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Library support for open access journal publishing: a needs analysis

The aim of this study was to establish the role of academic libraries in the context of open access (OA) journal publishing, based on the perceived needs of the journals and/or their editors. As a study sample, 14 OA journals affiliated to the University of Zürich, Switzerland, were taken. They were very different in nature, ranging from well-established society journals to newly founded titles launched by dedicated individuals. The study comprised two approaches: a comprehensive journal assessment and subsequent editor interviews. The journal assessments evaluated the functionalities, ease of use, sustainability and visibility of the journal. The interviews were used to get additional background information about the journals and explore editors' needs, experiences and viewpoints. The results show that journals affiliated to publishing houses or libraries are technically well provided for. Unaffiliated journals offer fewer functionalities and display some unconventional features, often described as innovations by the editors. More resources – financial or human – is seen by nearly all editors as the most pressing need and as a limitation to growth. In comparison, IT/technical needs are mentioned much less often. The article also describes the launch of an Editors' Forum, an idea suggested by the editors and implemented by the library. This Forum offered further valuable insight into the potential role of libraries, but also specifically addressed several of the editors' needs as expressed in the interviews.

Introduction

Libraries are increasingly moving from content collection to content creation. Many librarians consider that the library as a publisher is both desirable and inevitable as libraries expand their service portfolio to best support their users' needs.[1,2] Activities and services, such as digitization of existing collections, institutional repositories, data and journal hosting services, research data management and e-publishing, all fall into this broad category of 'library-as-publisher'. Within this field, open access (OA) journal publishing has become a popular service offered by many libraries worldwide, increasingly attracting the interest of researchers. The obvious way for a library to support journal publishing is to provide a journal management system and thus support the launch of a new journal or migration of an existing title. Two journal management systems which are frequently mentioned in literature are Open Journal Systems (OJS) from Public Knowledge Project (PKP) or Digital Commons from bepress.[3,4,5]

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The author was aware that by no means all OA journals edited by academics employ a professional journal management system and/or are supported by their library. Furthermore, some journals are owned by third parties and are therefore not free to co-operate with their library.

This study aimed to gain an overview of all types of OA journal and establish the needs of the journals and/or their editors. What are their needs? And what could be the role of the library? Should the library focus on promoting a centralized journal management system? Or should the library primarily offer independent consultancy services for journal editors, irrespective of the system employed? Do editors even want or need such publishing advice?

Literature review

A literature review shows that most of the relevant publications are authored by librarians and refer to OA journals that come under their care, i.e. journals that are hosted and

supported by the library.[6] These publications generally represent a library perspective, not the editor's viewpoint. This strong library perspective does not mean that there is no genuine need on the side of the editors. Indeed, Hahn emphasizes that 'interviews suggest library-based publishing programs are pragmatic responses to evident needs, not services in search of clients.'[7]

It is striking that, despite this evident need, it is difficult to find literature offering a survey of the requirements from an editor's point of view. Instead, we find individual case histories describing the foundation of an OA journal or the transition of an existing journal from a subscription-based to an OA dissemination model. The thrust of such case studies is normally a strong advocacy for open access, a description of the chosen open source journal management system and a rough outline of the financial arrangements.[8,9,10,11] There is no systematic analysis or documentation of the editors' needs. The reason for this gap in literature is certainly that such case histories normally only describe *one* journal, i.e. they lack the comparative perspective. Also, given that these articles are written by the editor of the journal, it is not surprising that they are all presented as success stories with little mention of ongoing, pressing needs.

