Open Access Publishing and Social Justice: Scranton’s Perspectives

George Aulisio

Associate Professor, Weinberg Memorial Library, The University of Scranton, george.aulisio@scranton.edu

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Open Access Publishing and Social Justice: Scranton’s Perspectives

George J. Aulisio
Associate Professor, Weinberg Memorial Library
The University of Scranton
(george.aulisio@scranton.edu)

Abstract

Purpose: To explore The University of Scranton faculty’s perspectives on open access publishing and to determine if open access is a social justice issue.

Participants: Full-time faculty and administrators were invited to participate.

Method: An anonymous survey was administered to full-time faculty and administrators to determine their knowledge of and perspectives on open access publishing. The study also sought to determine if open access is a social justice issue based on a definitional and descriptive argument.

Results: Most faculty feel positively about open access, but they don’t feel compelled to publish in open access journals in part due to how they believe their colleagues perceive open access publications. In addition, many faculty are unsure if open access is a social justice issue. An exploration of the literature and an examination of the mission of the Society of Jesus shows that the development of open access policies at AJCU schools would be beneficial to faculty, the open access movement, and in line with the social justice principles of the Society of Jesus.

Conclusions: Open access publishing is a social justice issue that needs to be fostered and encouraged in AJCU schools so that our mission and the goals of open access can work together symbiotically.

Introduction

In scholarly publishing, the term “open access” (OA) is primarily used to describe a type of publication, but it is also used to describe a collective movement in the industry. Supporters of the OA movement seek to remove price barriers from scholarship in order to make research openly accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Idealistically speaking, OA is defined as the “world-wide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature, completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds.” However, the ideals of OA publishing do not make the concept universally loved and accepted. While some disciplines have been quick to adopt OA publishing, others are more reticent.

Librarians, though not always scholars, find themselves at the forefront of this issue because of the logistics of various forms of OA publishing. Mercer (2011) notes “[…] librarians have become liaisons who provide expanded services to academic departments. Liaison-librarians often are responsible for discussing scholarly communications topics, such as the rising cost of scholarly journal subscriptions and open access (OA) alternatives, and they are expected to advise authors to retain enough rights to their published work […].” Many librarians champion the OA movement because its goal of making scholarship and information freely accessible to all users is in line with the ideals and goals of libraries and librarians. Specifically, Principle IV of the Library Bill of Rights states “Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgement of free expression and free access to ideas.” This principle of the Library Bill of Rights can be interpreted to mean librarians have a duty to strive for equal and open access to information. A statement released by the American Library Association notes “[l]ibrarians have an ethical responsibility to be strong advocates of open access to information.” In addition, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) released its own statement declaring that it “is committed to the principles of freedom of access to information and the belief that universal and equitable access to information is vital for the social, educational, cultural, democratic, and economic well-being of people, communities, and organizations.”
On the practical level, the perpetually rising costs of academic journals are becoming an unsustainable expense for most libraries. According to Walters (2008), “an economically sustainable collection is one for which the rate of increase in prices is no greater than the rate of increase in the library acquisitions budget.” It is common knowledge among librarians that journal subscription costs rise at a rate well above the Consumer Price Index (CPI). For example, a large sample of over 10,000 academic titles indexed in ISI Arts and Humanities, Science, and Social Sciences Citation Indices, as well as EBSCO Academic Search Premier and Masterfile Premier, shows that the average price of journals has risen steadily since 2009 and consistently outpaces the Consumer Price Index (see Table 1).

Without publicly available data on AJCU library budgets, it is difficult to say for certain how sustainable the current model is; however, given the numerous reports of the budget crises in higher education, one can only assume library funding is at best remaining level or seeing modest percent increases. However, since journals have regularly raised their subscription fees, level funding for a library is in essence a cut in purchasing power. Therefore, unless journals are cancelled each year, funds will need to be pulled from another acquisitions area—most likely monographs or perhaps technology. Greenstein (2010) notes that “[u]niversity libraries are principally reliant for their operating revenues on the same funds that meet the costs of a university's academic departments […]. Bluntly, those funds are diminished by the global recession, and it is not clear that they are likely to rebound, let alone resume their growth, any time soon.”

With the above facts in mind, many librarians hold out hope that a strong and growing OA movement will eventually mean subscription journals will need to compete and will eventually need to lower their fees, or, ideally adopt new business models and become OA themselves. This belief may not simply be wishful thinking. Lewis (2012) argues that OA publications can possibly be considered a “disruptive technology” which according to business theorist Clayton Christensen means we can anticipate their growth. Using OA publication data from Laakso, et al (2011) and Christensen’s methodology, Lewis argues that “using the 2000 to 2009 data, it is likely that Gold OA journals will publish half of all scholarly articles by 2017 and will publish 90 percent of the articles by 2020. The second estimate, based on 2005 to 2009, shows that 50 percent of scholarly articles would be Gold OA by 2021 and over 90 percent by 2025.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
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<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI % Increase</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Average Price, Price % Increase, and CPI % Increase of Academic Journals from 2009-2013

“[t]he lion’s share of those resources derives from revenues received for the instruction of students. Whether provided by public bodies, in the form of block grants, or privately, in the form of student tuition, the national capacity […] to sustain the levels of support so recently enjoyed is structurally impaired. […] the college bound cohort is now receding and “[p]rivate universities, too, are troubled. […] Looking forward, it is not clear that the U.S. economy will any time soon see a return to the long-term rise in inflation-adjusted family income […] that helped sustain, and even grow, the private university sector during the last half of a century.”
final measure significantly misses the mark, it would be hard to imagine subscription journals not needing to be more competitive in their pricing if even only 40% of articles are born OA by 2025.

