

Ask the Community (and Chefs): How Can We Achieve Equitable Participation in Open Research? – Part 2

By ANN MICHAEL, JASMINE WALLACE, JUDY LUTHER | OCT 22, 2020

ADVOCACY | BUSINESS MODELS | DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION | OPEN ACCESS | RESEARCH

In yesterday's "[Ask the Community \(and Chefs\)](https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2020/10/21/ask-the-community-equitable-participation-in-open-research/)" (<https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2020/10/21/ask-the-community-equitable-participation-in-open-research/>) post, most contributors acknowledged that some progress has been made, but we still have a long way to go. Today we continue to add the voices of Chefs and community members. Please add your own responses to the question in the comments.



Jasmine Wallace, *Scholarly Kitchen* Chef, Peer Review Manager at the American Society for Microbiology

If I'm honest – my initial response to this question was a simple, “we can't”. It's daunting to think about the work that is required to make sure every researcher's voice is equally valued, heard, and spoken. Taking into consideration the systems and structures in place that perpetuate and reinforce barriers to access, much less equitable participation, this task seems impossible. And even if we make our way past funder mandates, paywalls, awareness, infrastructure and publication cost, just to identify a few areas that need work, there still is a long road ahead. However, this is a year that has taught me about how the impossible can become possible.

In the open research sphere, I see the publisher's role as similar to an educator's in a classroom, as a guide in facilitating spaces for discussion. To achieve that, I believe we might need to learn a few classroom management skills. Teachers are taught practices to create environments where all their students' voices are heard. They understand that without each and every student participating, learning is hindered. For them, similar to our communities, equitable participation is about surfacing all thoughts and ideas in hopes of generating more thoughts and ideas. One strategy noted by the [George Lucas Education Foundation](https://www.edutopia.org/blog/practices-promote-equity-in-classroom-shane-safir) (<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/practices-promote-equity-in-classroom-shane-safir>) that helps educators to put this into practice advises that the first step to equitable participation is to intentionally check your bias and assumptions at the door. They suggest tactics like ‘equity sticks’ to make sure that each student participates, regardless of their abilities. Once you've developed a plan to ensure every student is at the table, then track your data. You should monitor how frequently each student speaks up, or not; and then, if needed, shift your overall approach. In reviewing the data, if you find that certain voices or thoughts dominate the conversation, or, are never being represented, stop inequity in its track and get those thoughts out. Lastly, they teach you to experiment with different discussion structures to see when there is more, or, less engagement, from who, and then work to assess why.

There is no solution that every participant in the research ecosystem will, or should buy into. That being said, this is a job likely best tackled within our individual spaces. Think small wins, big gains. Applying this academic participation strategy to the society publishing space requires an organization to treat their community as classroom. Find ways to make sure each and every member is involved, regardless of where/who they are and what they contribute. Then be sure to not just track data on participation, but to evaluate it and be ready to change an approach quickly and often. And finally, have multiple ways everyone can be involved in the larger conversations. Equitable participation in open research is not about surfacing novel research or ideas, but rather making every participant's thinking visible.

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Judy Luther, *Scholarly Kitchen* Chef, President of Informed Strategies

Cultural change takes a village since it is not something that can be mandated. Economic and global forces, on the other hand, can drive change more quickly. The recent emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion has resulted in programs being established within organizations. Involvement in open research is a funding issue, as participants need to be included as part of the team or need to be funded to pay to publish. This year the pandemic accelerated some trends toward opening research and has also disrupted efforts towards equitable participation.

A study published in July in *Nature Human Behavior* (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-020-0921-y>), and widely reported in the business press revealed that female scientists with young children are being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, especially in fields involving lab work. A complementary article in *Nature* (<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02183-x>) the same month listed examples from many organizations that have been working to achieve balance and this year were focusing on actions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Solutions included funders providing a supplement for caregivers to reclaim time, and also setting allocation quotas for grant recipients. Journal editors at large research intensive universities have paid attention to submissions from early career researchers and those from the global south. The Editor in Chief of *Cell Reports* evaluated composition of their editorial board, and wants a female reviewer for each article. Societies frequently offer a mentoring program for their early career researchers and some have established outreach to researchers in other countries. This year, virtual conferences were offered as free to attend. We need to document the successes to reinforce the value to organizations and society writ large. In order for large scale change to occur it will be necessary for institutions to incorporate processes that support the objective.

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The economic impact of the pandemic will likely divert attention in the US, as state-funded universities deal with the reduced budgets. The topic of equitable participation needs to remain a priority and continue to be part of the agendas of all stakeholders as there are many ways to support it.