> 'There is no systematic analysis or documentation of the editors' needs'

Moving back to the more copious literature authored by librarians, the main emphasis on the benefits of library publishing relate to the economic advantage as compared to traditional or commercial publishers. The primary incentive for journal editors to work with their library is their low- or no-cost publishing models. Literature shows that some libraries charge for journal publishing services, others do not and some offer mixed models.[12,13,14,15]

> 'the main emphasis on the benefits of library publishing relate to the economic advantage'

An analysis of the case studies evaluated in this literature review shows that journals involved in library-publishing are often newly founded journals, faculty-edited journals in niche or emerging fields, often in humanities or social sciences (HSS), small society publications, institutional print journals wishing to move online or student journals. It is often pointed out that the journals lack the resources to co-operate with traditional publishers. It is not always clear whether the journal editors voted for open access, or whether this was a requirement of the library's publishing policy. Many university libraries have a very strong or exclusive commitment to open access,[16,17,18,19] whilst others also support subscription-based journal publishing.[20,21] Very few journals published by libraries charge authors article processing charges (APCs). Busher and Kamotsky note that out of 700 journals using Digital Commons in 2013, 94% were open access, and none relied on APCs.[22] But, as mentioned above, all these studies relate to journals published by libraries; extremely little is known about institutional, non-commercial OA journals published outside libraries.

There is very little information about the criteria libraries employ when taking on, i.e. accepting to support, a journal. Mattson and Friend offer a sample consultation script,[23] Kennison outlines her team's exploration of the needs that have to be met for journals to be accepted,[24] and McIntyre, Chan and Gross recall the assessment and interview process with the editor.[25] The existence of such selection criteria indicates that not all editors applying for library support are granted this backing. Some authors specifically mention that their libraries do not have the resources to take on all the journals knocking at their door.[26] Mattson and Friend indicate that not all journals 'meet the established standards for library endorsement'[27] without expanding on what these are. This means that some – or perhaps even many – journals are left out in the cold, without appropriate library support. In other words, the demand appears to exceed the libraries' capacities.

Interestingly, some libraries offer different levels of service within their publishing programme. Penn State University offers four tiers,[28] Columbia University Libraries offers six levels of service from a barebones service (no fee) to a premier service (fee).[29] Several authors propose that a full journal management system may be too intricate for some projects and that some journals may be better served with a simple blog installation.[30,31,32] This is very valuable information, but unfortunately the authors do not indicate which criteria they apply for this distinction.

Perry makes a useful point that even where libraries cannot (or not yet) provide dissemination capabilities, i.e. a journal management system, demand for advisory services is growing.[33] Perry also provides a useful list of support services outside OJS.

Research questions

The aim of this study was to establish the role of the university library in the context of OA journal publishing, based on the perceived needs of the journals and/or their editors. The phrasing 'perceived needs of the journals and/or the editors' is intentional, as it was not clear from the outset whether these two viewpoints would be identical.

Obviously, journals cannot have 'needs' in the same way as an editor can express his or her needs. However, if you consider that each journal has to compete in a highly competitive market in order to achieve scholarly standing and reputation, it becomes clear that there are targets and requirements that have to be met. In this study, these targets and requirements are expressed as 'needs of the journal' and are encapsulated in the criteria applied in the journal assessment. Thus the needs analysis consists of two parts, described here as journal assessment and editor interviews.

In order to answer this principal overarching question, the study addressed the following research questions:

- Which features and functionalities do the journals offer?

- How sustainable are they?

- How do they benefit from publisher or library support?

- Which technologies or systems are used to host and manage the journals?

- Have the editors made secure arrangements for long-term access and digital archiving?

- How committed are the editors to the underlying purpose of open access?

- What are the editors' most pressing needs?

- Where do the editors see the role of libraries?

As a sample the author chose those journals closest to her home library, the Zentralbibliothek Zürich, which is the central university library of the University of Zürich, Switzerland. The University also has a Main Library which focuses primarily on supporting the sciences and medicine. The Main Library also runs the University's institutional repository and has just recently launched a pilot project for OJS.

Methods

Journal sample

The sample chosen for this study was all the OA journals affiliated with the University of Zürich. A further criterion was that the content of the journal had to be scholarly and peer-reviewed.