Lastly, combating the ever rising and restrictive costs publishers put on their journals is not the only issue that OA publishing aims to resolve. The OA movement also seeks to change the balance of copyright ownership in scholarly publishing. Traditionally, when publishing in a scholarly journal, many publishers ask for full rights to the articles being published in their journals. By signing agreements that allows for full copyright transfer, authors sign away all of their legal rights to their creative work and give them over to the publishing company. Within the copyright transfer contract, the publisher will usually guarantee the author allowances by licensing back specific rights that are associated with copyright protection, such as permission to distribute paper copies to colleagues or permission to make derivative works. If a full transfer of copyright agreement does not license back rights to the author and no fair use or other copyright exceptions apply, then, depending on the situation, it could mean authors would be infringing on copyright if they were to distribute their articles to colleagues and students, post the article to their personal websites, create derivative works, and read the article aloud to an audience, _ceteris paribus_. To the author and its proponents, OA can be described as a movement for publishing and research equality, something that is once again at the heart of librarianship. According to Principle IV of the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association, “We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.” It is admirable that scholars choose to give up their rights so that their work can be widely read, but it is an excessive approach that ultimately is only benefitting publishing companies and indirectly harming authors and information users.

**OA Specifics**

There are two overarching types of OA publication models, weak OA, which is also often referred to as “gratis OA” and strong OA, which is often referred to as “libre OA.” Both types of OA journals are openly available for viewing without restrictive barriers, such as subscription costs or viewing that is restricted to those connected to specific online networks. Both types of OA journals usually attempt to be more cost efficient, perhaps by gaining revenue from advertisements, publishing on a not-for-profit basis, or by charging a publication fee to authors or their university, organization, or academic department. The primary goal of both types of OA is to make scholarship accessible to everyone. In addition to being accessible without price barriers, strong or libre OA allows authors to retain their full copyright over their creative works, only seeking the permissions necessary to legally publish and distribute an article. Though strong or libre OA may be ideal, with the movement having varying levels of support from scholars and a fair amount of resistance from publishers, proponents of OA have rallied behind one or more of the at least three OA paths that authors can take toward more equitable relationship between authors, publishers, libraries, and information users.

The first path, referred to as “gold OA,” is an author’s commitment to publish in journals which choose to be OA by their nature. There are a large number of OA journals that likely reaches into every major academic discipline. Gold OA is arguably the most effective way of assuring scholarship is available to the masses while also assuring that authors’ retain the copyright over their articles. However, despite relatively little research being done on faculty perspectives of OA publishing, these journals have met at least some resistance from scholars. According to Coonin (2011) in a survey of 1,293 business faculty from American schools of business, “55.5% thought OA journals were less prestigious than subscription-based journals. Only 6.1% said they were not less prestigious, 27.1% said it depends on the journal, and 11.3% had no opinion.” Though prestige is of course only one factor, it is an important factor which can dissuade potential submissions. By synthesizing the results of twenty-six published survey results on authors’ perceptions of scholarly publishing, Xia (2010) showed that authors’ knowledge of OA has increased steadily over time, but survey data seems to "indicate a relative hesitation among scholars..."
for making contributions to OA journal publishing.\textsuperscript{21}

Though seemingly less common, scholars unfamiliar with the OA movement are prone to inquire whether these types of journals are respectable peer reviewed journals. Of course, the answer to this question is really no different than asking the same question of subscription journals, namely, it can only be decided on a case-by-case basis. Though it would make sense for a scholar to be somewhat hesitant of any newer journal that doesn’t have a long tradition of excellent high quality publications, the generalization of branding OA journals as low quality publication opportunities is an unwarranted negative generalization. Some proof for this includes the massive success and widespread respect for certain OA journals that include the seven peer reviewed and open access Public Library of Science (PLOS) journals. Another instance of this is the \textit{Philosopher's Imprint} which has been ranked as one of the top journals in the field of Philosophy by practicing philosophers.\textsuperscript{22}

