PARTNERSHIP

The Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research
Revue canadienne de la pratique et de la recherche en bibliothéconomie et sciences de l'information

vol. 13, no. 2 (2018)

Editor's Comments

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v13i2.5048>

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What Is the Cost of Publishing an Open Access Journal?

This is something I think about frequently. I look at this question from two perspectives: as the editor-in-chief of a diamond open access journal¹ and as a scholarly communications librarian at a research-intensive university.

As an editor-in-chief:

The simple answer is nothing—our journal receives no direct funding from any institution and has no budget or bank account. That said, the reality is more complex and nuanced.

Although *Partnership* receives no money to speak of, it runs on many, many dollars of in-kind contributions.

To list them briefly²:

1. Primary technical and operational support provided by the University of Guelph Library. This includes Crossref membership so our journal articles may have DOIs.
2. Hosting, platform and server maintenance, and secondary technical support by Scholars Portal (Ontario Council of University Libraries).

¹ Diamond open access journals provide free access to readers and do not charge their authors any fees or article processing charges (APCs) (Kelly, 2013).

² This scenario is unique to *Partnership* and I do not profess detailed knowledge of how other journals are structured and the levels of in-kind contributions they receive; this may vary widely.

3. Feedback, advice, and guidance provided by the board of Canada's national network of provincial and territorial library associations, also named *Partnership* (and from which we draw our journal's name).
4. Postings for editorial board positions on the *Partnership* job board site.
5. Complimentary registration from the Ontario Library Association to its annual Superconference, allowing the editorial board to meet in-person once a year.
6. Virtual meeting software provided by my employer, McGill University.
7. My time, energy, and labour as supported by my employer.³
8. The time, energy, and labour of our 20-person, entirely volunteer, editorial team.
9. The time, energy, and labour of our peer reviewers and authors.
10. Additional software provided as needed by the editorial team members' institutions.⁴

All this is without getting into the open-source infrastructure OJS, developed and supported by the Public Knowledge Project, which underpins the software platform *Partnership* runs on.

The point is publishing costs something, whether that something is money or people's time (and the implicit cost therein). As a benchmark, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Aid to Scholarly Journals grant pegs the cost of a single open access journal article at \$1050 (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2018).

I should state here my gratitude to my editorial board colleagues for their hard work and dedication, as well as to the University of Guelph Library and the *Partnership* board for their support. The commitment and assistance *Partnership* receives from the library community is extraordinary; I believe it is no small feat that a 100% volunteer-run journal consistently produces two issues a year of high-quality, Canadian-focused research and shared practice material.

Now, as a scholarly communications librarian:

In our field, we believe in open access and its merits. I am no different (or else I would not have been involved with *Partnership* for so long!). That stated, I sometimes feel that

³ I am in the fortunate position that service opportunities, such as serving on an editorial board, are considered a portion of my position at McGill University. I gratefully acknowledge this to be the case and recognize not all past editors-in-chief may have had this privilege.

⁴ I apologize here if I have overlooked any additional in-kind contributions.

the conversation in scholarly communications is neglecting the issues driving this editorial: what does it really cost to publish something open access? What does that mean? Who ends up paying and how?

I happily volunteer my time and trust my editorial board does as well, but I would like it recognized that we are volunteers. That means something and that costs something even if it is not obvious. Open access never really means 100% free—and much in the same way we want the uncompensated work in subscription-based publishing to be acknowledged, we must recognize this in open access publishing.

References

Kelly, J.M. (2013, January 27). [Green, gold, and diamond: A short primer on open access.](#)

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. (2018). [Changes to the aid to scholarly journals funding opportunity.](#)