Identifying these journals in the first place presented a significant challenge, as many of them are not recorded in regular periodical listings, such as the Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek (EZB)[34] or Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). And even where they are recorded, they are not searchable by affiliated institution. Furthermore, it proved difficult to define the affiliation: what does 'affiliated with the University of Zürich' mean in practice? Whilst some journals have a clear institutional affiliation to the University, this link is less obvious in other cases. In the end, the sample was extended to include all OA journals where the editor-in-chief or a key member on the editorial board was a member of the University teaching or research staff, or where the editing society had a strong link with the University.

As mentioned above, this first research phase had already highlighted a significant problem with many OA journals: they are not systematically recorded in traditional catalogues and indexes. Finally, various internet searches and suggestions from subject librarians led to a list of 14 journals that were considered suitable for the study (Table 1). However, there is no way of saying whether this is a comprehensive list of all eligible journals. Some of the online journals covered in this study continue to publish print copies, though these print versions are not part of the evaluation.

Journal	URL	Subject area
Altrelettere	http://www.altrelettere.uzh.ch/index.html	Italian literature
Asiatische Studien – Études Asiatiques	http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/asia	Asian studies
Bfo-Journal	http://bauforschungonline.ch/bfo-journal.html	Art & architecture
Common – Journal für Kunst & Öffentlichkeit	http://commonthejournal.com/	Art & public space
Electronic Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law	http://www.ejimel.uzh.ch/index.html	Law
Foucaultblog	http://www.fsw.uzh.ch/foucaultblog/	Economic and social history
Geographica Helvetica	http://www.geographica-helvetica.net/	Geography
Ibidem (student journal)	http://www.phil.uzh.ch/elearning/blog/ibidem/	Italian language and literature
Journal für Psychoanalyse	http://www.psychoanalyse-journal.ch/	Psychology
Journal of Research Projects – East Asian Art Section	E-Book, not yet available online	Asian art studies
kids + media	http://www.kids-media.uzh.ch	Media studies
Vierteljahrsschrift der Naturforschenden Gesellschaft	http://www.ngzh.ch/publikationen/vierteljahrsschrift	Biosciences
Zeitschrift für Rezensionen zur germanistischen Sprachwissenschaft	http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/zrs	German language
Zeitschrift Schreiben – European Journal of Writing	http://www.zeitschrift-schreiben.eu/	Academic writing

Table 1. List of OA journals affiliated to the University of Zürich and included in the study.
NB: The definition of 'affiliated to' is explained fully under 'Journal sample' above.

All the journals in Table 1 are scholarly, peer-reviewed, available open access and none of them charges APCs. Apart from that, they vary considerably: several are well-established journals published by commercial publishers or societies and others are newly founded titles launched by dedicated academics. Finally, one of the journals is still 'under construction', so whilst the editor was willing to take part in an interview, the functionalities were not yet available for testing. This range and variety of journals means that the survey provides a very broad overview of the different types of OA journal.

Part 1: journal assessments

The aim of the journal assessment was to evaluate the functionalities, ease of use, sustainability and visibility of the journal. These are essential features for every successful online journal. Professional librarians are experienced at assessing journals as part of their collection management responsibilities. This knowledge and experience can be usefully employed to evaluate OA journals.

Content and reputation were not part of the survey, as the journals covered such a broad range of subjects, types and audiences. Instead, specific criteria were chosen to reflect the competitiveness and sustainability of the journal. These include criteria used by DOAJ,[35] quality-related criteria from the ISI website,[36] and suggestions from the Handbook of Journal Publishing.[37] In addition, the author has relevant journal publishing experience from a former position in academic publishing.

'specific criteria were chosen to reflect the competitiveness and sustainability of the journal'

Part 2: editor interviews

Following the journal assessments, individual interviews were carried out with the editors of all 14 journals. The main purpose of these interviews was to fill some of the gaps and get additional background information about the journals and the editors' needs, experiences and viewpoints. Questions related to technical issues which were not apparent from the journal website; procedures for article submission, peer review, copy-editing and layout; and financial and resourcing aspects. Besides these technical and managerial issues, the interview also covered strategic and conceptual topics. These questions concerned the editor's motivation, his or her commitment to open access, plans for future development, and pressing worries and concerns. Finally, editors were asked where they saw the role of their university library.