Another option for authors who wish to make their articles more accessible, but not necessarily publish in an OA journal is to go the “Green OA” route. This option allows authors to make their work more widely available by posting their published article or a version of it on a personal webpage,\textsuperscript{23} institutional repository (IR), or general repository on the web. To do this, authors negotiate with publishers through scholarly communications departments, university counsel, or another campus entity to secure their intellectual property rights and retain permission to post their article freely over the internet. By taking this path, authors can publish in any journal they want so long as the journal accepts the conditions of the addendum. This path to OA attempts to sidestep a journal’s price barrier by also electronically posting the article in an open venue that is findable through general internet search engines. The success of Green OA is directly reliant on the consistency and reliability that authors will self-archive their material on their personal webpage or an IR. Unfortunately, existing estimates show that only about 15% of the peer-reviewed literature is presently being self-archived in IRs.\textsuperscript{24}

The Green OA movement has been bolstered by a growing number of universities that have instituted OA mandates or policies on their campuses.\textsuperscript{25} In practice these OA mandates have varying levels of strength with many simply encouraging faculty to publish in OA journals, submit copyright addendums so authors can retain their copyright over their articles, and an expectation that faculty will submit their published work to a university repository that is made openly accessible over the internet. However, there are a number of universities or colleges, such as The Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University who have taken what might be considered more proactive action in their OA mandates. Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences mandate reads:

“Each Faculty member grants to the President and Fellows of Harvard College permission to make available his or her scholarly articles and to exercise the copyright in those articles. In legal terms, the permission granted by each Faculty member is a nonexclusive, irrevocable, paid-up, worldwide license to exercise any and all rights under copyright relating to each of his or her scholarly articles, in any medium, and to authorize others to do the same, provided that the articles are not sold for a profit. […] The Dean or the Dean’s designate will waive application of the policy for a particular article upon written request by a Faculty member explaining the need. […] [E]ach Faculty member will provide an electronic copy of the final version of the article at no charge to the appropriate representative of the Provost’s Office […]. The Provost's Office may make the article available to the public in an open-access repository. […]”\textsuperscript{26}

The above policy is for all intents and purposes a mandate that faculty take the steps necessary to make sure their published work is not only available through the journal they are published in, but also make it open access through a university maintained open access institutional repository. A policy such as this allows for authors to publish in
any journal they wish to publish in regardless of its OA status, but it also takes action to make sure faculty retain their copyright over their article and because of that allows and encourages authors to make their work open access through the university’s institutional repository. This policy also makes it possible for faculty to be excused from the policy if, for example, a publisher is unwilling to negotiate their copyright policy.

Green OA should make scholarship more accessible, but there are a few pitfalls associated with this route. Currently, institutional repositories (IRs) tend to act as silos for collections of digital content. IRs that contain faculty research, will encompass every discipline on campus and because of this, it is mostly populated with articles from disciplines not of interest to someone doing research in a specific field. Considering this, it is unlikely that an IR would be searched directly by a researcher searching for scholarly articles on a topic outside of the local network. The most effective way of combatting this problem is to assure the content of one’s IR is indexed in major search engines, such as Google. However, doing this is only partially in the control of an IR manager. Search engines, such as Google, use their own proprietary algorithms to crawl and rank websites. The criteria of the algorithm is primarily focused on the popularity of a website, so general keyword searches for topics may not be successful at retrieving IR content from a web search. In order to combat this problem, data managers attempt to make their IRs appealing for search engines by assigning appropriate metadata and making content open, but IR managers are limited in what they can effectively accomplish. Many IR platforms are hosted by third party companies, which are optimized to work with specific metadata standards, for example Dublin Core, but traditionally Google chooses to use the Highwire Press metadata standard. This effectively makes an institutional repository not using Highwire Press mostly invisible to Google searches. This practice has the potential of making even direct searches for the title of an article housed in an IR irretrievable through Google. It is also important to note that starting an IR is expensive and, depending on their operational model, requires significant personnel time, making staffing a major issue.

For these reasons and more, many universities choose to not invest in faculty institutional repositories.

Many Association of Jesuit Colleges & Universities (AJCU) schools have IRs that focus on digital collections, special collections, and archive materials; however, only about half have IRs that are utilized to make faculty scholarship OA (see Table 2).

A third alternative, mostly championed by journal publishers, is often referred to as the Hybrid OA model. Subscription journals that participate in a hybrid OA program allow authors to purchase OA rights to their article. By doing this, authors do not have to be selective about which journals they publish in, the journal publisher continues to make their article locatable through all of the traditional means, including internet search engines and academic databases, but the articles would also be full-text accessible to anyone with an internet connection. The hybrid OA model has a number of positives associated with it; however, for the most part, this model does not have the same forward thinking stance on copyright retention for authors and publishers typically charge an exorbitantly high OA publishing fee. For example, according to Clobridge (2013) “fees range from $562 at the lowest end of the spectrum to $5,000 per article, with most falling between the $1,500 and $3,000 price points.” Sherpa/RoMEO, a database of journals’ and publishers’ stance on OA publishing, self-archiving, and archiving in repositories, also lists individual publisher’s fees associated with making an article OA.

