gifts	3
Grant funding	3
Endowments	2

Participants' Personal Opinions

Almost all of the participants indicated some level of personal support for OA (seventeen); however, three indicated disagreement with personally supporting OA. All three of these participants were editors with society journals. Six participants included an email address for potential follow-up interviews, which is intended to be part of a future study.

Finally, participants were given a chance to voice general thoughts on the topic in an open text field. These comments ranged over a number of themes, the most frequent of which focused on

the role that finances play in both scholarly publishing and societies. For instance, several participants expressed their inability to truly understand how much it costs to publish their journal when these costs are often spread out over hundreds of scholarly journals owned by the large, for-profit publishers. Others expressed either a concern that losing subscription funding could potentially mean the end of their journal or that it didn't make financial sense. One participant noted that "Our journal is a terrific product at a very reasonable price. There is work that the organization can do of much more value to the profession, discipline, and society than supporting a diamond model right now...."

Another related theme that emerged focused on worries about moving to a no-publishing fee OA model, including uncompensated labor and the difficulty in finding an equitable model that would allow a journal to continue operating. One editor said:

While I believe there are many benefits to OA, I also feel that in many cases it demands much uncompensated labor, often from people in vulnerable positions and early stages of their careers. I appreciate that our journal, while it remains behind a paywall, treats ... the elements that go into producing a journal as professional positions that both demand excellence and deserve appropriate compensation.

Other themes from the open text comments include reemphasizing that the journals do allow for other forms of OA, such as green OA, and reiterating a lack of control in this decision-making process.

Discussion

The findings show a general lack of knowledge by journal editors about their journal's budgets, with just a third initially indicating they were aware of their journal budgets and even fewer offering estimated budgets. A number of comments reflected this lack of knowledge, indicating that it was hard to fully comprehend the budget as publishers spread out some of the costs. As one participant said, "[t]he journal is owned by an increasingly commercial/private funding body. The earlier questions re dollars are impossible to estimate across a stable

of titles.” This aligns with a point made by Fyfe et al. that smaller societies participating in copublishing arrangements with large publishers appear to have little or no knowledge of their finances.⁴⁷ The OA Diamond Journals Study also found that almost one-third of journals they surveyed did not know their financial status.⁴⁸ This lack of knowledge could potentially expand to various equitable funding models for OA journal publishing. The most popular option was S2O, which has seen broad coverage in trade news and other scholarly research. Editors might have selected it by virtue of being familiar with it.

Most editors indicated they had favorable opinions about OA; at the same time few noted ever engaging in conversations about the possibility of transitioning their journal to more equitable models. How much of this is because of the above-mentioned lack of awareness—both in their journal’s budget and in the growing variety of OA funding models—is unknown, but it does raise the question as to what effect a greater understanding of both would have.

Another possible factor in whether an editor had engaged in a conversation about transitioning a journal is how long they’ve served with the journal. The average length in the role of editor was about five years, and editors had served with the journal in some capacity for an average of almost nine years. The authors also note that in looking at the initial pool of editors surveyed, some edit multiple journals. Some of the editors who responded to the survey voiced feelings of powerlessness, such as one who noted that “...the journal is owned by [publisher], so I’m not even certain that I could start this kind of a conversation.”

However, the authors argue they do hold shared power that could be wielded but is not. While the institutional knowledge that long-serving editors bring should not be discounted, the authors believe that neither should concerns about the potential desire to uphold the status quo for various reasons, such as one editor who saw journal subscriptions as a way to provide benefits to association members. Standardizing term limits for service and diversifying editorial boards with different perspectives could help invigorate new discussion on OA and other topics.

However, the authors firmly acknowledge that running a scholarly journal involves a significant amount of labor, and the results show that many LIS journal editors who responded are paid at least an honorarium for their work. Transitioning to a no-publishing fee OA model should not require this labor to become volunteer. As one editor noted, there can be an expectation that OA means “uncompensated labor” from those who support the work of scholarly journals. Indeed, a recent study of labor and non-commercial Canadian journals found that a lack of recognition and monetary compensation for editorial positions threatens the future of the journals.⁴⁹ Finding a way to support all this labor—not just for journal editors—in an equitable OA funding model is important. The possibility of cost sharing for common services, such as copyediting and typesetting, could help alleviate these concerns but would only be possible with a shared-infrastructure funding model.

