

Not Just Monetary: Arts and Humanities Scholars' Perspectives on the Costs of Open Access Publishing

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Bibliometric and survey-based studies have documented different open access (OA) publishing practices among scholars across academic disciplines. This article reports on interviews conducted with arts and humanities scholars from the United States, and it explores how OA intersects with their research and publication practices. Beyond the considerable financial costs of OA publishing, findings demonstrate that arts and humanities scholars contend with opportunity, reputational, equity, and time costs as they consider and engage with OA publishing. The authors discuss the implications of these costs for librarians who facilitate the dissemination, discovery, and preservation of arts and humanities scholarship.

Introduction

The literature shows that arts and humanities scholars do not publish their work open access (OA) as frequently as their colleagues in the sciences (Severin et al., 2020). A variety of factors contribute to their relative lack of engagement with OA publishing, including differences in research funding, the format of research outputs, and the availability and prestige of OA publishing venues. Despite research demonstrating that arts and humanities scholars are not dissimilar in their OA preferences (Scott & Dubnjakovic, 2025), their practices, opportunities, and resources remain quite different from those conducting research in the sciences.

This study focuses on the costs of OA publishing—material, opportunity, reputational, equity, time, and otherwise—to explore arts and humanities scholars' perceptions of OA publishing within their disciplines and institutions, as well as the intersection of these perceptions with personal practices. Although interview participants were selected based on self-reported OA engagement, none had paid out-of-pocket to publish their work OA, and most would be opposed to doing so. Not only is OA publishing not a priority, but several participants also conveyed a lack of awareness of the varieties of OA, their financial costs, and licensing considerations.

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The authors investigate three research questions to consider participants' perceptions of the costs involved in OA publishing and how these intersect with personal, disciplinary, and institutional values:

- RQ1. How does open access factor into the publication and dissemination of arts and humanities research?
- RQ2. How are open access venues perceived in arts and humanities disciplines, and what considerations contribute to these perceptions?
- RQ3. What do arts and humanities scholars identify as the costs of open access publishing?

Participants' responses uncovered the nuanced positions arts and humanities scholars find themselves in as they disseminate their work and advance professionally. In amplifying these positions, the authors—all of whom work as academic librarians—hope to shed light on opportunities for librarians to assist arts and humanities scholars in preserving and sharing their work.

Literature Review

There is a vast literature on OA publishing, with much of it focusing on articles rather than monographic or other formats. Prior studies gathering scholars' general perceptions of OA publishing have largely found ambivalent attitudes across the disciplines (Rowley et al., 2017; Tenopir et al., 2017; Togia & Korobili, 2014). While STEM faculty are generally more aware of OA publishing due to grant funding requirements and have adopted OA at higher rates (Olejniczak & Wilson, 2020; Severin et al., 2020), uncertainty about OA publishing practices and principles persists. Bryant and Thomas (2024) make an important distinction between awareness and understanding; while authors are often aware of OA, they do not understand the nuances between publishing models or how to intentionally make their work open.

Considering that arts and humanities researchers are less likely to believe OA publishing expands their readership to new audiences (Dalton et al., 2020), are less frequently subject to OA mandates (Severin et al., 2020) and receive less grant funding for article processing charges (APCs) (Tenopir et al., 2017), they generally lack incentive to better understand the OA publishing landscape in their disciplines. Scholars in the arts face the added complication of navigating image permissions in a system designed primarily for text-based contributions (Thomlin, 2011). The proliferation of predatory journals further disincentivizes OA publishing, reinforcing the narrative that OA publications are of lesser quality even when the evidence suggests otherwise (Gaines, 2015; Richardson et al., 2019; Tenopir et al., 2017). For some scholars, paying to publish OA—if they can source funding—risks association with vanity publishing; therefore, they view traditional gated publishing and established venues as the only valid route to tenure and promotion (Harley et al., 2007; Narayan, 2018; Scott & Shelley, 2022).

For scholars across disciplines, the literature shows that OA and copyright policy play a minor role in venue selection, with fit, quality, and time-to-publication carrying significantly more importance (Gaines, 2015; Solomon & Bjork, 2012; Swan & Brown, 2004). Once a venue is selected, however, OA is often viewed as a bonus (Nicholas et al., 2019; Scott & Shelley, 2022). Many arts and humanities scholars support the ethos behind OA publishing even if they do not prioritize OA venues (Eve, 2014; Nicholas et al., 2019). As more gated journals transition to hybrid OA and offer fee-based publishing options, they provide a lower-effort path to OA publication by preserving author choice and providing options based on author

funding. The question then becomes whether scholars or their institutions are willing or able to pay these fees.

APC funding is a barrier for arts and humanities scholars (Quigley, 2021; Severin et al., 2020), though recent studies suggest funding opportunities are growing. In a 2020 study, Cantrell and Swanson surveyed faculty with at least one OA publication in the social sciences, arts, and humanities; of the ten who had paid an APC, all ten reported having received funding through their department, college, school, library, or sponsored research funds. In Bryant and Thomas's 2024 study, participants predominately in the humanities, social sciences, and public health disciplines reported mixed levels and sources of financial support, ranging from none to full APC coverage. Often, using funding for APCs requires a tradeoff. In *Exploring the Hidden Impacts of Open Access Financing Mechanisms* (2022), the American Association for the Advancement of Science reports that "over three-quarters of researchers (n = 115, 77.7%) reported foregoing purchases of materials, equipment, or tools to pay APCs, and nearly three-fifths (n = 86, 58.1%) reported not attending workshops or conferences relevant to their work" (p. 1)—a substitution that disproportionately impacts women.

Historically, arts and humanities scholars have had low self-depositing rates; Gargouri et al. (2012) recorded average rates of 9% and 14% for articles published in the arts and humanities, respectively, between 2005–2010, compared to a 21% average for all disciplines, and a high of 43% for math. Arts and humanities scholars are more familiar with institutional repositories (IRs) than disciplinary repositories (Creaser et al., 2010), though academic social networks (ASN) continue to show considerable growth. In a 2017 study, Borrego found that only 11.1% of the articles published by researchers at Spanish universities in 2014 were deposited in IRs, while 54.8% had been uploaded to ResearchGate. Scott (2019) compared the deposit practices of musicologists and the subject librarians who serve them; unsurprisingly, librarians deposit in institutional repositories at higher rates than musicologists, whose work was more commonly in ASN. When sharing to ASN, researchers across disciplines lack clarity on whether this practice is considered OA (Bryant & Thomas, 2024).

The present study adds to this literature by providing more depth and nuance regarding arts and humanities scholars' motivations and practices surrounding OA publishing and self-deposit, as well as the costs associated with them. Previous studies examining OA publishing behaviors and attitudes have largely collected information using surveys (Cantrell & Swanson, 2020; Dalton et al., 2020; Gaines, 2015; Nayaran et al., 2018; Richardson et al., 2019; Rowley et al., 2017; Solomon & Bjork, 2011; Swan & Brown, 2004; Tenopir et al., 2017). Although some studies have leveraged focus groups, group discussions, and interviews to explore OA motivations and obstacles in a variety of disciplines (Greussing et al., 2020; Kirschner et al., 2024), there is nonetheless space for a deeper reflection that privileges the experiences and motivations of arts and humanities researchers in their own words.

TABLE 1 Self-Reported Participant Disciplines
Art History (5)
Art (1)
Communication (2)
Critical Media Theory (1)
Design (1)
English (1)
Literature and Languages (1)
History (4)
Journalism and Mass Communication (1)
Musicology (1)
Philosophy (1)
Rhetoric (1)
Theatre Studies (1)

Methods

The authors conducted twenty-one in-depth, semi-structured interviews with arts and humanities scholars based in the United States who identified as having published at least one article OA. For the purpose of this study, the authors defined OA publications as those freely available directly from the publisher. In addition, participants were asked about self-deposit practices. One of the authors had previously co-conducted a survey of arts and humanities scholars on their experiences with and perceptions of OA publishing (Shelley et al., 2023). That survey was distributed on email lists serving arts and humanities disciplines and requested that those interested in participating in an interview separately share an email address. The authors reviewed prospective participants and invited those whose discipline and academic position promoted the most diverse perspectives (Maxwell, 2013, p. 96–7).

The study was approved as exempt by the Illinois State University institutional review board; the interview questions are available in Appendix A. The authors conducted interviews via Zoom in April and May 2024, receiving permission to record the interviews and enable transcription. Drawing on their reconciled notes and interview transcriptions, the authors used interpretive description, an inductive framework that promotes understanding through observation, to organize the data into themes and subthemes (Garipey, 2021).

The authors leveraged practices highlighted by Creswell and Miller (2000) for promoting the validity of qualitative data. Among these, the authors searched for convergence among multiple and different sources (i.e., triangulation), invited participants for their input on the credibility of the information and account (i.e., member checking), asked external professionals to examine the account and consider its credibility (i.e., audit trail), and quoted participants extensively (i.e., thick, rich description), creating “verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study” (p. 129). The authors investigated the publications of participants to triangulate them with interview data. After drafting a manuscript, the authors shared it with participants and experts external to the study, incorporating their edits and feedback into subsequent drafts.