The willingness of major universities to institute OA mandates and statements of support for OA publishing shows that the movement not only has considerable traction, but it is a respectable movement that, in terms of quality scholarship, deserves the same considerations that subscription based journals receive. Though that would seemingly be the case, the author of this article sought to test his own institutions perceptions of OA publishing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AJCU School</th>
<th>Institutional Repository for Faculty Scholarship</th>
<th>University-wide or College-level OA Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Boston College</td>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creighton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detroit Mercy</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairfield</td>
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<td>Fordham</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgetown</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gonzaga</td>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Cross</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Carroll</td>
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<tr>
<td>Le Moyne</td>
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<td>Loyola Chicago</td>
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<td>Scranton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>Law school only</td>
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<td>Spring hill</td>
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<td>St. Joseph's</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>St. Louis</td>
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<td>St. Peters</td>
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<td>U of San Francisco</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Wheeling Jesuit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xavier</td>
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**Table 2:** AJCU Institutions with IRs for faculty scholarship and OA Policies.
Findings

The University of Scranton, a Catholic and Jesuit University located in Scranton, Pennsylvania, emphasizes the mission of the Society of Jesus in its institutional mission, which includes the “service of faith and the promotion of justice.”

The author of this article, interested in learning more about his community’s knowledge and perspective of OA publishing, crafted an intentionally short survey that went out to all full-time faculty and academic administrators of The University of Scranton on Tuesday, April 2, 2013. In particular, the purpose of the survey was to discover faculty’s knowledge of OA, their attitudes toward OA publishing, speculation on how they believe their colleagues’ perceive OA publishing, their thoughts on whether OA was a social justice issue, and what they would like to see happen with OA at The University of Scranton. At the time the survey was administered, The University of Scranton had 290 full-time faculty members and at close of the survey there were 65 full-time faculty respondents and 3 administrators who completed the survey in full. Though responses were limited, 22% of the total full-time faculty did participate in the survey.

Full-time faculty members at The University of Scranton can at first be divided into three broad categories, non-tenure track, tenure track, and tenured. The survey represents two full-time non-tenure track positions, Lecturer and Faculty Specialist. There are differences between the two ranks, most notably lecturers are hired with limited term contracts and faculty specialists often have ongoing and renewable contracts. Tenure-track positions in order of ascending rank are Instructor, Assistant Professor, and Associate Professor. The University of Scranton’s faculty contract stipulates that faculty are allowed to apply for promotion one year before they apply for tenure, so there are a small number of untenured associate professors who completed the survey. Lastly, there are three ranks in which it is possible to earn tenure, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor. The complete breakdown of participants by rank is detailed in Figure 1:

![Figure 1: Breakdown of survey respondents](chart.png)
Figure 1. The survey is mostly representative of three primary groups of faculty, untenured Assistant Professors (22.1%), tenured Associate Professors (26.5%), and tenured Professors (22.1%). There were a total of 29 non-tenured and non-tenure track faculty respondents and 36 tenured respondents.

In a survey conducted in 2008, Morris and Thorn (2009) concluded that even though many respondents were aware of OA, they didn’t actually know what OA entailed. In the Scranton survey, the majority of respondents (50.7%) indicated that they were “Somewhat familiar” with Open Access publishing, while 26.9% and 14.9% stated they were “Somewhat unfamiliar” and “Completely unfamiliar,” respectively (see Figure 2). The majority of respondents noted that they were “Somewhat familiar” with OA. Survey Question 3 sought to verify how accurate respondents were at describing an OA journal.

As noted earlier, OA can come in multiple varieties, but there are a number of assumptions about OA that can be ruled out as false beliefs. For example, it is not accurate to generalize all OA journals as “Similar to a vanity press,” “Always has publication fees,” “Never peer reviewed,” and “Always peer reviewed.” On the positive side, very few respondents selected these false characterizations of OA journals and the majority of survey takers (72.3%) accurately described OA as “Freely accessible over the internet” while 43.1% noted that they “Sometimes have publication fees” and 53.8% indicated that they were “Sometimes peer reviewed.” Based on these results, most respondents seem to have at least a basic grasp of the general characteristics of OA journals (see Figure 3 for detailed results).