One factor that was not included in the survey questions, but seems like an important consideration from some participants, is the notion of risk. This is exemplified by one of the editors’ comments: “The publisher has sole decision making on [this] and will not contemplate any action that carries any risk of compromising revenue.” In order for a flip to a no-publishing fee OA model to occur, the risks to the publisher must be understood. In the context of the quotation, the authors believe that the implied risk for profit-driven publishers is that of not just revenue but in maintaining profit, and relatedly, investors’ return on investment. For no-publishing fee OA journals, however, risk is more closely associated with sustainability

as these journals make decisions to ensure that they have sufficient revenue to continue operations. A variety of alternate funding models for small publishers or single journals exists, such as donations, endowments, and subsidies, but respondents to Wise and Estelle's survey did not view these as realistic alternatives to the predictable and sustainable subscription revenue that they currently rely on.⁵⁰ As other comments in the present study illustrate, the role that a single journal's finances play in a profit-driven publisher's operating budget is not well understood, which also affects risk calculations. The authors also find themselves asking questions about risk as they look at preferences for different funding models. The Subscribe to Open model, one of the top selected models, seems to carry much greater risk to revenue and profit than some of the lesser-chosen models, such as endowment, because it relies on individual libraries to continue subscribing to a resource when they are no longer required to do so—that is, the possibility of libraries withdrawing from S2O deals because the journal/publication is already open introduces a significant source of risk over time. Endowments, on the other hand, are financially self-sustaining if correctly used and maintained to not draw on the endowment capital over time. Whether more discussion or education on these models would redefine risk factors also remains an open question.

There is a clear conflict between mission-driven and profit-driven academic publishing. While knowledge dissemination may be part of a larger mission for scholarly society publishers, it is clear that this can compete with other missions as they strive to support their membership, resulting in actions such as erecting subscription paywalls for readers or APC barriers that conflict with a mission to disseminate knowledge beyond its membership. The deprioritization of no-publishing fee OA models within these societies raises concerns in the minds of the authors as to whether they are in fact more concerned about collecting revenues to advance society activities than disseminating knowledge broadly, or at the very least are unwilling to entertain difficult conversations concerning finances and value alignment. And although societies may be technically “non-profit,” some of the big ones are in fact as “profit-driven” as any of the commercial publishers—except that their surplus revenue (beyond direct costs) is used to fund salaries and society activities, not shareholder dividends. Funding staff salaries is a reasonable use of surplus funds, of course, and the authors acknowledge that excessive salaries for non-profit society publishing executives is not generally an issue of concern in LIS (as it may be in other disciplines). Funding salaries and society activities may be much more precarious without access to subscription and APC revenue streams. Are societies willing to participate in a no-publishing fee OA system if it potentially threatens this revenue source? Indeed, Fyfe questions whether societies are even “...the best structures for managing a future of scholarly communication that should be open, diverse and equitable, and operate on a global scale.”⁵¹ These are larger questions beyond the scope of the present study to address.

The ways in which these conflicting missions drive decision-making processes for OA leave the authors wondering if profit-driven publishing, as part of our capitalist society, will ever align with a no-publishing fee OA model, and if so, the degree to which such a model will be sustainable or equitable. There are already unsustainable price increases of large for-profit collections driving a rise in Big Deal cancellations.⁵² If profit-driven publishers are willing to consider fully open models but insist on maintaining current profit margins, should libraries (and authors) continue to support these publications and publishers? If profit-driven publisher-owned journals wish to leave, will publishers allow them to leave, or is the only option to have editors “declare independence,” i.e., divest from the current journal and start

a new publication, like *Lingua*'s editors did to start *Glossa*?⁵³ Our study further illuminates many questions without easy answers, but the survey responses show at least some levels of hesitation from editors associated with societies, which raises concerns about potentially supporting a professional society if it shifted from a profit-driven to a mission-driven model of financial support for their journal.

The authors began this project with the assumption that OA is a shared value among academic librarians. The results indicate that generally it is a shared value, but that its priority is not the same for everyone and that some disagree with it. This is especially concerning as those who disagreed with OA were all editors of society journals, which have more power to decide to transition to a no-publishing fee OA model. Perhaps one reason for this is the belief of some editors that there was not enough demand from their authors for OA. Their interpretation could be incorrect, but if so, more scholars in the field of library science need to speak up—including in their choice of where to publish—in support of no-publishing fee OA, especially from professional societies. Some editors indicated that their journals do support OA through other models, such as green OA, which allows authors to deposit versions of their articles in open repositories. However, Borchardt et al. found that few LIS scholars actually take advantage of this,⁵⁴ indicating it might not be enough for a journal to rely solely on green OA.