There are several methodological limitations to this study. Recruiting interview participants from a survey that had been distributed via email lists meant that disciplinary representation and career stage are not representative of the current academic workforce in the United States—communication scholars and historians were overrepresented, for example. All participants are active in the United States, and the findings are limited to an American context. By asking first about research articles, the interview instrument may have biased participants toward that format and not open access publishing more broadly. Finally, the authors are all librarians with an interest in supporting scholars; the framing of questions and direction of the interviews were informed by the authors’ vested interests and the participants’ perceptions of librarianship.

Not on the tenure track (2)
Pursuing tenure (6)
Tenured (10)
Retired (1)
Emeritus (2)

Baccalaureate (1)
Master’s (3)
Doctoral/Professional (2)
Doctoral: High research activity (6)
Doctoral: Very high research activity (9)

Results

Research Question 1: How does open access factor into the publication and dissemination of arts and humanities research?

Venue Selection

Participants were asked to discuss the factors they consider when selecting publication venues. As found in other studies, prestige, fit, audience, career stage, impact, peer review, and time to publication emerged as the main criteria scholars weigh in venue selection (Gaines, 2015; Solomon & Bjork, 2012; Warlick & Vaughan, 2007). Participants most often did not explicitly consider OA, privileging other factors instead. Indeed, OA could be understood as competing directly with scholars' desire to place their work in the most prestigious venues in their field and strategically advance their careers through publication.

Prestige and Impact

Open access venues in the arts and humanities—which are newer and infrequently flagship society outlets—tend not to be perceived as the most prestigious (Xu et al., 2020). A literary scholar admitted to playing the “prestige game” when placing a monograph while also acknowledging that esteemed venues are not going to be open: “I’m swinging for the fences.” Despite the manifold advantages of publishing OA, doing so may not help one secure a tenure-track position or advance a career in the arts and humanities. Several participants indicated that tenure and promotion is dependent on publishing in the most respected and most selective venues. A philosopher noted that more prestigious outlets are better for your career even if “those journals don’t actually always publish better material, and in fact sometimes what they publish might be worse but more attention grabbing—not more rigorous or important.” Among participants, impact was not measured via a journal’s impact factor, but rather if “it’s in the field, familiar, and people I know publish or read there.” Scholars agreed that they “wouldn’t want to publish to have something languish unread.”

Fit and Community

All participants acknowledged the importance of fit within a venue’s scope. One historian stated that venue selection was heavily dependent on whom their arguments would benefit; an English scholar described how argument and venue are interrelated: “If I’m trying to make an argument or present research, what would it look like if it were published by a specific journal or press versus another?” They noted that they’re “looking for a match in value systems—thinking about the community.” Participants emphasized that research is about relationships; a communications scholar wants “to be part of a conversation,” and a historian engages audiences “with storytelling and multimodal outputs.” For some participants, the connection to community necessitates openness. A design scholar spoke about a project in which they explore the visual design of radical scholarship. They are only considering OA venues: “This needs to be public, it needs to be accessible outside the ivory tower. It’s related to openness, to public engagement, to public art.” Similarly, a historian who works on French relations with North Africa is

aware that a lot of research that I produce is hidden behind paywalls, projects that I think would be of more interest to ordinary people and scholars who don’t have the infrastructure of a university to get access [...] it’s important that what we’re producing is available to a larger public.

In many cases, however, the desired audience tied participants to gated venues.

Peer Review and Career Stage

Peer review plays a complex role in considering OA venues. Many participants acknowledged the importance of “the imprimatur of peer review” for tenure and promotion purposes, while also indicating that it is problematic, time-consuming, and fraught. A musicologist stated that peer review “keeps out-of-the-box ideas from being published [...] Academic societies are cliquish; if you’re outside, you won’t get published.” They made a case for depositing work in Humanities Commons, which has subsequently been renamed Knowledge Commons, rather than publishing in peer reviewed journals.

Participants “wouldn’t make the same decisions everywhere” and one said venue selection “depends on where I am in my career.” A historian shared: “When I was going up for tenure, you needed to signal that you’ve hit a certain standard by publishing in certain journals. But now I’m more open to publishing in open venues and more public venues.” One scholar who recently switched to a tenure-track position and is going up for tenure next year indicated “because of that, I look at journal rankings and impact factor.” Although they understand it may be out of their hands, participants also consider time to publication, saying, “pre-tenure, that has serious implications.”

Open Access Publishing

Most participants indicated that OA does not influence where they submit their work: “I haven’t sought out OA, but I’m not avoiding it either.” For several, it is not a consideration: “Frankly, I don’t know of many journals that are OA in my field. One reason could be because that’s not a criterion I use when choosing a journal.” Many participants responded along the lines of: “If I’m looking for a place to publish an article, OA doesn’t come into play. But if they offer it, that’s a bonus.” Others were explicit about weighing OA against prestige and reputation: “I try to negotiate for OA options if it’s not in the contract or choose journals that are OA [...] I must balance that with performance expectations as a scholar.”

Some participants noted that established journals increasingly offer OA as a possibility and a few alluded to library support for OA publishing. A historian shared their experience having an article published OA via a library agreement:

The journal sent me an email to ask if I wanted to publish OA in the final stages. I emailed the history librarian to ask what the process would entail. I remember it was extremely seamless. I indicated I wanted to publish OA, Sage got into contact with the library, and they took care of it.

Others expressed pleasant surprise with OA monograph publishing; an art historian whose contribution was published in an OA anthology remarked: “I asked a publisher rep how they make money on it, and she said it pushes sales.” Similarly, an English scholar encountered the TOME [Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem] project as a graduate student: “I saw its immense potential. There was a faculty member who published a monograph and had great sales and then published OA and that book had even more engagement.” That said, many remain skeptical about OA book publishing: “I haven’t seen them succeed yet.”

When participants consider OA publishing venues, it ranges from aspirational (“I wish I prioritized the better open access models, not just closed journals trying to make some papers open access and be profitable”), to intentional (“How high is the barrier of entry for someone without institutional access to get to this thing?”). Even those interested in OA have boundaries: “I wouldn’t publish in anything that’s for-profit. I would never publish in a shady journal that charges a publication fee.” A historian argued that OA venues in the United States are not “where you send your best stuff: it doesn’t look good on your resume.” They specifically called out reputational costs: “It doesn’t look good for graduate students on the job market; if you’ve sent your dissertation preview to an OA journal, the assumption is that it was the only place you could find that would take it.” An English scholar noted OA publishing may be held against scholars, asking, “What part of publishing is social and what part is intellectual? Publishing OA might check the social box and get more engagement.” The implication is that it may not check intellectual boxes.

Depositing

Participants were asked to discuss disciplinary perspectives on archiving scholarship in disciplinary or institutional repositories (IR). As confirmed in previous studies, engagement with such repositories is minimal and participants more readily disseminate their work via ASN or through casual sharing mechanisms (Segado-Boj et al., 2024). Although participants’ practices for depositing intersect with OA, their statements convey confusion about and lack of interest in the terms of publishing agreements related to green OA.

Depositing activities range considerably among participants. A philosophy scholar actively maintains profiles, depositing every accepted manuscript to ResearchGate and PhilPapers, and even preregistering hypotheses or analytic decisions on Open Science Framework: “Because we have a lot of data and data analysis files, we put it on Open Science Framework so others can use it. It’s been used at least once—our data was used for a re-analysis to answer different questions. We usually preregister hypotheses or analytic decisions so we’re not p-hacking.” More commonly, however, participants “Don’t tend that part of my garden.” They agreed that the practice of depositing depends on disciplinary norms and one’s training: “Deciding on which to use depends on which people you spent time around, what was recommended—wherever your advisor told you, you probably don’t change.”

Academic Social Networks

Participants appreciate the capacity of ASN to share work with readers worldwide: “[Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu) is international and gets thousands of hits and lots of downloads. It’s really effective.” Those who use ASN do so primarily to provide access to their work: “I keep everything on ResearchGate to counteract the fact that my work is gated.” Participants vary considerably in their engagement with and perceptions of ASN. As a historian stated: “I don’t think there’s a consensus position—some people put a lot on them, and others put next to nothing. I have seen a lot of people put their conference papers on them.” Part of this variation is confusion about what version of a manuscript can be deposited and when. A theatre scholar remarked, “I notice other scholars post things immediately even though I think agreements with journals say you need to wait some time.” Some participants are untroubled by copyright restrictions: “I usually throw the publisher’s version on there; it’s cleaner and has images.” Confusion was

the most common position: “I don’t know what laws are being broken when you put things up on [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu). And who is losing money when you can find articles there? Is it the journal, the hosting institution, or the publisher?”