The most interesting results of this particular question are related to promotion and tenure. Less than half of the respondents (43.1%) believed that a publication in an OA journal would benefit someone applying for promotion or tenure, while 18.5% indicated that a publication in an OA journal might harm someone applying for promotion or tenure. For the OA movement to truly thrive, faculty would need to believe that OA publications would help someone applying for promotion or tenure otherwise publishing in OA could come at the cost of one’s career. Though the author of the survey sympathizes with the very positive review of OA journals, the most appropriate answer of the three would likely be “Open Access, in and of itself, has no bearing on promotion and tenure” for which 27.7% indicated this answer to be the most appropriate. This is of course based in the fact that there do exist a number of low quality OA journals that may be looked upon negatively by one’s peers and could ultimately harm one’s prospect for promotion and tenure.
OA journals that are not peer reviewed likely play a part in the negative connotations associated with the term “open access.” Informally speaking, OA has gained considerable traction in the last few years. In April 2009, there were 4,000 OA journals listed on the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), as of November 2014 there are over 10,000 OA journals listed on the DOAJ. Even more telling, in a 2008 random sample study of articles indexed in Scopus, 20.4% were found to be freely accessible on the web. In a 2014 study using the same methodology, Chen (2014) found that the percentage of freely available Scopus sample articles has increased to 37.8%. However, a rise in what has been dubbed “predatory OA journals” likely causes scholars added concern when considering OA publishing. Predatory OA journals typically are journals that guarantee the quality of their journal and the stringent peer review process accepted articles undergo. However, the reality is often far from true as predatory OA journals will seek out potential authors, persuade them to submit to their journal, accept the articles outright with little to no peer review; they offer no critical feedback, or professional editorial work, and will quickly publish the article. After publication of the article, these publishers will charge exorbitantly high fees for publication, fees that the publisher is not upfront about. Leaving the author in a difficult
OA publications would benefit someone applying for promotion or tenure | OA publications might harm someone applying for promotion or tenure | OA in and of itself has no bearing on promotion and tenure
---|---|---
Non-tenured | 12 | 7 | 6
Tenured | 15 | 5 | 11
Administrator | 1 | 0 | 1

Table 3: Perceptions of OA by tenure or administrator status

OA publications would benefit someone applying for promotion or tenure | OA publications might harm someone applying for promotion or tenure | OA in and of itself has no bearing on promotion and tenure
---|---|---
Non-tenured | 12 | 7 | 6
Tenured | 15 | 5 | 11
Administrator | 1 | 0 | 1

Table 3: Perceptions of OA by tenure or administrator status

situation to pay the fee or contest the charges and pull one’s article from publication. Though the fee is an incredibly negative consequence of predatory OA journals, it is arguably nowhere near as devastating as what it could potentially do to one’s scholarly reputation and their pursuit for tenure and promotion. Though one sign of a predatory OA journal is a publication fee, it is not enough of a distinguishing factor to predicate a particular journal as “predatory.” There are legitimate, high quality OA journals that do charge publication fees, most notably in the sciences, while other legitimate, high quality OA journals do not charge an OA fee. Unfortunately, there is no easy to follow formula for determining the legitimacy of an OA publication.

A further breakdown revealed that tenured faculty respondents at The University of Scranton hold publications in OA journals in a mostly positive light, with 48.4% noting that OA would benefit someone and 35.4% believing that OA, in and of itself, should have no bearing on promotion or tenure, while only 16.1% believed an OA publication might harm someone applying for promotion or tenure. Non-tenured faculty, though mostly positive in their assessment of OA, seem to indicate slightly more pause when it comes to OA publications, with a significant 28.0% believing that OA publications might harm someone applying for promotion or tenure (see Table 3).

The survey revealed that the large majority of respondents (82.4%) have not published in an OA Journal, whereas 10.3% indicated that they have published in an OA journal. A small percentage of respondents (7.3%) were not familiar enough with OA to answer or could not recall if they have published in an OA journal in the past (see Figure 4). On the face of it, these results are rather discouraging for OA publishing. As for their willingness, 50.0% of respondents indicated that they might publish in an OA journal in the future,
but “it depends” (see Figure 5). Even if the respondents mostly believed that OA publishing would benefit someone or would have no direct effect on someone applying for promotion or tenure, respondents still seem to be holding off on submitting their work to OA journals echoing trends witnessed in other published surveys.\(^{45}\)

Even if respondents in general did not believe that OA publications were in and of themselves of lower or questionable quality, the majority of respondents (58.5%) feared that their colleagues did view OA publishing in a negative light. It is also worth noting that 23.1% of respondents indicated that they had their own concerns about the quality of OA journals, while slightly fewer respondents (21.5%) stated that they have “no concerns about publishing in OA journals.” Though not wholly relatable, responses to this question resemble responses by 55.5% of business faculty that indicated “OA journals were less prestigious than subscription-based journals.”\(^{46}\)

Respondents’ second and third major concerns about OA publishing were publication fees (32.3%) and being unaware of which journals were in fact OA (30.8%), respectively (see Figure 6).

