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Special Issue: Open Access: Diverse Experiences and Expectations

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Special Issue: Open Access: Diverse Experiences and Expectations

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The *JLSC* Editorial Board and Editors are pleased to introduce this Special Issue on Open Access (OA), commemorating 10 years of OA initiatives and practice since the original special issue was published in 2014. There has been incredible change in the practice of OA in that time. OA models have proliferated, from transformative agreements with commercial publishers to the rise of community-driven “diamond” OA consisting of free-to-read and free-to-publish journals. Across the world, institutional and funder policies have mandated OA to

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publicly funded research. The definition of OA itself has broadened to encompass all forms of research output, following the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science in 2021.

IMPETUS FOR THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Discussions around the 2024 Special Issue commenced in 2023 when the editorial board began considering ways to further the work of the journal. The idea of revisiting the 2014 Special Issue paper by providing an updated perspective ten years later was raised as a way to pause and reflect on how OA publishing has changed in the past decade. A major consideration for the special issue was to attract a more geographically diverse pool of scholars—as both authors and peer reviewers—and thereby include a wider range of cultural perspectives on OA. We also wanted to offer the original contributors to the 2014 paper an opportunity to assess the progress towards OA in 2024 and the remaining challenges.

OUR AIMS

In deciding to create this special issue, we explicitly sought to achieve the following aims:

- Provide a ten-year reflection of the original 2014 paper and expand these discussions into a full issue
- Increase the geographic diversity and career stages of authors contributing to these conversations
- Increase the geographic diversity and career stages of peer reviewers in these spaces
- Continue *JLSC*'s contribution to quality, peer-reviewed articles in the field of librarianship, scholarly communications, and OA publishing

We are publishing in this rolling issue papers from the US, the UK, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Brazil, and Russia, among others. Our peer reviewers for these papers have been drawn from a pool representing Aotearoa New Zealand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Namibia, Australia, Canada, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, India, Brazil, Columbia, Albania, and Ukraine.

BASIC THEMES BASED ON THE ARTICLES

In preparing papers for this special issue, the working group found a number of themes. Since 2014, a greater awareness of OA has emerged, and it has become clear that there is no single OA model that serves as an across-the-board solution for every country, institution, scholar, or reader. Not only are the challenges different but goals, needs, beliefs, values, levels of expertise,

funding, and resources vary. This diversity is partly a result of necessity, with scholars, institutions, organizations, and governments having to support themselves, other scholars, and readers in innovative ways using limited resources. This is seen in many of the case studies in upcoming contributions.

We are also seeing the emergence of more complexity in OA in different spaces and conversations. Upcoming papers highlight achievements and challenges with open data, repositories, software, and publishing models across various geographic locations and stages of OA maturity. The special issue articles demonstrate collaboration, lobbying for resources, shouldering of additional work, seeking out alternative models, enduring advocacy and innovation by librarians and Library and Information Science professionals, and ever-present sustainability concerns for OA publishing platforms and models.

In contrast to this localized and resourceful approach to OA practice, we see the consolidation of commercial scholarly publishing into the hands of a small number of global mega companies, via the acquisition of smaller publishers or publishing-adjacent companies. Many upcoming publications discuss this landscape and the impacts it is having on how they are achieving OA and present various models of OA publishing to circumvent this development as best they can. Papers discuss how, as OA becomes more available to readers, many barriers remain for authors wanting to publish their work open to all.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN PUTTING THIS ISSUE TOGETHER

In the creation of this special issue, we encountered a number of challenges that we briefly discuss here. *JLSC* is a volunteer-run journal, and we all have jobs, lives, caring duties, and other life events that sometimes prevent us from being able to dedicate as much time as we would like. This can be particularly apparent when working on a time-dependent piece of work. This working group is also made up of people working in three different countries across a minimum of six different time zones, meaning the practicalities of communication can be difficult. We are living in different cultural, social, and political contexts; some of us experience regular power outages impeding the ability to join meetings, and others experienced significant climate disasters during the creation of this special issue, making joining and being present at meetings, as well as completing work, difficult at times.

Regarding the content of this issue, we had a number of accepted proposals that were never completed. This is often due to reasons similar to those outlined above. We also experienced the complexity of finding appropriate peer reviewers, despite our expanded pool, especially those papers documenting viewpoints and situations from areas not often represented in a US-based, Western-focused journal such as *JLSC*. We had reviewers, but we sometimes struggled

to find *peer* reviewers. Increasing *JLSC*'s peer reviewer diversity is something we are always looking to improve. The journal is actively working on updating peer reviewer guidelines and looking into ways we can better support those undertaking peer review for the journal. During the process of putting together the special issue—particularly thanks to feedback from our guest editors—we have also found the need for more guidance on editorial policies and additional guidance for reviewers and authors, improvements the *JLSC* editorial board are now working on.

WHERE THIS SPECIAL ISSUE LEAVES US

For the working group, undertaking this special issue has been a fun, insightful, challenging, educational, and highly worthwhile experience. It has allowed many of us to gain more experience in the role of editor, the importance of peer reviewer selection, and in reading through a collection of remarkable papers offering myriad perspectives, experiences, questions, and thoughts for us to consider. We find the importance of continued collaboration and communication among LIS professionals across regions, countries, and fields to be critical. Alternatives to commercial publishers, such as diamond open access journals and repositories, must continue to be sought and supported.

The Special Issue Working Group would like to thank all those who have been involved in this process, from our colleagues at *JLSC* to all those who submitted an abstract, as well as the authors, the peer reviewers, and the readers of *JLSC*.