The biggest complaints about [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu) relate to the pay structure, for example: “[[Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu)] wants me to pay to see my mentions, but I don’t care, I’d never pay for that,” and “Things that are commercial are a little fishy.” A philosopher has “grumpy thoughts about [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu).” Despite wanting to like it, “I was constantly bombarded with emails saying that people were talking about me, and I should upgrade to premium to find out who/what. I found that really off-putting—they’re capitalizing on the worst human tendencies.” Participants appreciate that ResearchGate is cost-free: “I upload to ResearchGate whether or not I’m supposed to and put everything there. I’ll do that until I’m told not to; I don’t want to pay for [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu).” Some make use of the request feature that allows readers to request a PDF from the author: “Because of copyright, I’ll post things with ‘ask me for the PDF,’ on ResearchGate. I don’t log in regularly and when I do I have several requests from international scholars.” An English scholar noted that EPUB files cannot be shared via ResearchGate direct messages; if they receive a request for which they do not have a PDF, they provide a link to LibGen. Only one participant, a philosopher, indicated that they use the social part of ResearchGate: “One of my recent papers [happened] because I published a question on ResearchGate and a startup responded and wanted to collaborate.”

Several participants expressed skepticism about the commercial nature of ASN. A literary studies scholar acknowledged that the needs of under-resourced academics drive ASN usage but stated: “Given that I have other alternatives, I’ll use those first. I was on the bandwagon with [#deleteAcademia.edu](https://www.academia.edu) and never looked back. If there’s a nonprofit option, that’s the one I’ll lean towards.” A legal scholar indicated that authors do not think enough about copyright: “Most are open to putting work in IRs or on LinkedIn or ResearchGate and are not worried about being sued. I don’t think publishers are suing scholars. They could.” Participants also expressed some skepticism about the stability and discoverability of ASN:

People might say: I’ve archived it at [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu) but there’s no discussion about long-term archiving or sharing to a repository. There is uneven awareness of how those repositories fit into the systems of resource discovery that dominate your experience on a library website. Discovery gets missed in this conversation.

An English scholar who does not have the bandwidth to investigate what can be deposited in ASN directs requestors to platforms on which the articles are available, including piracy websites:

I grew up in a place where I wouldn’t have had access without piracy sites. I’ve studied piracy; it often is encouraged by the people who hold copyright and patents because it helps with usage which can be transformed into money, it builds dependencies.

They allow students to access materials in any way: “I’ll tell them about the piracy sites.”

Institutional and Disciplinary Repositories

Over half of participants were aware of their institutional repository (IR): “we know they exist but it’s even more out of sight, out of mind [than ASN].” As with ASN, participants expressed confusion about what content is eligible for deposit. A historian said: “I don’t think they’ve ever explained to us what we’re allowed to put there.” An art historian is “afraid I’m going to get a cease-and-desist letter from [a publisher]. But I figure, after a certain number of years they won’t care so much.”

A few participants indicated that librarians facilitate their IR deposits and make the process “pretty painless.” A scholar in the California State System said a librarian contacted them when they started and offered to deposit on the scholar’s behalf. They have not kept up with this work, however: “We get an email once a year that says how often the article was read and that’s when I realize I haven’t updated it with my other articles [...] It’s not essential.” A scholar in the University of California System was not aware of an IR because “everything is online.” They indicated that their library is so understaffed and underfunded, these responsibilities are the purview of professors. “And people are publishing so much these days there isn’t a way to keep track of it.”

Those participants who use an IR do not see broad use among others in their fields. An art historian shared that although they have always made use of their IR, others do not: “I see more people in the sciences taking advantage of the IR as well as the data repository.” Another participant shared that, “It’s always clunkier than I think it will be, there are fields where I’m unsure what they’re asking for.” A design scholar indicated that they have not submitted anything to their IR in a few years “because the process seemed very manual. And then it wasn’t really the article, it was a link.” They further noted “My field is not as versed in this as other humanities fields are. We’re studying and creating visual artifacts—often there are copyright issues related to artwork.” An art historian noted that “There are probably generational differences” in engagement with an IR.

Three participants shared negative experiences with their IR. A language and literature scholar has “no use” for the IR, deprecating it as “chaotic, useless, helter skelter, random, and disorganized.” They feel that the publisher’s version is the “only thing we can rely on” while also acknowledging that “journals come and go.” A musicologist shared that their institution had an IR but lost it due to financial exigency: “Everything we put up there digitally is gone. They got something else and restored some of it.” A historian shared a particularly maddening experience related to a digital project: “Our library funded this thing, and they were supposed to print a book for me. They never did, and they took it off the website and now it’s just gone.” This has left the scholar with

a lot of confusion and resistance to the notion of depositing work in an IR because it is unclear where it goes, who has access, and what happens with it. Due to the short lifespan of what I put there, I wouldn’t go out of my way to deposit anything there.

Participants mentioned MLA Commons, PhilPapers, and SSRN as disciplinary repositories with which they had some experience. A legal scholar shared: “It’s not clear if I publish in SSRN if a journal might reject it because it’s technically ‘published’ somewhere. Journals

don't make that clear. Law reviews make it much clearer than other publishers." Accordingly, they err on the side of being conservative. A musicologist noted that their professional association endorses Humanities Commons, and they deposit their work there. They worked on a manuscript that was too long and interdisciplinary for journals, so they deposited it to Humanities Commons: "It's been read by more than it would have been otherwise. Publishing there broke down silos." A literary studies scholar also uses Humanities Commons: "If it's not a publisher's open platform, I'll stick whatever I can into Humanities Commons. That includes syllabi and course materials at times." A media studies scholar finds repositories exciting but does not see that they are particularly useful in their own field: "It's not something that anyone thinks about, considers, talks about, or is cognizant of." They noted exceptions of scholars in Western Europe, those meeting grant requirements, and digital humanities work that intersects with computer science: "there is a greater awareness of openness."

Personal Website

Only four participants maintain a personal website, which can comprehensively list publications and provide access. As one design scholar stated: "We're scholars at a public university so we need to make our work accessible. My website is also a record of all my work—makes tracking easier." Another scholar who "puts everything on my personal website," includes a note on the page saying, "if you hit a paywall, let me know and I'll provide it to you free of charge." Another scholar underlined the tension between what is uploaded and what is linked to: "I put a link to my publications on my personal website. I'll sometimes upload the published copy, but I only do that for articles that I published three or more years ago." Participants indicated that it is not clear what rights they have and linking seems like the safest route. Those who do not maintain a personal website shared that it feels like yet another "nonessential" thing to do. An art historian was told to develop an online presence early in their tenure: "I like to share things but the idea of spending all this time to create an online presence wasn't my idea of big fun." A historian quipped "I was born a few years too early to engage with personal promotion via Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or a personal website."

PrePrints, Data, and Code

Most participants do not have experience depositing preprints. A media studies scholar shared an example of having an award-winning article that had a long publication delay at a top journal: "I asked if I could publish a preprint while it was under review and they said if I did that, they would not publish it, so I didn't do it." They were a graduate student at the time and might make a different decision now: "I think this hampered the visibility of the piece." A historian only feels comfortable sharing the final, copyedited version of record: "The journals that say you can post to repositories don't let you put the final version—do I want to put the version up that is not copyedited? No." A philosopher offered detailed considerations of concerns around preprints:

I have senior colleagues in philosophy and at least one in social psychology that seem worried about posting papers before they're accepted by a journal. A decade ago, their reasons were that if it was already 'published' in a repository it could

give a publisher a reason to reject it. Some people are afraid of getting scooped or someone taking the novelty away from them.

Although many journals explicitly allow for posting preprints and sharing data, some participants note that concerns around scooping persist. Although a philosopher is not convinced this is happening, “Some colleagues are afraid that a PI with an army of postdocs could get to it first.” This contrasts with younger colleagues in philosophy of science or metascience who are in favor of repositories and look down on those who do not deposit research data and outputs: “There’s a meme—if you say ‘data is available upon request,’ they take it as a middle finger. Because it would be so easy to share the data—it takes just as much energy to write that statement. It’s a very closed-minded decision.” Given the proliferation of large language model tools, a historian registered concerns that data sharing and scraping are “increasingly an issue we should at least be discussing in the context of OA.”

Participants note that scholars of arts and humanities engaged in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and digital humanities work more frequently “share everything, including your code and other resources.” They acknowledge that sharing qualitative and visual data is “messier”: “There’s an impulse to make as visible as possible what you’re doing and how you’re doing it. There are still barriers.”

Other Dissemination Methods

An art historian noted the “soft market of sharing things” in their field. “I’m a big fan of the idea of OA but the reality of the huge subvention needed makes it unfeasible, which is why [we just] email it. [...] Culturally there isn’t any taboo about emailing work in my subdiscipline.” Another art historian noted that interlibrary loan and other library approaches to sharing work may be unsuccessful in the discipline because images may be excluded or of low quality. Yet another art historian said:

sending and receiving PDFs is part of my daily life. I feel like scholars in my circle are sharing knowledge on our own, but it would be nice if that was happening above board. It’s a position of privilege to share this way: who do you know, who are you asking?

A recently retired scholar shared they have not suffered at the loss of institutional access:

I found it didn’t stop me or slow me down. If I couldn’t get an article, I’d write the author, and they’d send me a PDF copy. [...] Libraries as we know them will cease to exist—digital repositories are more powerful.