If the survey is representative of The University of Scranton’s faculty, then it would seem there are substantial concerns about publishing in OA journals mostly due to how respondents believed their colleagues might perceive OA publishing. Further exploration into these results seem to indicate that this fear of the unknown transcends the tenured and untenured divide with an almost equal number of respondents from each category indicating that they had at least some anxiety about how their colleagues might perceive OA publishing. Of the 38 respondents who selected that they had concerns about their colleagues’ perceptions of OA publishing, twenty were tenured respondents, or 55.5% of the total number of tenured respondents, and eighteen were untenured faculty, or 62.1% of untenured respondents.
One possible method of combatting any negative stigma scholars may have over OA is to develop an OA policy that is ratified by the shared governing bodies of a university. Such a route can come in different extremes, such as OA mandates or general statements of support for OA publishing. Survey Question 8 was in part meant to test the faculty’s perceived need for an OA policy at The University of Scranton. The largest faction was made up of people unsure if The University of Scranton needed an OA policy (48.5%) and an additional 16.2% noted that it may be worth having (see Figure 7). Only a small portion (5.9%) stated they did not think the university needed an OA policy, whereas 29.4% of respondents noted that they would like a policy. Given the open ended nature of the question with no real description of what an OA policy might entail, it is not surprising to see the “unsure” and “maybe” categories being the most selected options. However, a significant portion noted that they would like an OA policy with one respondent noting that an OA policy “would help with Rank & Tenure decisions.” It is possible that this faculty member was still considering what they believed their colleagues’ perceptions of OA are and how it might affect individuals choosing to publish in OA venues. The subsequent survey question asked, “Ideally, what would The University of Scranton’s Open Access policy contain? (e.g., mandatory archiving on a university website, mandatory inclusion of copyright addendum, statement that a publication will not be viewed prejudicially based solely on the fact that it is an open access publication, etc.).” This question was meant to work in tandem with Question 8, so that it might be inferred what benefits faculty believed an OA policy might bring with it. Of the 33 comments, 11 indicated that they did not know, or they were unsure what an OA policy should contain due to their limited knowledge of OA and one additional commenter provided an inaccurate description of OA. An additional 16 commenters lent general support for the development of an OA policy, with 15 of those 16 stating that the policy should speak positively of OA publishing and another 6 noting an OA policy should contain all of the question’s example statements (i.e., mandatory archiving, mandatory inclusion of addendum, statement against prejudicial views on OA). Individual comments were reassuring and showed that some faculty respondents are knowledgeable of OA policies. A summary of faculty responses to this question appears in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe.</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not sure.</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Respondents interest in seeing an OA policy at The University of Scranton.
had some concerns over their colleagues’ perceptions of OA, it would seem an inclusion of a line like this might be beneficial to advancing OA publishing at The University of Scranton. A few of the open ended comments were rather illuminating, for example, one respondent noted that if the University were to set up a system for faculty to request their potential OA publication fees to be offset by the university that it would “encourage more research” and “make us more innovative.” However, an OA policy may not necessarily bolster OA publishing on campus. Considering that most OA journals are by their very nature in their infancy and must compete against journals that have been publishing for decades, they often lack the scholarly reputation that their subscription counterparts have developed over the years. No matter how much support is lent in favor of OA publishing on one’s campus, a broader, perhaps even more important question is how will these publications be viewed by colleagues from one’s field? This idea is echoed by the academic philosopher Novaes who notes that:

“What stands in the way of open access journals in philosophy is to a large extent the issue of establishing a reputation as a top-quality venue; we are still too hung up on the traditional ‘top journals’, and a bit wary of novelty. Open access or not, it is very difficult for a new journal to establish itself in philosophy – we are a rather conservative discipline.”

Undoubtedly, many fields extending beyond philosophy share the same wariness of novelty. That being said, as time passes and more distinguished scholars publish in OA publications, the prestige of OA journals will develop over time at varying rates. Therefore, the best way for OA to be rid of its image problem is to find ways to encourage more scholars to adopt a willingness to publish in OA venues. One such way to help the cause along would be to eliminate local concerns by having a university mandate or statement in support of OA publications.

As a way to garner the largest possible feedback on whether survey takers believed OA was a social justice issue, the Budapest Open Access Initiative’s definition was included in the question. This tactic was mildly successful in understanding faculty’s perspectives on this question with 65 out of 68 survey takers responding to the question. The largest portion of faculty (47.7%) believed OA might be a social justice issue based on the definition from the Budapest Open Access Initiative, while 22.7% believed it was not, 24.2% believed it was, and 6.1% believed “it is a social justice issue, but not because of the above definition.”

Even though 22% of full-time faculty is not a statistically significant number of respondents, the results of the survey were illuminating in that it showed the majority of respondents felt positively about OA publishing and its ideals, but a considerable margin had concerns about their colleagues’ perceptions and felt no personal call to begin submitting their research to OA journals.

## Open Access Publishing as Social Justice Issue

Though survey results indicated faculty were unsure if OA is a social justice issue, this of course does not definitively mean that OA is not a social justice issue. Since few faculty would likely be doing research into the OA movement, it is not surprising that only a few respondents would make the connection between OA and social justice. It is worth noting that social justice is not a

![Image](image-url)
concept unique to the Jesuits and because of that it is formulated in different ways, such as John Rawls’ conception of justice as “fairness.”49 Some scholars have convincingly tied OA to social justice,50 normally focusing on the Rawlsian conception.51 However, no one, to the best of the author’s knowledge, has explored this connection with particular emphasis on the Jesuit conception of social justice. In order to show that OA could be considered a social justice issue in light of the Jesuit mission and worldview and with the hope that further dialogue on this issue can begin to take place among AJCU educators, I present a brief argument based on the published positions of the Society of Jesus and the Catholic Church.