Limitations

While these results hint at interesting future discussions and considerations for both journals and professional societies, this study has several limitations. Despite using previously established methodology for identifying LIS journals, adding several journals manually based on the authors' knowledge suggests that the corpus is incomplete and might not truly reflect the core of all LIS journals. While the survey response rate was relatively high, self-selection of editors willing to complete the survey may have more positive or stronger views regarding open access than the larger population the survey was sent to, which could skew the findings. On the other hand, some responses indicated some possible misunderstandings with some of the concepts included in the survey, which would certainly affect results. Qualitative interviews could help bring to light such possible misunderstandings as well as provide more clarity to responses. The authors neglected to include an open text response for one "other" response, limiting further knowledge on that topic. Only one open text response was included in the entirety of the survey that, combined with possible knowledge bases of the participants, jointly limited opportunities to further explore perceptions.

Conclusion

Equitable access to information via OA publishing models that do not rely on author fees or subscriptions is increasingly a shared value in librarianship, and organizations like LYRASIS and Jisc can assist with helping journals "flip" to a more equitable model. However, many librarianship journals have yet to adopt such a model. This study sought to better understand what perceived barriers exist for the editors of these journals, in order to gauge the potential feasibility of transitioning them to a more equitable model in the future. The survey results indicate that while the editors were generally supportive of open access, many felt that the decision was out of their hands. Survey results revealed some areas for potential future education or clarification, including further education on open access models and clarifica-

tion on decision-making responsibilities along with the specific financials for the journals, including overall budget and total costs for laborers. Editors indicated that finances were the primary barrier to moving to an equitable open access model. With societies relying on journals as a revenue stream and big publishers' profit margins, along with uncertainty in the journals' budgets, the specifics of what kind of financial support would be needed versus desired remains to be explored. Uncertainty in decision-making further led to questions about conditions under which many of these journals could make a decision to leave, with the authors postulating that editorial boards' only option may be to declare independence from profit-driven publishers in order to achieve alignment between journal operations and shared librarian values of equitable and open access to information. Ultimately, increased personal action to support these shared values, including librarians operating in the roles of editor or other journal laborer, author, or reader, may be the key to change in order to make equitable open access journals in librarianship a reality.

Future Research

This project was designed as an initial foray to study the feasibility of moving LIS journals to a no-publishing fee OA model. While this survey provides some clarity, more extensive conversations are needed to begin answering the many questions raised: Would additional knowledge change perceptions? Can exact finances be ascertained? Who has the authority to make decisions for a journal owned by a for-profit publisher, and would any of them be "allowed" to switch to a fully OA model? Could a fully open model be agreed on and enacted, and if so, how might this affect the journal and the associated professional societies as applicable? All of these questions need to be explored, likely through a series of individual and joint conversations or interviews, not only for this set of journals, but more broadly if libraries want to shift financial support to a fully open, financially sustainable, and equitable model of journal publication. Another potential avenue for consideration is gathering information from journals, particularly professional society publications, that previously moved to a fully open model to learn more about how they were able to overcome financial barriers and how transitions could be approached for other journals.

CRedit⁵⁵

Investigation and formal analysis: Rachel Borchardt and Teresa Schultz. Conceptualization, survey design, other analysis, and writing: Rachel Borchardt, Teresa Schultz, and DeDe Dawson

Appendix A. LIS Journal OA Survey

Consent

We are conducting a research study into better understanding the barriers and reasons why subscription or hybrid Library and Information Science (LIS) journals have not (yet) transitioned to a fully open access (OA) model that does not rely on publishing fees (i.e., “diamond” or “platinum” OA). Ultimately, we hope this information will help in the development of solutions and support for journals in making this transition. We are looking for editors of LIS journals that are not fully open access, or that charge a publishing fee to make articles OA, and we have identified you as one such editor.

Your participation in the study should take five to ten minutes. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to read and respond to survey questions about your work with an LIS journal and opinions on converting to an OA model that does not use a publishing fee.

This study is considered to be minimal risk of harm. This means the risks of your participation in the research are similar in type or intensity to what you encounter during your daily activities. However, you may discontinue your participation at any point during the study if you feel a personally unacceptable amount of distress or discomfort.

Benefits of doing research are not definite, but we hope to learn useful information that will help in the development of solutions and support for journals in making this transition. There are no direct benefits to you in this study activity.