A philosopher offered a novel way of disseminating research:

I read and record the papers where I’m first author to a podcast feed so people can access it [...] This can also help in realizing what sounds unnatural when read out loud and might result in a different type of ordinary language accessibility.

Research Question 2: How are open access venues perceived in arts and humanities disciplines and what considerations contribute to these perceptions?

Participants report a “really wide range” of perceptions on OA venues in their fields. While the individuals interviewed generally had positive views of OA, they characterized disciplinary perceptions as having greater levels of skepticism. A philosopher highlighted considerations that factor into these perceptions, including author payment, rigor, specialization, and methods:

Some people still think all OA is paying to publish a paper you wouldn't otherwise be able to publish. We know this exists—predatory journals [...] Among the younger people, and those that run statistical analysis, they seem to know the difference between predatory and different quality journals.

Participants' responses underline evolving tensions between the costs and values of OA publishing.

Author Payment

The consensus among participants is “paying to publish papers is seen as bad generally.” A design scholar stated “It's seen as pay-to-play, not rigorous. I get so many scammy looking emails.” A historian suggested that “having to pay to publish preys upon the vulnerability of academics,” and a communication scholar reiterated, “We don't get grants and funding to be able to drop \$1,500 to \$2,000 on a publication fee.” They mentioned knowing only one person who has published via an APC, who did so because they had grant money and knew the editor to be reputable. Nonetheless, “It's hard to tell when those things are and are not predatory,” and it “seems shady that something would get 2,000 views in a couple days.” Another communications scholar said:

Whenever I see publishers charging, I stay away from them. They're using IP that we produce with so much effort and our own funding and then they want us to spend money to publish. I don't find them authentic or credible. I don't think it's a moral way of publishing your work.

A language and literature scholar added: “When there is an author charge, I never pay. My reputation is at stake—I'm not paying. Either take it or I don't publish with you,” though they also acknowledged that they edit an MDPI journal that charges authors 1,400 euros per article.

A few participants were more ambivalent. An English scholar remarked: “Beyond a general ‘paying to publish’ is bad, I don't think there's a granular understanding of the difference in payment models.” A historian finds that “The distinction isn't necessarily between who charges fees and who doesn't. Once you've been trained in a particular discipline, you know which journals are established and respected versus those that are predatory.” In other words, scholars' time and expertise are expenditures when negotiating OA costs and venues. A philosopher noted that, “The people who have the most prestige are generally publishing

in *Science* or *Nature* where it costs a lot to publish OA. But they usually have funding to do it." They argued that negative associations about paying to publish seem generational. They imagine that in the coming years, scholars will aim to make their work open, even by payment: "Making your papers as rigorous and accessible as possible is what everyone should be doing."

Funding and Hybrid Venues

Only a few participants discussed the OA implications of funding compliance: "Funding agencies—public and private—more or less require OA publishing. And they'll pay for it—even above the budget approved." A philosopher shared, "If I get a grant, I'll add the funding in." They highlighted the disparity in funding among disciplines: "The sciences receive huge grants: \$2,000 is nothing for them. For us, it's life or death. We don't operate that way. If they have funding from the government, they don't care."

Most participants do not have research funding, and several spoke to other mechanisms of paying for OA publication. One indicated that their library funds up to \$2,000 a year to publish in OA journals. A historian mentioned:

I've recently been talking to our librarians and there have been some agreements I've heard of from publishers where they'll cover fees. I pay more attention to this than others and I was surprised when I found out the library offered it.

A few others reported that hybrid OA was not covered by institutional funding: "We have some funding for OA publishing fees, caps at \$1,500 per article. [...] They will only cover publishing in journals that are entirely OA—not hybrid journals. It is a joint program between the Library and Research and Sponsored Programs." One hinted at less transparent guidelines: "Our institution does fund us if we want to publish something, and the publisher is asking for money—they evaluate the publisher and decide if they'll provide money for it."

Participants expressed differing perspectives on hybrid OA—OA articles published in journals that also publish paywalled content. Several mentioned having been asked to publish OA after a manuscript had been accepted; none have paid to do so. One communications scholar stated that they're not opposed to hybrid OA, even if they are not interested: "I don't have as big a problem with [hybrid]. If I see a submission fee, that's more problematic. If they ask to pay to make it OA, I don't see the point—I can get that through ILL." A philosopher expressed skepticism about the quality of hybrid OA articles relative to paywalled content: "There are borderline cases where reputable journals have open access branches. I sometimes notice that papers published in that part of that journal aren't as rigorous as those that get published in the traditional section." A historian argued that a reputable journal would not willingly jeopardize that standing by offering hybrid options: "I don't think they would want to trash their reputation, so I would be less concerned about that one asking for payment for OA."

Rigor and Replicability

Open access publishing makes some participants question "how do we assess value, reliability?" Historians suggested a "general skepticism" about the rigor of some OA venues. For example, "[When] publishing in new spaces there is often talk about making sure it is a

valid journal; anyone who says they can publish in three days isn't doing much editing or peer review." A musicologist noted, "The perception for a long time was that it was vanity publishing—that it hadn't received the proper scrutiny or peer review." An art historian

would want the publication to be properly vetted—it depends what kind of thing that is. A museum catalog, for example, doesn't go through blind peer review anyway. But I would want the output to adhere to the same standards.

Another art historian said that there are few OA venues in their area: "I've published OA with an MDPI journal but that is seen as a little dicey." They were invited to contribute to a special issue by a colleague and did not pay any fees because of that relationship. "The whole process was really quick. Then things got a little weird; I would review for them, and they would publish regardless of what my review said."

Some participants did not tie concerns about rigor to OA. In design, "We don't have that many journals, so the discipline hasn't been overcome by OA journals that aren't perceived to be rigorous." An early career scholar said, "In my experience, open access has come up after a paper has been accepted, I've been given a choice [...] I haven't heard any conversation about paying for open access to influence acceptance or publication or anything like that." The topic of replicability only came up in one interview but was hinted at in a few others:

In sciences and STEM there's a push for everything to be available because lives depend on it. Replicability is essential for science; people don't think that's necessary for the humanities, but data replicability is just as important. Without more transparency, we'll see a more biased view of history.

They argued that more OA publishing options in the humanities would advance replicability.

Tenure and Promotion

Participants reported shifting perceptions of OA in tenure and promotion considerations, from hesitance toward acceptance. An emeritus art historian from an R1 institution said, "The university has gotten better; at first, they were hesitant to count OA publishing." A full professor of history also noted changes: "Having been on tenure and promotion committees, OA journals are not as well-viewed overall [...] My sense is that things are changing in younger generations." Two more junior faculty had not experienced hesitance about OA venues in evaluations: "At my institution, there aren't different weights for types of publications as long as they're peer-reviewed," and

I've been on committees that evaluate research, and I haven't really seen or heard about a lot of negative perspectives [about OA] from my senior colleagues—they're just happy about the fact that we're publishing. When it comes to reviewing the quality of our research, they look at the impact factor and open isn't considered.

An English scholar framed their response around the availability of prestigious OA venues: "I think there's a massive disconnect between what is considered 'top' and the availability

of OA which leads people to not consider OA. *Post45* was well-funded from the beginning but it's the exception." In other words, tenure and promotion requires the very best and such venues are most often not OA.

Some participants noted lists of top journals used within departmental tenure and promotion evaluations. An English scholar suggested that such a list could be used to determine funding priorities and incentivize a greater shift toward OA:

If there was a list that had OA fees—maybe a tier system of what the library will pay to make articles published in these top journals OA—there could be an opportunity to put money there instead of other places. If any acceptance at a top tier journal had the university step in and pay for OA—and more people saw top tier journals making work OA—the institution would see it as a prestige thing. That could start a domino effect where there would be pressure in the system for journals to publish more OA.

Although participants noted increasing awareness and acceptance of OA in tenure and promotion processes, this did not extend to monographic publishing. University presses and other prestigious venues for monographic publishing have not adopted OA models as quickly as journals; accordingly, there has been less time and opportunity to consider the impact of OA monographs in research evaluation.

Sustainability and Equity

Participants commonly asked, "If it's open access, who pays for it?" Several noted the perceived sustainability of university-funded journals but were skeptical of the viability and sustainability of such models. A literary studies and digital humanities scholar notes increasing awareness of the costs of OA publishing:

Ten to fifteen years ago, that conversation hadn't matured, but now it has more and more. There are different models like consortial agreements, libraries supporting open publishers and swimming against the tide of commercial publishers. The world of engineering and sciences has to deal with those issues a lot more frequently since they're paying for their own salaries and are expected to spend grant monies on APCs.

They expressed frustration that no sustainable, long-term business model for open publishing has been established, noting, "Humanities Commons has been supported by a lot of soft money."