Just as the journals covered a wide range of journal types, the editors also varied greatly in their publishing experience and mode of work. Some had been in an editorial role for years and had migrated their journal from print to online. In the case of society journals, the editors were employed by the society. With the more recently launched journals, some editorial teams had responsibilities clearly assigned, whilst in other cases 'everyone did everything'. Most of these newer journals appeared to be genuine team efforts, but in three cases, the journal was essentially run by one individual. The interviews were held with the person or persons affiliated to the University of Zürich. This was not always the editor-in-chief, but sometimes a co-editor or key member of the editorial board. In some cases the editor also brought his editorial or technical assistant to the interview.

> 'the editors varied greatly in their publishing experience and mode of work'

With regard to age, academic rank and computer skills, the editors also varied significantly. Amongst the newly founded journals, there were several editors who felt that their specific sub-discipline lacked a communication forum and had thus launched a new journal. But already in these cases the age span ranged from junior researcher to senior professor. Others worked in teams where all age groups and levels of academic rank were represented. Regarding computer skills, they all seemed knowledgeable, but relied on a webmaster or technical assistant for specific IT issues.

Journal editors are extremely busy people and it was clear from the start that they would only agree to take part in an interview if they got the impression that there was something in it for them, too. Therefore, as part of the introductory e-mail or telephone communication, it was important to drop a few unobtrusive suggestions as to how the editor could improve his or her journal. Such hints (e.g. 'Have you ever considered using Creative Commons licences for your journal?') immediately awakened the editors' interest and made them willing to engage in a more extensive interview.

Editors' Forum

Following the interviews, the Zentralbibliothek organized and hosted an Editors' Forum as a networking opportunity for the editors. Strictly speaking, this Forum was not part of the study, but it offered further valuable insights into the needs of editors, therefore it is included in this article.

The suggestion for an Editors' Forum came from the editors and was arranged shortly after the last interview. The idea was to bring editors together, offer them an opportunity to network, present their journal, discuss issues of their choice and learn more about the services available from the libraries.

Results and discussion

The study provided two sets of results: the findings from the journal assessments and the input derived from the editor interviews. Finally, further insight came from the Editors' Forum which is presented here after the results section. To respect and protect the privacy of journals and editors, names of individual journals, editors and publishing houses are not shown in the results.

Journal assessments

The journal assessments were carried out based on information available on the journal website. This data was verified and amended during the subsequent interviews with the editors. As one of the journals was still 'under construction', the assessment only covers 13 journals.

In total 21 criteria were used to assess the functionalities, visibility and ease of use of the journal (referred to as 'features' in the text below). A further four criteria were used to evaluate the sustainability of the journal. The last two sets of criteria concern the support available from an affiliated publishing house or library and the technical platform or system in use. The results are shown in Table 2.

The Features section in Table 2 [lines 1–21] shows which functionalities are more common than others, and how they are distributed across the journals. Some features are common for all or most journals (e.g. editorial 'Who is Who' [line 1]), whilst others are reserved for more sophisticated journals (e.g. article-level metrics [line 20]).

Most widespread are features relating to general information about the journal as a whole (e.g. editorial 'Who is Who' [line 1], Aims and Scope [line 3], ISSN [line 6]). More detailed information, often relating to individual articles or authors, is less widespread (e.g. full author details [line 8], peer-review process explained [line 14], author terms explained [line 18]).

Basic navigational and search functionalities are also to be found in nearly all journals (e.g. browsing by year [line 4], basic search [line 5]). However, even with regard to these very common features, some of the journals are seemingly lacking; a point explored further down in this section. Advanced search functionalities [line 19] are only available with two journals. Instead, five journals support specific subject or author access [line 15]. Interestingly, all of these five journals are 'unaffiliated journals.'[38] Could it be that publishers and libraries do not recognize the relevance and appeal of this browse option?

