

# JLSC

ISSN 2162-3309 | JLSC is published by the Iowa State University Digital Press | <http://jisc-pub.org>

**Volume 11, 1 (2023)**

## **Brief Reviews of Books and Products** Open Update

Cassandra Larose

Larose, C. (2023). Open Update [Brief Reviews of Books and Products]. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 11(1), eP16114. <https://doi.org/10.31274/jlsc.16114>



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## BRIEF REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND PRODUCTS

Hartgerink, C. (Host), & Uyens, B. (Producer). (2021–present). *Open Update* [Audio podcast]. **Liberate Science**. <https://libscie.org/open-update/>

### OPEN UPDATE PODCAST, SEASON 2

The Open Update podcast is produced by Liberate Science, an organization founded by podcast host Chris Hartgerink. In addition to the Open Update podcast, Liberate Science offers its own open publishing platform, as well as a now-defunct preprint bot, shut down in February 2023 following changes to Twitter that would drastically increase operation costs (Hartgerink, 2023b). Their manifesto, in brief, is as follows: “We seek to distribute knowledge, such that what it enables becomes distributed too. We want to repair, not destroy, and grow new modes of being, where empathy, humility and inclusivity are paramount” (Liberate Science et al., 2020).

Season 2 of the Open Update podcast interviews 10 guests over nine short episodes (around 25 minutes each) about the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Recommendation on Open Science, an international framework that provides a common definition, guiding principles, and actionable steps intended to support the operationalization of open science (UNESCO, 2021). Season 2 functions as a standalone series, without listeners needing to have listened to Season 1, which includes 52 shorter weekly episodes. Host Chris Hartgerink holds a doctorate (PhD) in Methodology and Statistics from Tilburg University in the Netherlands and describes their philosophy around open science to be radical, focused on equity and power distribution (Hartgerink, 2023a). Hartgerink left academia following the completion of their PhD in 2020, noting in the introduction to their dissertation defense the reason for leaving being the inability to make radical change in the systems of academia as they currently stand (Hartgerink, 2020).

As may be expected based on the background and philosophy of Hartgerink and Liberate Science, Open Update is pro-open science and future-focused, featuring a diverse roster of guests in Season 2. For example, artist and writer James Bridle speaks to Hartgerink about barriers to finding and using research as someone not affiliated with an academic institution. Bridle notes that their work requires both current and historical research, as well as the need to understand the structures of publishing to acquire materials, including things like preprints, archival materials, and materials that may be available for use in their own published works. Other guests across



episodes speak to the need for formal and informal structure and policy changes to support the move to open science. This includes discussion around the need for inclusion of other ways of knowing and acceptance of methods of scholarly communication beyond those traditionally used in the current Western, colonial systems of academia and publishing.

Change to academic culture is a common thread throughout the episodes, including interesting input from Wendy Ingram, CEO of nonprofit Dragonfly Mental Health, which focuses on mental health within academia. Ingram provides commentary on the lack of acknowledgment of mental health in the UNESCO Recommendation and the high rates of mental illness in academia. Hartgerink also talks with early career researchers from the Framework for Open and Reproducible Research Training (FORRT) project to get their perspectives on the potential impacts of open science on their career futures.

Listeners would do well to have some familiarity with the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, as the podcast does not provide an explicit summary or overview. Given the likely intended audience for an open-science podcast, it seems to be understood that listeners are familiar with the principles of open science and have knowledge of the processes and language used in research and academia. Although likely most valuable for audiences with an interest in open science, the podcast is generally quite accessible, with guests from a variety of backgrounds, including those from outside academia.

Although a knowledge of research practices and open science is useful to understand the context of the conversations, the podcast does follow with the values of open science in having plain-language conversations. Use of jargon is limited, as are terms that may be tied to specific languages or cultures (low-hanging fruit being the main repeated exception, used to refer to a task that is easily accomplished). Notable in one episode is host Hartgerink asking a guest for clarification of a colloquialism, noting that English is not their first language. The podcast feels conversational and inclusive in moments like these. Although the podcast, per the UNESCO Recommendation, uses the term open science, care is taken to be as inclusive as possible in terms of language, and it is noted that the connotation of the term open science may be seen as a barrier to those in fields such as the humanities and arts.

From a technical perspective, Open Update puts its values around accessibility into action, with transcripts available on the website and linked in the description for those listening on a podcast player app. The production quality is high, with good sound and pacing throughout each episode. The podcast is ad-free and freely available to listeners from a Web browser or podcast player.

The podcast may not be satisfying to those looking for in-depth discussion of specific aspects of open science, including ways to operationalize the UNESCO Recommendation. Although

each guest is asked to identify one potentially easily completed task and one aspect that may be more difficult to see realized from the Recommendation, the short run time of each episode does not allow for in-depth strategizing.

The Open Update podcast is an interesting, quick listen that will resonate with people in all stages of academic careers with an interest in open science. Early career researchers and students with an interest in continuing in academia may be especially interested in the perspectives presented to inform and provide inspiration as they develop their practice and values in research and scholarly communication. The variety of guests who offer insights from a breadth of roles, personal perspectives, and career stages keep the podcast interesting, and Hartgerink is an engaging and competent host. The podcast acknowledges the challenges that surround open science as both a process and an endpoint but leaves the listener with hope that a shift toward open science is well underway.

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Cassandra Larose (she/her) is the Scholarly Communication and Learning Support Librarian at Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. She is an early career librarian, having earned her Master of Library and Information Studies from Dalhousie University in 2021. A first-in-family university graduate who has previously worked in academic quality assurance and student services, she is passionate about providing access and reducing barriers to build a more inclusive and equitable space for those who may not see themselves as belonging in academia. Her research interests include open access and open science, critical information literacy, and citation justice.