Participants from a variety of disciplines commented on the disappearance of journals and digital projects. A musicologist said the question is "how long will this server last?" and recalled the demise of *Ethnomusicology Online*: "It was peer reviewed but [...] authors were weary of publishing in an online journal. It should have succeeded but it didn't." While a historian argued that born-digital content is more discoverable than print alternatives, a literary studies scholar pushed back against the assumption that "just being on the web makes something discoverable," and gave an example of a great project "on some academic's server which is the most digitally precarious place on the whole internet." An art historian shared:

In terms of working with things that are old and physical—as long as the physical book exists, the knowledge exists, but if the journal I’m published in takes down their website, it’s gone forever. I’m concerned about the digital longevity of publications.

A communications scholar has “seen OA journals disappear or be subsumed into [commercial publisher].” They gave the example of *Advances for the History of Rhetoric* which was previously OA but is now accessed via subscription:

I’ve seen more OA journals disappear than pop up. I’ve also seen things stagnate. I worry about my work vanishing in the ether if a journal dies. I worry about this more with OA but it’s not unique to those journals.

One participant indicated that a journal they edit offers waivers and reduced rates for individuals from specific countries but indicated that this does not satisfactorily address equity concerns. Another participant received a waiver to publish in an MDPI journal: “I said I’d only publish there if they gave me a waiver, and they did. I’m not sure why—it’s not like I’m coming from a developing country [...] I wonder how people are getting them. Is it need based?” They expressed ambivalence about having been granted that waiver: “I feel conflicted about that. Having more transparency would be better.” A few participants spoke to considerations around co-authored papers, with one early career scholar highlighting potential equity issues when publishing with students: “Charging fees is disliked and discouraged, especially when working with graduate students, unless the university pays the fees themselves.”

Terms and Permissions

Participants across fields expressed confusion about OA publishing terms. An early career scholar finds decisions around open access publishing confusing,

especially for graduate students who don’t understand what funding is available or what they are agreeing to if they publish open access. I don’t think universities explain the process of how to publish thoroughly, what we are taught as graduate students has no discussion of how work is distributed and disseminated.

More established scholars also expressed confusion, for example: “I’m unsure, do they become OA after a certain period of time?” A literary studies scholar who has sought to retain rights when publishing credits

librarians and offices on campus for looking over the contracts [...] their expertise has helped me understand what I can ask for without pissing off anyone in an editorial office. I tell everyone I can to talk to their corresponding colleagues if they’re lucky enough to have them.

Art historians had much to say about the additional costs of OA publishing due to image rights and permissions. One shared that payment-based OA is inherently problematic

but presents additional issues with image rights: “I’ve had negative experiences with OA because sometimes the images are removed and that wipes away the evidence for the article—the images are our data.” They indicate that there is no stigma around OA in their discipline, “but there’s the reality that we don’t have support for this, and we have to acquire image permissions, so that’s the real barrier to publishing OA in my discipline. That’s also probably why there are fewer OA publications in this area.” Although not unique to OA, a design scholar further articulated issues with copyright clearance when a designer cannot be traced. “With designers or illustrators, that work sometimes goes uncredited which complicated things.”

Topic and Method

Many participants indicated that, although the flagship journals of their respective societies and organizations are not OA, OA journals serve many subdisciplines and area studies. An art historian shared: “The ones I have used are not strictly speaking in my field, they’re in area studies instead of art history. In my field, do we have any? I frankly do not know.” Several participants named highly respected OA journals in subdisciplines; an art education scholar said that the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* “is fully credible—the range of scholars who publish in the prestigious art education journals also publish here,” and another art historian said the *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* “admittedly is a journal in a subdiscipline of a subdiscipline, but it is highly used and cited.”

In history, the flagship journals are not OA, “though they might be hybrid so you can pay for OA, but I’m not sure.” A medievalist noted OA is viewed positively, “which is interesting since history is usually more conservative.” A historian of France offered a qualified endorsement of the *Journal of the Western Society of French History*:

They’ve been open access for a long time. They started out in print, now are published through the University of Michigan Library on their site—it’s seen as respectable but is seen as a place where you publish a project that is still at an intermediate stage.

Open access venues for military history “Tend to be policy-centric, like *War on the Rocks*; it’s well-respected but it’s for history related to policy issues going on currently. *Military Review* publishes military history, but it has to speak to a contemporary military issue.”

In addition to topic and subdiscipline, the methods and approach have implications for OA publishing. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), for example,

Is incredibly interdisciplinary and international, and organizations are working to make this field as accessible as possible. For the [SoTL] journal I work on, we have no cost to publish and no cost to read. International colleagues have reached out to say that they appreciate that.

Similarly, digital humanities (DH) work “has fully embraced OA.” Participants noted several reputable options for OA publishing in DH, including *Digital Humanities Quarterly* and *Journal of Culture and Analytics*. “In general, that field has co-evolved with discussions about OA and

is constitutionally amenable to providing it as an option.” Participants note that DH is more likely to be grant funded than other humanities research, and accordingly the outputs may be required to share publicly. In DH: “You can lose credibility with the crowd if you’re not on board with OA and if your project involves datasets or certain collections. You need to at least explain why you don’t make them available.”

Audience and Innovation

A shift toward public scholarship in arts and humanities has considerable implications for OA publishing:

We’re clearly at some kind of inflection point [where] we’re writing things for an academic audience that the public can’t necessarily see and wouldn’t necessarily want to read if they could, so I do think it behooves scholars to get their work out more publicly through different methods.

An art education scholar shared: “One of my projects is a blog, it’s completely open to the public. It’s not peer reviewed, but it’s intended to be open, and I have no expectation or desire to make money from it.” A historian referenced *Age of Revolutions* as “doing a fantastic job in producing distilled research from experts that are peer reviewed and OA. I published there but I’d come upon it before I met the editors because I’d used it in my teaching.” They indicated that there should be increased resources for supporting those publications:

Universities should give more credit in tenure and promotion to public work, but it’s not an easy thing to figure out. There’s a lot of discussion about these things in my department and there’s a disconnect between what is valued by the people who run the media relations versus people in departments.

One historian noted that OA venues have missed opportunities to innovate: “There’s a gap in my field in terms of the kinds of publications that are published.” Traditional venues serve seven-to-ten-thousand-word pieces and books of seventy to eighty thousand words. They think OA publishing would provide value to the discipline by taking on “that giant space in between.”

Research Question 3: What do arts and humanities scholars identify as the costs of open access publishing?

Participants report that the costs of payment-based OA publishing extend beyond the financial, taking a toll on the equity and transparency of scholarly communication; exploiting scholars and making their labor even less visible; damaging their reputations; and diminishing the (perceived) rigor of their scholarship. The costs also pose ethical and moral concerns; have opportunity costs at personal, institutional, and professional levels; divert money from other infrastructural and support needs; perpetuate inflated publishing costs and suggest alignment with the values of commercial publishers; facilitate surveillance and counting frameworks; and sacrifice copyright and intellectual work to the training of large language model (LLM) tools.

Economic

When asked their willingness to participate in payment-based OA publishing, the overwhelming response from participants was: “We have no money.” Arts and humanities scholars are often “not flush with either salary or external grant resources.” Several participants philosophically support public access to research but lack funding to publish OA under payment-based OA models: “I would love in theory for my work to be completely OA, for undergraduate students new to research, for the general public. I don’t have the funding to do it, and I won’t pay out of pocket.” This leads to cynicism; as an art historian stated, there are “always going to be haves and have nots.”

Although some participants have received small creative activities or research grants, most have no external funding and indicated that institutional funding options were limited. Participants indicated that society subvention grants are competitive and small—typically offering no more than a few thousand dollars. A design scholar confirmed: “Society subvention grants are really small—just a couple hundred dollars and they’re few and far between.” An art historian concurred:

Grant funding is an issue—where there is some, it is small in scale because there is a perception that humanities research doesn’t cost anything. There’s more funding for Digital Humanities. That ends up being a buzz term—people will throw something into their project because it’s shiny and new, but their research will be compromised.

Some participants shared that the professional development or noncompetitive institutional funds cannot be used for publishing costs. An English scholar shared: “My institution has little to no funding for these sorts of things. Otherwise, it is a resource rich environment. There are provisions where funds can only be used for certain purposes.” They note, however, “If you could use it for this purpose, then you would have to decide if publishing OA is more useful than traveling to a conference. Then justify using funds for one and not another expense.”

Participants reiterated that their fields are underfunded within academia: “They’re such poorly funded fields—art, humanities, education—it’s not reasonable to expect that we can fund it. Teachers, students, scholars deserve access to the information.” A participant at a large public institution shared:

Budget cuts have devastated us. My department has no money—we can’t fully support conference travel anymore. There is a competitive grant you can apply for within the university to compete for publication fees. It’s competitive across disciplines and isn’t always the friendliest thing to humanities because selection is rooted in journal metrics and the like.

Some participants suggested that using personal funds for OA publishing would present a poor return on investment. A historian asked:

Where is the money going to come from to pay for these things? Especially in situations in which my financial reward for publishing is so small—even

including merit raises—how much money would I want to spend if there's no financial reward? Seems like a bad decision.

An art historian discussed payment-based OA saying, "I could have gotten full professorship earlier if I'd paid \$10,000 to get a book published. But do I want a down payment on a house or to publish a book?"