> 'Could it be that publishers and libraries do not recognize the relevance and appeal of this browse option?'

Metadata: Whilst most of the journals are registered in the Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek (EZB) [line 7], only two are recorded in DOAJ [line 21]. It is not likely that all 13 journals would qualify for inclusion in DOAJ, but it was remarkable how few editors were aware of the existence of the Directory. This is an important finding which indicates that longitudinal surveys of OA journals based exclusively on journals recorded in DOAJ cannot be considered comprehensive in scope.[39] Nearly half the journals use DOI to identify articles [line 11], a service offered by the neighbouring ETH Library. Inclusion in abstract and index (A&I) services is comparatively rare [line 16], and only available with publisher-affiliated journals.

Only three journals have arrangements in place for a secure digital archive [line 25]; these are all publisher-affiliated journals.

During the interview it was fascinating to see how editors – especially those managing unaffiliated journals – responded to features seemingly lacking in their journal. Indeed, where elements were missing from a librarian's point of view, there could easily be a reason for this. For example, two editors intentionally do not display any numbering (volume or year) on their journal entry page as they consider this unnecessary and archaic. [lines 4 and 15] Instead they offer and encourage browsing by subject/author. Two journals have even created their own citation method which does not require volume or article numbering. The interviews showed that academics can see online journals as an opportunity to free themselves from the constraints forced upon them by print publications. Also, editors define a journal differently from the way librarians are taught at library school! This was an important lesson to be learnt: where a journal may seem lacking from a librarian's point of view, editors might intentionally be experimenting with new forms of scholarly communication.

> 'where a journal may seem lacking from a librarian's point of view, editors might intentionally be experimenting'

		Journal number													Count
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
	Features														
1	Editorial "Who is Who"	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
2	PDF or HTML as fulltext format	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	12
3	Full "Aims and Scope" published	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	12
4	Browsing by year possible	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	11
5	Basic search functionalities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	10
6	Has ISSN	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	9
7	Listed in EZB	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	9
8	Full author details given (article level)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	9
9	Linked to social media or alert service	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	8
10	Easy citation possible	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	8
11	Uses DOI	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	7
12	Uses Creative Commons licences	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	7
13	Export to Endnote etc. possible	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
14	Peer-review process explained	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
15	Browse by subject/ author possible	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	5
16	Indexed by A&I services	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
17	Offers both PDF and HTML fulltexts	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
18	Author terms explained	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
19	Advanced search functionalities	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
20	Offers article-level metrics	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
21	Listed in DOAJ	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Total features	19	17	15	14	13	11	10	10	10	8	7	7	3	
	Sustainability factors														
22	Third party funding	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
23	5yrs or older	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
24	Society affiliation	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	
25	Secure digital archive	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total stabilising factors	4	0	4	2	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	
	Publisher or library affiliation														
26	Publisher affiliation	1	0	1	1	1	0	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	
27	Library supported	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
28	**Technical platform/ system**	Publ	Inst Repo	Publ & Inst Rep	Publ	OJS	CMS	Blog	Data-base	Blog	CMS	CMS	Blog	eBook	

Table 2. Results of the journal assessment.

Some features are not widely available amongst unaffiliated journals, but were of immediate interest to the editors when mentioned in the interview. These include features such as registration in DOAJ [line 21] use of Creative Commons licences [line 12] or use of DOI [line 11]. Other features did not attract much interest because editors do not recognize their potential usefulness. A typical example of such a feature is the inclusion of journals in abstracting and indexing (A&I) services [line 16]. Only one editor was really interested in this aspect as he was hoping to acquire a journal impact factor. Other aspects, for example long-term access and digital archiving, had just not yet entered the editors' minds [line 25]; a topic explored further down during the interviews.