The Society of Jesus believes that social justice means “confronting the structures of our world that perpetuate poverty and injustice.”52 Therefore, if the OA movement’s mission and actual practice is to confront poverty and injustice, then it could be considered a social justice issue. Poverty, which is often simply regarded as an extreme dearth of money and material possessions, seems to be a bit more nuanced and complex under Catholic interpretations. In the Gaudium et Spes, Pope Paul VI writes:

“In order for individual men to discharge with greater exactness the obligations of their conscience toward themselves and the various group to which they belong, they must be carefully educated to a higher degree of culture through the use of the immense resources available today to the human race. Above all the education of youth from every social background has to be undertaken, so that there can be produced not only men and women of refined talents, but those great-souled persons who are so desperately required by our times.

Now a man can scarcely arrive at the needed sense of responsibility, unless his living conditions allow him to become conscious of his dignity, and to rise to his destiny by spending himself for God and for others. But human freedom is often crippled when a man encounters extreme poverty just as it withers when he indulges in too many of life’s comforts and imprisons himself in a kind of splendid isolation. Freedom acquires new strength, by contrast, when a man consents to the unavoidable requirements of social life, takes on the manifold demands of human partnership, and commits himself to the service of the human community” (par. 31).”53

Based on the above, the Catholic Church draws a clear connection between poverty, freedom, and dignity. In further support of this, Pope Paul VI writes “When we fight poverty and oppose the unfair conditions of the present, we are not just promoting human well-being; we are also furthering man’s spiritual and moral development, and hence we are benefiting the whole human race” (par. 76).54 The position of the Catholic Church seems to be that human freedom and dignity is the ultimate goal, but it is difficult if not impossible to reach if a person is impoverished. In addition to being free from concerns of poverty, is the explicit need or importance of being “carefully educated to a higher degree of culture through the use of the immense resource available today to the human race.”55 There is no specific mention of what those “immense resources” might be, but given that the statement is clearly in reference to education and culture, it seems plausible, if not certain, that the resources must include the body of knowledge that our collective culture creates, since knowledge of all types is universally used in all forms of education.

As noted above,56 the consistent rise in the cost of journals at a rate well above inflation points to the subscription model of publishing as a structure that could potentially be perpetuating poverty. This is most noticeable in the developing world, but with recent widespread criticism of college tuition rates in the United States, it may also be an issue for AJCU schools as well. The primary purpose of a library has always been to make knowledge resources available to its community. It is also justified to claim that library resources lead to a better education. In a large study of over 5,000 first year undergraduates students at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, results showed that “four particular types of library resources were significantly and positively
associated with students’ academic achievement: using the library workstations (indicating physical presence in the libraries), accessing online databases, accessing electronic journals, and checking out books.”

University libraries provide many forms of knowledge and information resources, but, to a community of scholars, journals are on an equal footing, if not of greater importance, than any other type of information. It seems uncontestable that having access to knowledge and especially mostly current scholarship is essential to a higher education; if not to all disciplines, it is at least essential to the sciences and health professions. If universities regularly need to increase library budgets in order to accommodate journal subscription inflation, it would follow that every year journals raise their rates at a level beyond the CPI, they are negatively impacting a university’s bottom line. Assuming all AJCU libraries are at least partially funded by tuition money, then these yearly increases in subscription costs would in turn have an effect on tuition rates.

It is well known that college tuition in the United States has risen steadily on a yearly basis. According to College Board’s yearly study of college tuition costs and affordability, “from 1983-84 to 2013-14, average published tuition and fees at private nonprofit four-year institutions rose by 153%, from $11,909 (in 2013 dollars) to $30,094” with the 2013-2014 academic year increase of 2.9% being the lowest increase in over 30 years. Rising college tuition has always been a matter of concern, but when compacted with ever rising income inequality, this issue becomes even more exacerbated. According to Denk et al., “Income inequality and relative poverty in the United States are among the highest in the OECD and have substantially increased over the past decades.”

Based on U.S. Census data, Oxford Analytica Daily Brief posits that a college degree is the most important attribute for income advancement and assurance of eventual employment. Therefore, there is a clear connection between rising college costs, shrinking spending power, and the necessity of a college degree for income advancement and employment. If libraries need to have current scholarship in order to meet the needs of a higher education, and the cost of subscriptions continually rise, then this will affect university expenditure. Rise in expenditure leads to higher tuition increases, which in turn leads to more difficulty in affording a college education. If more people are dropping below the poverty line in the United States as opposed to surpassing the poverty line, then their opportunities to receive a college education are diminished. Lastly, if a college degree is the most effective way of increasing one’s economic power and employability, but college is unaffordable for those without the financial means, then any structure that leads to an increase in university tuition, while regularly and substantially increasing one’s own profits, is a structure that is perpetuating poverty. All of this speaks toward a serious injustice.