Several scholars engaged in visual arts reiterated that their limited funding pays for images and permissions: "I would never submit something to any place that charges a fee. I am already paying for photographs." Although participants use public domain images where possible, when art is your discipline, the visual image is your evidence. One scholar has earmarked \$4,000 for image permissions for their current book-length project: "I won't look into OA because I won't have the money for it. All the money will go to image subvention." For many participants, these costs compel them to seek out a publisher that covers costs: "We signed away royalties and they gave us a lump sum and cleared all the images for us." These costs have promoted creative approaches. A literary studies scholar was going to be "charged for an image I wanted to use, but managed to just buy a copy via eBay, which was probably sketchy." They scanned it and claimed, "author's collection" as the source. Sadly, one scholar has "chosen research projects before because I knew the images would be accessible." These costs constrain publishing choices, especially for arts and art history scholars.

Equity and Transparency

Most participants acknowledged that author payment models privilege authors at well-funded institutions. An early career scholar said, "I don't think it's equitable, especially for students and faculty of color [...] Most people would not be able to afford it, and institutions aren't providing support." An art historian asked if charging fees enables scholars at research institutions to publish while simultaneously constraining the ability of researchers at those less-funded, saying, "It's like a class system in academia." An English scholar at a relatively well-funded research university shared: "In an ideal world, I would like all my work to be OA. If that required payments, I'd make those payments. But I say that from a privileged position."

Participants noted information asymmetry in terms of who can afford to publish OA and socioeconomic barriers to entry which bias the literature. An art historian has, "seen bad scholarship that is open and gets a ton of eyes because they spent a lot of money while better scholarship is gated and can't be read. It's ironic because the university is promoting DEI and yet the humanities is still this elite club that you need money to get into." A historian shared serious concerns about the implications of pay-to-publish models in the academy:

Public institutions and tuition-based private institutions don't have money to support this. I worry that we'll end up in a world where only people at rich institutions can afford a robust publishing agenda [...] My school is an R1 but we have no spare money—this will hurt the public universities.

Another historian expressed frustration that "People get into the academy to share knowledge but then there are fees and costs that limit that knowledge." As a communication scholar

joked, "If my work takes off, I want it to be because it was worth reading, not because I had more money."

Participants, many of whom have some affiliation with scholarly journals, indicated that the costs of OA publishing are not transparent. A historian shared, "For my journal, we pay for a copyeditor and production manager, and I know exactly how much that costs. But it's certainly not \$3,000 an article. Where are those costs going?" Despite supporting OA, a legal scholar has philosophical concerns about it: "If it had the infrastructure that law reviews do and if they were more transparent with labor practices, I'd support them." They indicated that many OA journals are not indexed in major databases. "If my research is going somewhere to die and it's invisible labor that's done by faculty and graduate students, I'm not in favor of that." They contrasted this with law reviews, saying "it's amazing training for the law students and it's a beautiful system we don't have in the social sciences and humanities."

Exploitation and Invisible Labor

Participants were clear that payment-based OA publishing models feel exploitative. An art historian shared, "I got into academia because I loved to teach and share my ideas with others." They argued that humanities professors are not well compensated and are increasingly hired into nontenure track positions. They feel that payment-based OA models are especially exploitative of academics in precarious positions: "Humanities scholars are stuck in adjunct positions and trying to publish to get into a TT job and being exploited by fees." A communication scholar shared,

I don't have a problem with reviewing things for free, but it has become exploitative because with austerity measures, I'm doing administrative work, and I don't have time to participate in all these scholarly activities. Now people are expected to produce so much; you're not getting tenure on a wink and an article anymore.

An art historian spoke to the predatory nature of such models, with publishers "taking advantage of passionate scholars who get nothing from it." They said,

in arts and humanities, we feel so small. There's pressure to publish but we don't get paid for it and there aren't any financial benefits like in the sciences (like patents) so to pay to publish when we don't get anything for it seems exploitative. Humanities research is guided by a passion rather than to save the world or make money.

A literary studies scholar has a "dim view of how the OA space has been co-opted first by large publishers and then predatory journals." They do not see that openness is a value proposition relative to prestige in their field. A historian said,

This is an exploitative academic model. Academics are doing all this work for free (writing, peer review, editing) so why are we paying for OA? I don't think paying for OA means a work is of lesser quality but there's a problem with pushing out the costs this way.

Related to the labor of writing, reviewing, and editing these journals, many participants see a cost in doing work that is not sufficiently recognized or rewarded:

I know journal editors who've received small stipends of \$1,000 a year. I guest edited an issue and it was so much work. A top journal in my field was run by a woman who had a 3/3 load—she did that for twelve years. There is so much labor that is unrecognized [...] It's usually not part of workload, just seen as service to the discipline.

A communication scholar who is on a 4/4 at an institution that requires significant service “fantasize[s] about later in my career having more time to do things. I don't want to be the person who checks out and stops participating in reviews, but if it's too much I will prioritize my health.”

Reputational Damage and Rigor

Although several participants hinted that paying to publish would take a toll on their reputation, an art historian did not hold back: “I would lose my reputation if people thought I was paying to publish. It would be catastrophic.” One tenure-track scholar acknowledged the reputational risk in paying to publish: “I knew this could be a career risk, so I made it clear that I would not pay to publish.” They added a funding statement to the published article indicating that the APC had been waived. A theatre professor reiterated the importance of reputation to tenure and promotion: “One of my colleagues isn't going up for promotion because he's published in predatory journals, and he thinks he won't get promoted because of it.” A historian would welcome changes to promotion and tenure guidelines at their institution: “It's ridiculous, but people are told ‘I have to get published in X journal to get tenure.’” They would support a statement on the value of OA publishing and societally impactful work.

Some participants tied the risk of reputational damage to the perceived rigor of OA publication venues. A philosopher “would never want to publish in a venue where it's known that peer review is compromised.” A design scholar shared concerns that author payment-based journals feel predatory:

if their online presence looks scammy, they're not trustworthy. If they look too polished, that can be a red flag too. Many of the scammy ones are international, unrecognizable, and require payment; they don't carry credibility. I can't think of a current journal in my field I would pay to publish in.

Acknowledging that some OA venues are rigorous, a historian said, “there are others that send me spam on a regular basis. You could send them anything and for the low, low price of \$500–\$1,000 they'll put it on their website.” They shared,

It's already that case that you don't get a lot of sales in our discipline—we've long stopped caring about royalties. You're already giving up copyright: now you're going to pay to publish? Open access online publishing already doesn't have the space limitations that print journals have. If you're paying to put them there and

they don't have a space limitation, that makes a lot of us uncomfortable—are there real scholarly standards being applied?

Ethics and Morals

Most participants feel strongly that publishers should not profit from their labor. A representative statement is: “I don't think academics should have to pay. We're already doing quite a lot of work for free. We're not getting paid for this work, we get paid by promotion from our institutions, so we shouldn't have to pay for this.” Whether they frame their perspective as a personal belief or through the values of their community, most participants think charging authors to publish is wrong: “Asking for money from an author and then profiting from that author's work by selling it to folks who don't have access is highly unethical. I'd rather provide my work directly to people who ask for it, and I have done so.”

Some participants explored the issue beyond questions of right or wrong, highlighting:

- Ethical concerns around publishing incentives (“If I'm an editor, and I have to incentivize folks to publish with me, are they paying for inflated stats?”);
- Public funding (“I don't want the publishers to profit. If it's my money or the university's money—it's the taxpayers' money. It is exploiting the taxpayers to read your work”);
- Pirating (“The first actors in Open Science were often those charging high access fees—there's platformization here—so I'm good with talking about alternate routes for access like SciHub, Anna's Archive, LibGen, etc. Open Science was flawed by these interests”);
- Student debt (“I love open access and I use OERs in my classes. If I can get something OA or I can steal it, I will. I don't want my students to be in debt like I am. There are barrier concerns and longevity concerns. With my students, they don't know what they don't know. They don't realize they pay money to have access to many things that they'll never have access to again”);
- Profit margins of publishers (“As an international student in India, I was asked to pay \$30 for an article—it's too much. I understand the value of OA but [I'm morally opposed to] paying journals because they're already profiting through our work”); and
- International wealth disparities (“Whether it's OA or not, I'm against the idea of paying to publish my work. I think they should be paying me instead—I'm giving them my work. If they're going to be selling the article to libraries or people in third world countries that don't have institutional access”).

One participant questioned the ethics of redistributing funds from universities to the private sector: “University is an odd model—a neoliberal business model paired with medieval monastic tradition; how can they coexist? To what extent can a University be used for redistribution? Move money from libraries to society to publisher?” They suggested:

Tighter integration between the library system and subject experts might be the best pathway forward to prevent problems with Open Science [...] I think there should be more quality control so that we're not being extracted by a for-profit entity.

They noted that library-funded OA systems have their own drawbacks: “It seems like a bit of a scam if the library has paid money for one author to publish seven articles OA while others

don't get theirs published and now Springer has \$60k?" They noted that financial issues could disincentivize them to publish more, saying, "It gets tricky really quickly."