Lines 22–25 in Table 2 refer to four factors which are used to assess the sustainability and longevity of the journal. These include third-party funding, age of the journal (five years or older), society affiliation and a secure digital archive. Lines 26 and 27 describe the support received through a publisher or library.[40] On the whole, journals with a higher number of features and with either publisher or library affiliation display higher sustainability. Or vice versa. This is a highly interesting observation, but further research would be needed to verify and explain this correlation.

Technical platform or system [line 28]: The Main Library is currently investigating the use of OJS to host journals and has launched a pilot project (not yet publicly available). It also offers the possibility of hosting journals in the institutional repository. But other than that, and until very recently, editors had to find their own technical solutions to enable them to launch and manage online journals, or alternatively co-operate with a publishing house. Three journals use blog software, a further three journals employ a content management system (CMS), two journals deposit individual articles in the University's institutional repository, one journal has developed its own database based on MySQL PSP and one journal uses eBook software. Finally, three journals use their publisher's system (Publ), one of which also deposits articles in the institutional repository.

Editor interviews

Interviews were carried out with the editors of all 14 journals. For three journals the interviews were conducted over the telephone, and in all other cases they were held face-to-face. Initial reactions showed that editors were surprised and somewhat perplexed that a university library should be interested in their journal. Quite clearly they did not immediately see a connection between journal publishing and libraries. This in itself is an interesting observation and food for thought as libraries start to develop publishing activities.

'editors . . . did not immediately see a connection between journal publishing and libraries'

In several of the interviews it was necessary to reach a shared understanding of 'what makes a journal a journal'. But this, too, was an important finding. Generally speaking, editors are proud of the appearance and layout of their journal. Especially with unaffiliated journals, they represent an opportunity for academic self-realization. Nearly all the editors originally employed a graphic designer to develop the look and feel of their journal website. Unconventional features, design and navigation are often considered innovative and modern by editors; here they see an opportunity to transform scholarly communication in their field. They would be particularly reluctant to surrender these feature in order to join a centralized service or system.

Attitude towards open access

All editors were familiar with the concept of open access, but in general it was not a key issue for them. Instead, they are guided by pragmatic considerations in how to achieve best possible visibility and accessibility. Several of them would be happy to charge an access fee or be subscription based if this could be accomplished more easily and did not hinder access. Regarding access, their main concern is that students would not pay to read a journal. Only three of the 14 editors demonstrated genuine and political commitment to OA. The others could be described as 'open access pragmatists.'

'Only three . . . editors demonstrated genuine and political commitment to OA'

Several of the journals have print counterparts; four of them are long-standing society journals. Here the primary intention was to make the journal available online and attract new readers or members. A paywall would deter young readers. Switching a society journal to OA is a particularly delicate issue, as there is always the danger that existing members may be alienated and tempted to cancel their membership. All four societies had considered this issue, but nonetheless decided to take this risk. As one editor pointed out, the number of members was falling anyway, and it was more important to attract the younger generation than resist change.

> 'it was more important to attract the younger generation than resist change'

Technical solutions

The technical solutions were evaluated as part of the journal assessment, whilst the interview offered further information about how choices had been made. Typically, the editor-in-chief is not the IT-savvy person running the journal website. Editors often had to refer technical questions to one of their assistants or webmaster.

The advantage of developing one's own system is that the editor-in-chief can design and configure all the elements according to his or her requirements and wishes – naturally, within the constraints of the system employed. This freedom is greatly appreciated by the editors and perhaps explains why none of them expressed an immediate need or desire to change system. On the contrary, the editors of unaffiliated journals all seemed very satisfied with and proud of their technical achievements. Nonetheless, the presentation of OJS at the Editors' Forum (see below) was of great interest to them.

Long-term access and digital archiving

The journal assessment showed that only three journals have what a librarian would classify as secure arrangements for long-term access and digital archiving in place (e.g. Portico, LOCKSS). Typically, all three of these are affiliated to a publishing house. A further two journals rely on the print version as the archival copy.