Turning to international implications, the high cost of journals precludes subscriptions for all but a few libraries in the developing world. Developing countries have a need for OA scholarly information, as evidenced by published testimonials and from various reports. For example, a recent report published by Mendeley, which drew from data from over 2 million users, concluded that:

“Developing countries are facing considerable challenges: To afford each of their researchers’ access to an additional 50 research papers, developing countries require a ten-fold increase in R&D expenditure per capita. This highlights the importance of the recent trend towards Open Access publishing for making researchers in developing countries more competitive.”

It has already been posited that having access to a body of knowledge is a necessary component of a higher education, but many developing countries have limited access to much of the scholarly literature published in subscription journals due to the high costs associated with subscribing. The 31st Congregation of the Society of Jesus decreed that Jesuits “keep in mind the special importance of collaborating with those international organizations which promote education, especially in less developed countries. The OA movement is a group of individuals, internationally dispersed, that have banded together with the express goal of widely disseminating scholarship for free to
anyone with access to the internet. The widespread adoption of OA publishing in the United States would enable students and scholars in developing countries to have access to research that they otherwise would not be able to use in their own research or for classroom purposes, effectively confronting a structure that perpetuates poverty, while promoting a more comprehensive education in developing countries. OA publications have the potential of reaching more scholars and it has been demonstrated that OA articles are read more than articles in subscription based publications. Therefore, when citizens of developing countries have the potential to access cutting edge scholarship for free, this enables education, which in turn leads to increased earning potential and employability, ultimately creating the conditions for human dignity and freedom. Under this model, subscription journals would need to get more competitive in their pricing or perhaps would need to investigate more sustainable business models as more scholars choose to publish in OA alternatives. By definition and practice OA publishing has it at its core the goal of making published work as openly accessible as possible by eliminating restrictive barriers, such as subscription fees. Therefore, OA is an international movement that attempts to lessen the impact of poverty by sharing the wealth of scholarly literature.

**Conclusion**

The University of Scranton, a Catholic and Jesuit University, is guided by the principles of the Catholic Church and the Society of Jesus and one of many key Catholic and Jesuit principles is the active promotion of social justice. Open access may not explicitly be known as a social justice issue, but it most definitely is an attempt at making research and education equal to all and therefore it is one way to bring about a more just world. The University of Scranton’s lack of a policy or statement is unsurprising as further research showed that none of the AJCU schools have an institution wide OA policy in place. Since “[t]he mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement,” then fostering and encouraging OA at AJCU schools would be a positive improvement in terms of embodying the university’s mission and encouraging faculty to take a more just approach to scholarly publishing. The prestige of OA will undoubtedly continue to be an issue until publishing in OA journals becomes a common practice. However, for researchers to seriously consider publishing in OA journals, they will need encouragement and reassurance that doing so will not be detrimental to their careers. As evidenced in this survey, general reassurance would be beneficial to scholars who are considering publishing in OA venues but are hesitant due to potential negative repercussions from colleagues who may have an inaccurate and negative view of OA journals. To accomplish this, comprehensive OA policies would likely be ideal, but it is clear that doing so is a large scale project that involves considerable dedicated resources, such as an institutional repository and funds dedicated to paying OA publication fees for faculty scholarship. However, a general statement of support would be a relatively straightforward and easy step that all AJCU schools could take. Such a statement would be in line with the Jesuit mission, would encourage faculty to consider OA journals, and in turn would solidify the connection between OA and social justice.
Aulisio: Open Access Publishing and Social Justice


10 Ibid.


18 For a comprehensive list of OA journals, see the Directory of Open Access Journals accessible at http://doaj.org/.


23 Occasionally, the personal webpage route is referred to as “Grey OA,” but it is safe to say this is a subclass of the Green OA route. The drab color choice is likely in regards to the commonly held belief that personal webpage are less findable than institutionally maintained webpages.


31 I’m indebted to Prof. Kristen Yarmey, Associate Professor and Digital Services Librarian, The University of Scranton, for her expert insight into all of the issues associated with Institutional Repositories.


34 SHERPA/RoMEO, “Publishers with Paid Options for Open Access,” accessed July 1, 2014,
http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/PaidOA.php?la=en&version=p


38 Determining the quality of an OA journal is a multistep process, but a good starting point is to check for the journal’s name or its publisher in Beall’s List of “Potential, possible, or probable predatory scholarly open-access publishers,” http://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/.


48 Budapest Open Access Initiative, “Read the Budapest Open Access Initiative,” 1.


55 Ibid.

56 Narda Tafuri (ed.), “Prices of U.S. and Foreign Published Materials” 7.


58 The author believes that if it is not wholly necessary, it is at least of great importance for all disciplines to have access to current scholarship. This assures a robust education that is continually developing.

59 With alternatives being funding through endowments and gifts.


71 Thank you to Prof. Donna Witek, Associate Professor and Public Services Librarian, The University of Scranton, for her willingness to read through a draft of this section and offer her invaluable comments and suggested edits.

72 At least none are readily available online or listed in the ROARMAP repository, available at http://roarmap.eprints.org/.