Opportunity and Time

Some participants asked, "what would take a hit?" if author payment were required. A communication scholar remarked

If the school was going to pay for it, even then, it adds up to a lot of money. Could we be spending money in better places? What student scholarship could it go to? Could it be spent to abate the asbestos in my building or replace our furniture from 1962?

An English scholar asked, "How much would I be willing to take from my research funds for that?" They continued:

Maybe ten years from now I'll have enough resources where I could pay. But if I did that right now, I wouldn't be able to go to conferences or use funds for other research activities. [...] It's not that I don't want to pay—my threshold is: does it impact other things I was going to do, research-wise?

An art historian similarly noted:

I'm at a university where budgets are being tightened—if the funding could be used for a research trip or a conference, I wouldn't want to use it for OA fees. But if the money was sitting around or would be lost if it wasn't spent, I might consider it. But I wouldn't take it out of the pool when my researchers are scrounging for money.

Participants agreed that one of the biggest costs of OA publishing was their time. Whether it was evaluating a journal, depositing accepted manuscripts, maintaining a website, or figuring out which versions could be shared on ASN, time was on their minds. They described depositing processes as manual and cumbersome, and sharing their work via ASN and personal websites as time consuming and potentially questionable. Because this work is a considerable investment of their time, some participants only engage in open practices for a portion of their outputs. A historian creates and disseminates OER through their DH work: "That's not really my scholarly research, but I spend a lot of time taking my research and making it usable in fully open spaces." They do not spend the time making their research for scholarly audiences available OA via deposit.

Infrastructure and Support

Participants reiterated:

there is infrastructure in sciences that doesn't exist in humanities and social sciences. Sciences have more opportunities for grant funding to line-item APCs, there is not as much funding in humanities and social sciences, so it creates a situation where those fields don't publish OA a lot because of the lack of funding.

An English scholar asked, “What are the infrastructural supports that keep something afloat in this age of precarity? Who is getting money from the payments received?” The distinction for this scholar is between nonprofit presses and for-profit entities:

I’m on the board of a society that gets most of its money from its journal’s JSTOR clicks and not membership fees. Due to the success of the journal, they are doing financially well. If I get elected as an officer for this society, I’d want to charge lower fees or make more OA.

They indicated that the “goal isn’t to get to \$0—but to get to fair,” and would lower APCs, subsidize, and open selected content.

Inflated Costs of Publishing

“These [APC] fees are the cost of rent!” sums up the perspective of many participants. An art historian said “Paying for OA is real money—it’s not just like \$50. Even if I had access to funding, I don’t know that I’d pay it because it seems like a lot.” A historian shared that,

[OA] publishing would be a lot from a monthly paycheck. But even still the cost would become a factor in deciding where I wanted to publish. The higher the cost, even borne by the school, the less willing I’d be. I’d balance it against the outlet: is it worth it?

An English scholar offered additional considerations:

It depends what the payment looks like. If it’s a nonprofit press—I know university presses that are overworked—I could pay more. But I would never pay for Springer and Sage because the fees are absurd. Someone must pay, so I’m not against it in theory. It’s the amount the rich publishers are charging.

An art historian recognizes that

publishing costs money, and somebody has to pay for everything that goes into publishing and editing. But the idea that it’s an individual scholar doing it really bothers me. I’d like outlets to be more transparent about who is paying for them to be there. [...] It’s a game of musical chairs because someone has to pay, but who is making money and who is paying?

Several participants asked, “I wonder where that money is going?” Participants almost universally feel that the costs outweigh the return on investment: “I know a journal needs money to run but they’re asking for thousands of dollars—what is that money funding?” Some participants spoke to advances in technology that have made publishing more cost-effective. A theatre scholar said, “I’m sure maintaining software and updating systems requires some funds [...] but I think it costs less than print journals did.” Another participant acknowledges the costs of publishing but asserts “it also breeds predatory spaces. There needs to be more

clarity and definitions and guidelines for how people can understand good OA vs predatory OA." A few participants referred to double dipping. A philosopher said, "Charging authors and continuing to charge libraries millions of dollars—that seems to be double dipping, but I've never studied journal models well enough to know if that is justified." They prefer OA models that are funded by institutions, libraries, or professional societies.

One participant advocated for the work of a commercial publisher based on their experience as an associate editor for a journal published by a major publisher:

I think there's more value to these publishers than people acknowledge. I have a technical team in India helping with every single article and the publishers are pushing the articles to indexing databases. There's a lot people don't see—the backend work needed to put out content and have it in library databases. If you don't know how to make articles available, you shouldn't be running an OA journal.

They called for transparency in discussing how much it costs to run a journal and thought it cost about \$10,000 a year to run the journal they worked on:

The benefits of the major publishers and the costs aren't always transparent in these discussions [...] Publishers put in so much work to make information available in databases. Journals shouldn't be publishing OA without understanding what it takes to run a journal, this is not always transparent in discussions.

Other participants questioned the value added by publishers. A graphic designer said, "I can put together a PDF of an article, that's not hard—especially with the right software." They went on to discuss the costs of database indexing, copyright, and distribution, but shared "Part of me hopes that more truly OA journals pop up in my discipline that get started in that grassroots way." A historian asked what publishers do to market their work: "Are they working hard to get it out there, or are they more focused on money from me or to embrace wanting to make it accessible and get it out there?" Another historian feels that the quality of the editorial process has declined: "Time to review takes longer and longer and longer post-COVID, even for articles to be sent out to reviewers. More reviewers are turning down reviews. It took eight months for one of my articles to get sent out for first review." The combination of extended timelines, higher costs, and declining quality is a major concern.

Values of Commercial Publishers

Participants expressed concern about commercial publishers and the concentration of power among a few major publishers: "If big conglomerates buy these journals, are there going to be fewer OA options? I tell my students they can't use the for-profit journals and predatory journals and explain what they are." An English scholar finds it "a little icky" when a top-tier journal is controlled by a for-profit press. They gave the example of *Big Data and Society*: "it is a top journal in my field, and I'd like to have an article there as a social signal, but it would make me feel icky to pay a bunch of money to those publishers." Some participants expressed frustration at the co-opting of OA by commercial publishers. An English scholar remarked

With Open Science, the problem isn't the openness itself, it's that the companies that were already making a ton of money continued making money from OA—so to have to pay higher open access fees is the problem. Those situated to profit have profited off OA.

A literary studies scholar discussed how

They devised a business model on the backs of an OA ethos that was never supposed to be about commercialization. This is what innovation is now: looking for loopholes. It's not like they broke any rules but it's a shame that this has become a business model in which authors are expected to pay.

They explored the implications of an OA marketplace run by commercial publishers:

This has spawned predatory schemes that are spurious and fake outlets that profit from people that agree to publish. This is more of an issue in sciences, engineering, medicine where publication and citation counts have such a big impact on how they are evaluated.

Surveillance and Counting

Participants raised concerns around surveillance, censorship, and the culture of counting research outputs. A literary scholar highlighted attention paid to quantity over other measures at the institutional level: "It's more how much you've published than where." Their experience is primarily at universities with missions to serve the public and they noted developing political suspicions about this—especially in Florida:

Making your work open made it available for public surveillance. I never thought at that time that I might have been helping to build a surveillance machine by advocating for open content. I have colleagues now that are dealing with this in real time. The video surveillance systems in our classrooms as part of this too. I have a more tempered opinion on mandates for open access because of politically motivated surveillance.

An emeritus professor said: "A lot of universities in the South now are conservative and academic freedom is being questioned. If you're being censored, maybe you have to pay to publish OA to get the idea out there." An English scholar said, "We've convinced ourselves that citations and visibility are not important for us in the social sciences and humanities, but OA does improve the reach and impact of your work." Noting discomfort about quantitative methods in their field, they theorized that making the top journals OA "would force more conversations and the university would put more money there."

Copyright and Training LLM Tools

Some participants discussed the costs related to copyright. In addition to concerns about the costs associated with image and other permissions, scholars also noted unease about the

potential for their work to be “stolen” or harvested. A music scholar mentioned the existence of licensing agreements via Creative Commons which would protect the author, but other colleagues may still be apprehensive. A design scholar shared that in discussions of plagiarism with visual work,

There’s a fear that if a publication isn’t being published by a credible organization that our work isn’t safe there—not just the writing but the visualizations [...] that kind of gets into Creative Commons too... some people are in favor of remixes, some are not.

They spoke to the costs of keeping their work safe from harvesting and training large language models: “We’re at the edge of what kind of scraping we’re going to see from published work that gets recycled into a tool.”

Implications for Practice

Arts and humanities scholars identified several costs associated with open access publishing that have implications for the librarians who support them. As librarians, the authors wish to draw some explicit connections between the results, participants’ practices, and the implications for our work as academic librarians. The following section leverages themes from the findings to consider participant practices and work that librarians can undertake to support arts and humanities scholars.