> 'only three journals have . . . secure arrangements for long-term access and digital archiving in place'

For all the other journals, editors were fully confident that their computer centre or external hosting agent would act as trusted archive. Most editors were so absorbed by the day-to-day challenges of running a journal that they had not yet found time to consider the long-term future of their journal. None of them had thought of approaching their library for advice regarding digital archiving. And indeed, even when asked, most did not really see the need – after all, they had full confidence in their existing back-up arrangements.

'What are your most pressing needs?'

All editors were asked about their 'most pressing needs'. First and foremost for nearly all editors was the need for more resources: either financial and/or human resources. Only five journals have access to third-party or society funding, and even then, funding is often insufficient or, as in one case, only short term. All the other editors rely fully on honorary work and/or temporary faculty grants. They see a pressing need to develop a more sustainable financial basis. This need becomes increasingly urgent as the journals attract more content and grow in size. Several of the editors emphasize that they could publish more articles if they had sufficient resources to process them.

Within the editorial board, nearly all journals rely on honorary work – or self-exploitation, as one of the editors calls it. However, in most cases they are supported by a paid research assistant who is responsible for the copy-editing, online publishing and technical issues. The financial concern of the editors is primarily to provide these research assistants with a secure and longer-term contract. Only one editor actually wants to earn money herself through publishing a journal. Conversations with editors brought to light that none of the recently launched or unaffiliated journals had drawn up a financial business plan or had a plan in place for how to acquire additional funding.

Apart from these pressing financial needs, one editor mentioned the need for a professional manuscript submission system as the number of articles grows. But on the whole, the editors of unaffiliated journals were satisfied with their technical solutions and did not see a need to move to a more professional journal management system. At the Editors' Forum mentioned further down, librarians from the Main Library presented their plans to introduce OJS as a journal publishing service. Several of the editors were keen to learn more and clearly saw the benefits of such a system. At the same time, they immediately asked how much this would cost and how compatible such a system would be with their journal's 'look and feel'.

'Where do you see a role for the library?'

As a concluding question, editors were asked where they saw the role of the Zentralbibliothek. None of them had thought about the Library's role to support OA journal publishing before. On the other hand, many of the editors mentioned how much they had benefited from the interview. They were particularly interested in the criteria used for the journal assessment and asked for the results. Several of them showed a keen interest in specific features (e.g. DOI, Creative Commons licences, registration in DOAJ) and wanted to follow up these suggestions immediately.

The second point made by several editors was the desire to get to know other OA journal editors and exchange experiences and ideas. Many of them – particularly editors of unaffiliated journals – felt lonely and unsupported in their efforts to launch and maintain a journal. Several of them emphasized in their interview that they were academics, not publishers.

Launch of the Editors' Forum

One of the outcomes of the interviews was the common desire to meet other OA journal editors and form a network. In particular with newly launched journals, the editors feel lonely in their efforts to sustain a journal. They have no one to consult about journal-specific questions and during the interviews they became increasingly curious to know how other journal editors dealt with these issues. The 14 journals are placed so far apart with regard to journal type and subject matter that it seemed unlikely that the editors would meet each other without mediation.

'editors feel lonely in their efforts to sustain a journal'

The Zentralbibliothek saw this as an appropriate role for the Library and hosted the first Editors' Forum in June 2015. The Library not only had suitable and central facilities, but Library staff also saw this as an opportunity to present some of their publishing support services.

From the start it was clear that the primary purpose of the Forum was networking between editors, not presentations given by librarians. As a tool to encourage and facilitate these discussions amongst editors who had never met before and had very little academically in common, the Library arranged a mini-poster for each journal. (This could be done quite easily based on the information derived from the journal assessments.) These mini-posters were prepared in advance and sent to the editors for final approval. In addition to the mini-posters, the Zentralbibliothek also prepared one printed article per journal to give an impression of the look and feel of the publication.