We, as the researchers, and our institutions will treat your identity and the information collected about you with professional standards of confidentiality and protect it to the extent allowed by law. You will not be personally identified in any published data, reports, or publications that may result from this study. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop at any time. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

By completing and submitting this survey, **your free and informed consent is implied** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study.

You may ask questions at any time and inquire about the results of this study by emailing any or all of us: Rachel Borchardt, Scholarly Communication Librarian, American University, borchard@american.edu; DeDe Dawson, Science & Scholarly Communication Librarian, University of Saskatchewan, diane.dawson@usask.ca; and Teresa Schultz, Scholarly Communication & Copyright Librarian, University of Nevada, Reno, teresas@unr.edu.

You may ask about your rights as a research participant. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research, you may report them (anonymously if you so choose) by emailing or calling Matt Zembrzuski, Research Compliance Officer at American University, zembrzus@american.edu or 202-885-3447.

Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. We have asked for your participation because you serve as a primary decision-making authority (i.e., editor or co-editor) for a journal that is not fully open access or that charges publishing fees to make articles open access. We want to understand the barriers and reasons why subscription or hybrid LIS journals have not (yet) transitioned to an OA model that does not rely on publishing fees. Ultimately, we

hope this information will help in the development of solutions and support for journals in making this transition.

This survey asks ten to twelve questions about your work as an LIS journal editor and opinions about transitioning that journal to an OA model that does not rely on publishing fees. If you serve as an editor for more than one LIS journal, we ask that you answer in regard to just one of those journals.

[* = required response]

*Q1 What is the name of the journal you work with? (This information will only be used for internal purposes.) _____

*Q2 How many years have you served with the journal in your current position? _____

*Q3 How many years have you served with the journal in all? _____

Q4 Has your journal had conversations about moving to an OA model that does not rely on publishing fees?

- Yes, but we opted not to
- Yes, we're discussing this now
- No
- Other _____

Q5 Who would be part of making a final decision to move your journal to a fully OA model? Select all that apply.

- Editor(s)
- Editorial board
- Publisher
- Society executive board
- Society committee
- Other _____

Q6 How important are finances in determining whether to transition the journal?

- Very important— Financing is the main barrier to transitioning
- Important— Financing is a major barrier among a few others
- Somewhat important— Financing is a barrier, but other barriers are greater
- Not important— Financing is not a barrier

Q7 What financial aspects are specifically issues in transition?

- No source of funding
- Dependence on subscription income for journal or organization activities
- Other _____

*Q8 What are/have been the other biggest barriers in transitioning to an OA model that does not rely on publishing fees? Please **choose up to 3** of the most applicable reasons.

- ☉ Understanding / awareness / we don't understand it or know how

- Time
- Technical support
- Unclear who the decision-makers are
- Contract with publisher limits this
- Copyright / author's rights concerns
- Just don't like OA / not interested (or others connected to the journal don't like OA)
- Little or no demand from authors
- Little or no demand from readers
- Other

Q9 Are you aware of your journal's current budget?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Are you aware of your journal's current budget? = Yes

Q10 What are the total annual costs for your journal? Feel free to estimate if unsure.

Q11 Which aspects of your journal would need financial support if your journal were to transition? Select all that apply.

- Editorial positions
- Copy editing
- Technical/software support
- Typesetting
- Design
- Marketing
- Printing
- DOIs
- Membership
- Other _____

Q12 Are there any paid positions on your journal?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question:

If Are there any paid positions on your journal? = Yes

*Q13 How many paid positions does your journal have? _____

Display This Question:

If Are there any paid positions on your journal? = Yes

Q14 Please estimate the salaries or stipends. _____

Q15 With the understanding that multiple funding models might be used to support OA LIS journals that do not rely on publishing fees, which funding models do you think your journal would likely be willing to explore? Select as many as apply.

- In-kind support from an organization

- Volunteer labor
- Grant funding
- Collectively organized funding mechanisms such as Lyris' fundraising support of the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*
- Subscribe to open
- Endowments
- Freemium models
- Shared infrastructure
- Advertising/sponsorship
- Donations/gifts

Q16 Do you, personally, support the idea of moving your journal to a fully open access model?

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q17 Is there anything else you'd like for us to know regarding OA and your journal?

Q18 If you're willing to be contacted for a follow-up, such as an interview, please add your email address here. (This information will only be used for internal purposes)

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