Economic

Participants spoke at length about the economic barriers that prevent them from publishing gold or hybrid OA. Although participants have published under a variety of OA models, including diamond, five scholars (24%) specifically called out publishing in gold or hybrid OA journals; three had received APC waivers to do so, and two had received publishing support through their libraries’ institutional agreements. After the interviews, the authors reviewed participants’ publications and identified three additional hybrid OA articles. One of the articles included an acknowledgment that APC fees had been paid through an OA fund at a co-author’s institution. For the remaining two, the authors checked for active institutional agreements that would cover the corresponding author at time of publication and concluded that institutional agreements either covered or waived APC costs. One of those articles was single authored by a participant who did not disclose the use of an institutional agreement, which could indicate that the scholar was unaware that the library had provided the benefit.

While several participants mentioned that their library provides financial support, the availability of these services is often unclear to constituents and could be better and more frequently promoted. There is an opportunity for librarians to partner with research offices and other campus entities to accommodate and incentivize publishing in certain OA venues by covering or subsidizing costs, and to market these collaborations. Whether via transformative agreements, OA publishing funds, memberships, or other initiatives, librarians increasingly explicitly support OA publishing. Further, librarians can offer opportunities to discuss the publication support on offer through drop-in hours or consultations. Some scholars indicated that they felt that money spent on OA publishing costs could be better spent elsewhere or

would provide a greater benefit to other authors. As they are often not part of the negotiation process, however, scholars may not understand that some open access agreements are cost-neutral, and that their use does not take opportunities from others. Librarians can make themselves available to discuss scholars' needs and the manifold considerations that go into open access agreement negotiations.

Several scholars additionally indicated that they find the cost of APCs to be significantly higher than actual publication costs. It is harder to understand potential roles for librarians in establishing more accessible pricing, but librarians can certainly pass along feedback from their authors to publishers and vendors and advocate for price transparency.

Ethics and Morals

Arts and humanities scholars reported feeling exploited by current OA publishing models. Further, their labor in producing and supporting scholarly and creative outputs are frequently undervalued in academia. They see that OA perpetuates these inequities and that openness has been co-opted by commercial ventures. Librarians can advocate for systemic change and provide education for their campus communities that address these concerns.

Reforming tenure and promotion guidelines was a recurring theme throughout the interviews, and librarians can advocate for the institutional recognition of reviewing, editing, and otherwise engaging with OA publication. They can provide education and input on consolidation in the scholarly publishing market, empowering scholars to make informed decisions about the platforms and venues in which they place their work. Librarians can consult with authors on potential publication venues, with attention to predatory practices that are perpetuated by otherwise legitimate publishers.

A few participants received APC waivers to publish and expressed apprehensions about using them, and most voiced concerns about payment-based OA publishing privileging wealthy researchers and institutions. Librarians can advocate for equity and transparency in OA publishing and waiver programs, and for the expansion of waiver programs to support, for example, alumni authors that are unaffiliated or in precarious positions. Several publishers provide access to their platforms as a benefit of reviewing—why not supply OA publishing waivers to reviewers?

Finally, a few scholars voiced concerns about OA publishing enabling politically motivated surveillance at public institutions. Librarians can provide education about how faculty data systems that use bibliographic and funding data count and track outputs.

Reputational Damage and Rigor

When asked if they would pay for OA publishing costs if funding was made available, several participants responded with a qualified yes, dependent on whether the venue was of sufficient quality. Participants expressed suspicions that OA journals were of lesser quality than traditional, gated journals; even when sharing favorable impressions of OA, they perceived that their views may be more favorable than those of their colleagues or the field overall. Librarians have an opportunity to promote and publicize the benefits of OA publishing and reduce stigmas by helping authors tell the story of their OA publications. They can assist departments with identifying high quality OA journals and can advocate within shared governance structures to revise tenure and promotion guidelines to incentivize OA practices. When considering collection strategies, libraries can support open access memberships and initiatives and can partner with societies to flip established venues to sustainable OA models.

Opportunity, Time, and Copyright

Scholars consistently reported that they did not have the time to fully educate themselves on the varieties of OA models or the subtleties of copyright. While participants shared a wide range of green OA practices—with some sharing much of their work in repositories or via ASN and others none—nearly all expressed uncertainty about what allowances they were given in their publishing agreements. This uncertainty causes some scholars to be more careful with what they include in repositories and ASN, preferring to provide materials upon request instead; still, several others indicated they had no concern for copyright implications, doubted publishers would sue scholars, and thought “very few people outside librarianship worry about copyright.” Several expressed confusion about archiving generally and were unclear on its benefits, with some stating it was never explained what they were allowed to do.

Librarians can develop copyright programs that incorporate documentation, training, and consultations to help authors understand their rights, review author agreements, and assist authors in preparing amendments to these agreements. They can identify repository options and clarify their benefits and limitations. Additionally, librarians can provide education on personal identifiers and best practices for collocating scholars’ publications to demonstrate impact. Librarians can assist scholars with obtaining permissions and attempting to limit fees, as well as assist in the review of copyrights in publisher agreements. A few scholars mentioned they had utilized librarian assistance in these areas to positive results.

Infrastructure and Support

Early in the interviews, participants were asked about their experience depositing their research articles in disciplinary or institutional repositories. In response to this question, ten participants (48%) acknowledged an IR hosted by their library, but only two indicated that they actively use it—one of whom is employed as a librarian. Seven participants (33%) believed their institution did not have an IR or were unfamiliar with institutional repositories. After the interviews, the authors confirmed that six of those seven institutions have an IR, and found that several works from one participant were included in their IR.

Scholars agreed that the IR is “not something anything thinks about,” and several indicated that depositing in their IR was a clunky and burdensome process. A few participants stated that they had deposited works or sent them to librarians for mediated deposit, but had not kept up the routine because of the time-consuming process. Others expressed uncertainty about the sustainability of the IR and whether works would continue to be available over time.

To address concerns about time and process, librarians can deposit work in the IR on behalf of institutional authors and can develop workflows that automate and systematize the process to ensure it is continual. They can additionally provide concise and up-to-date documentation on the IR and clear guidelines on what is included and excluded. To address perception, libraries can advocate for the IR as a centralized repository for scholarly and creative activity across arts and humanities disciplines and can demonstrate the benefits of a well-populated IR, including demonstrating author impact and aiding recruitment efforts. Librarians can also advocate for publishers and platforms to automate these systems—publishers have the author accepted manuscript and could deposit to repositories with institutional support and author consent.

Institutional support was not central to these interviews. Although some participants did work at institutions and systems that have OA policies and guidelines, these were not

mentioned alongside their publishing and depositing practices. This may call into question the effectiveness of policies, or at least the implementation of policies at the individual author level. Librarians at such institutions should not take for granted that an OA policy or guideline translates into compliance; the need for outreach and education at universities is ongoing, and there is always a new audience to reach.

Similarly, OA compliance with funding agencies is also quite dynamic. With the Nelson Memo slated to go into effect by the end of 2025, librarians will need to understand and support the compliance requirements of campus authors. As part of the requirements of the Nelson Memo to provide embargo-free public access to funded research, librarians have the opportunity to expand OA agreements and infrastructure that serve their community.

Conclusion

As the first article to leverage interviews to explore the costs of OA publishing in arts and humanities, this work provides insight into the complexities of time, reputation, equity, opportunity, and material costs scholars contend with as they publish and disseminate their work. Although the findings largely align with results found in surveys and bibliometric studies, quotations from study participants add nuance to the understanding of these costs, as well as how arts and humanities scholars experience them. The authors offer several implications for practice that connect the findings with participants' practices.

Where previous studies have confirmed that OA is not a factor in where arts and humanities scholars disseminate their work, this study documented perspectives on how OA competes with publishing to advance one's career. Although OA venues are slowly gaining acceptance, prestige remains the most important consideration for academics in arts and humanities fields. OA publication remains sidelined and of interest to those working in specific topical areas, conducting SoTL or DH work, or in fields with respected diamond OA venues. Participants confirmed that they do not have the money to fund OA publishing charges; additionally, they described a variety of other costs that OA publishing incurs, taking a toll on reputation, time, equity, and opportunity.

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APPENDIX A Interview Questions

Arts and Humanities Scholars and Open Access Publishing Fees

Demographic and Research Practices

- Please provide your position, rank, discipline, and sub-discipline.
- Approximately how many research articles have you published in scholarly journals?
- Approximately how many research articles have you published open access?
- What has been your experience depositing your research articles in disciplinary or institutional repositories or archiving them in other online platforms (e.g., [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu), ResearchGate, or personal website)?

Venues and Open Access

- What factors play into your selection of a publication venue (e.g., journal, monographic, and other formats)?
- What open access venues exist in your field and how are they perceived by your disciplinary colleagues?
- How would you characterize disciplinary perspectives on archiving scholarship in disciplinary or institutional repositories?
- How would you characterize disciplinary perspectives on open access venues that charge authors fees and those that do not?

Funding and Payment

- What funding is available to support your publishing (e.g., institutional or society subvention funds)?
- What payments have you made related to publishing (e.g., editing, indexing, permissions, open access, etc.)?
- Under which circumstances would you pay to publish your work open access?
- What concerns do you have about open access models that charge authors to publish?