The schedule of the Editors' Forum included the mini-poster session mentioned above, a journal slam (where each editor was given three minutes to present his or her journal) and two short presentations by Library staff on the DOI registration services (ETH-Bibliothek staff) and the planned pilot project to introduce OJS (Main Library staff). Sufficient opportunity for discussions and networking was offered before and after the presentations.

All the editors voiced an interest in attending the event, but it proved impossible to find a date that suited all – as mentioned above, editors are extremely busy people. Thus, not all

journals were represented, but in some cases the editor sent his or her co-editor or editorial assistant instead.

The feedback showed that the two topics DOI and OJS were well chosen and of significant interest to the editors – even with those who had voiced scepticism during the interviews concerning centralized solutions. This interest, however, could not divert from the fact that the resource issue was always at the top of the editors' minds. Questions such as, 'How much would it cost to use OJS?' or 'How labour-intensive would the introduction of DOI be?' were asked by several editors.

'the resource issue was always at the top of the editors' minds'

Editors and librarians discussed their journals at the Editors' Forum. Each journal was represented by a mini-poster and a printout of an article

Whilst the interviews had already highlighted the financial or staffing concern of many of the editors, the Editors' Forum emphasized the urgency – or even hopelessness – of the situation. The library does not have any funding to support these journals directly, and the author does not see any easy solution to solving the resourcing problems of these journals. However, libraries can develop advisory services to support editors: for example, how to draw up a journal business plan, where and how to apply for funding, or which income models are compatible with open access (e.g. society funding, introduction of APCs, sponsoring of special issues). Whilst there appears to be an immediate need to advise editors of existing journals, it would be equally important to offer this sort of advice to prospective editors, i.e. academics who are contemplating launching a new OA journal in their field.

Feedback shows that the participants found the Editors' Forum very useful and appreciated the opportunity to get to know each other and compare publications. It was suggested that the Zentralbibliothek should host such Forums once a year. From the Library's point of view it would be useful to extend the invitation to prospective editors, too.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to establish the role of academic libraries in the context of OA journal publishing, based on the perceived needs of the journals and/or their editors. An important realization was that editors did not expect their University Library to be interested in or knowledgeable about journal publishing. However, once the first contact was established, they were thankful for Library support and continue to come back with questions.

The journal assessment showed that there are great differences between journals with regard to features, functionalities, affiliation, resources and technical platforms. Several of the journals, especially those affiliated to a publishing house or library, are technically well provided for. Unaffiliated journals, however, offer fewer functionalities and display some unconventional features, often described as innovations by the editors. These editors of unaffiliated journals appreciate their independence and are proud of their achievements.

Nonetheless, they were keen to discuss their journal and learn more, even though not all aspects of traditional journal publishing were of equal interest to them.

More resources – financial and/or human – was seen by nearly all editors as the 'most pressing need' and as the primary limitation to grow in size. The discussions at the Editors' Forum highlighted the urgency in this area. The author sees a clear need – and opportunity – for libraries to develop advisory services in this area: how to draw up a business plan, where and how to apply for funding, or which cost recovery models are compatible with open access.

In comparison, IT/technical needs were mentioned much less often. Editors were in general satisfied with their journal's online appearance. However, once shown the benefits of a professional journal management system, several of them realized that this could be very useful as their journal grows. At the same time, they were quick to recognize that migrating to a central system would involve additional costs and mean surrendering some of their independence and distinctiveness: a price not all of them seem able or willing to pay.

When talking about publishing support, libraries primarily focus on journals which come under their care. However, this study has shown that there is great heterogeneity amongst OA journals. Many OA journals are outside the reach of the library and it is especially these unaffiliated journals which are most in need of support. At the same time, the study also indicates that these editors may not spontaneously seek advice from the library. The point made originally by Elbaek and Nondal remains very true: 'Be proactive – some of the journals might not know that they can be helped.'[41]

> 'Many OA journals are outside the reach of the library and it is especially these unaffiliated journals which are most in need of support'

Competing interests
The author has declared no competing interests.

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