Romy Beard, Licensing Programme Manager and Rima Kupryte, Director of EIFL (<https://www.eifl.net/>), (Electronic Information for Libraries)

To ensure equitable participation in open access, there are a number of things that can be done — notably by publishers. In our work we have noticed a number of hurdles for researchers from EIFL partner countries (we're talking about 38 developing and transition economy countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa) when it comes to publishing in open access journals as well as depositing articles in repositories.

Various publishers offer waivers and discounts on Article Processing Charges (APCs) for corresponding authors from disadvantaged countries, but these can be cumbersome to claim (involving multiple email exchanges) and not automatically applied (the author needs to actively claim it during the submission process). In countries where researchers are eligible for an APC discount and not a full waiver, this is often not enough. For example, we're involved in a working group with our partners OA2020 looking at APC spend from four different lower-middle-income countries. A survey sent to authors in the Ukraine highlighted that a 50% discount on a \$3,000 APC is simply unrealistic for researchers who earn \$400 a month!

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In addition, waivers and discount are not generally available for hybrid journals. If publishers really want to help authors from disadvantaged countries to publish open access no matter what, they shouldn't be charging full price APCs for hybrid journals either. At the moment, they're pushing authors to publish behind the paywall in those journals if they don't have any funding to pay for the APCs — which most of them don't.

Our own agreements with publishers covering APCs (<https://eifl.net/apcs>) are trying to lower these 'hurdles' but it still feels like a drop in the ocean, and a bigger, more coordinated approach is needed.

On the other hand, publishers impose different embargo periods on authors when it comes to allowing them to deposit their articles in a repository. Only allowing the Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) to be deposited is another issue — many researchers in our partner countries can't find copies of their AAM and aren't able to retrieve it from publishers' submission systems. That's something we're trying to address in our discussions with publishers as well. It's just not good enough to say, "we have this generous green policy". Publishers should be more proactive in this, for example by notifying all co-authors after publication that they can deposit the AAM in a repository and re-attaching it for their convenience or looking into automated deposits. There are more than 1,000 open access repositories in our network, and it would be of great help to repository managers.

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Suzanne Kettley, Executive Director and Michael Donaldson, Manager, Open Access Program, Canadian Science Publishing

Open Research is noble in principle, with the goal of removing paywall barriers and enabling equitable access to research products. However, inequalities remain and if we are to ensure service providers can defray their costs, the question of Open Research becomes a more complex problem. If we are not careful, we are at risk of seeing new inequalities emerge. For example, Open Access (OA) has marked a fundamental shift in how publishing costs are covered, where authors often use their research budgets to pay Article Processing Charges (APCs) to cover publishing costs. APCs have been a predominant model used to fund OA for several years, despite placing additional strain on research budgets, which in many fields remain relatively static or are in decline. Based solely on the APC model, most authors would be unable to publish all their work as fully OA because the entire cost of publishing their article is transferred to them (unlike the subscription model, where costs are apportioned among hundreds or thousands of subscribers).

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There is still a place for the APC model in the future, but as part of a diverse ecosystem; other options such as transformative business models (which provide access to subscription content and OA publishing for an annual fee), collective action models (such as Subscribe to Open where a threshold of subscribers is required to flip journals to OA), and Green OA options (which enable authors to post the accepted version of their manuscript in an OA repository for free), help to make OA more equitable for many. However, even transformative approaches can create inequalities by shifting the entire publishing cost of OA articles to the researchers' institutional libraries, potentially creating a divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots", again leaving some researchers without access to disseminating their work as fully OA. Only when these inequalities are addressed can we consider research to be truly open; and it is clear we have a long way to go. To be frank, the only way OA will be sustainable is if we put our money where our mouths are and work together to support new options to fund OA in a sustainable and equitable manner.

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Don't forget to check [yesterday's thoughts on this subject \(https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2020/10/21/ask-the-community-equitable-participation-in-open-research/\)](https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2020/10/21/ask-the-community-equitable-participation-in-open-research/) as well.

And please share your thoughts below: ***How do you believe we can achieve equitable participation in Open Research?***



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Ann Michael is Founder and CEO of Delta Think, focused on strategy and innovation in scholarly communications. Throughout her career she has gained broad exposure to society and commercial scholarly publishers, librarians and library consortia, funders, and researchers. As an ardent believer in data informed decision-making, Ann was instrumental in the 2017 launch of the Delta Think Open Access Data & Analytics Tool, which tracks and assesses the impact of open access uptake and policies on the scholarly communications ecosystem. Additionally, Ann has served as Chief Digital Officer at PLOS, charged with driving execution and operations as well as their overall digital and supporting data strategy.



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The mission of the Society for Scholarly Publishing (SSP) is to advance scholarly publishing and communication, and the professional development of its members through education, collaboration, and networking. SSP established *The Scholarly Kitchen* blog in February 2008 to keep SSP members and interested parties aware of new developments in publishing.

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