

Interviews for CRAFT-OA

Elio Pellin  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4076-6743>

Dirk Verdicchio  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7297-9009>

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.11654584](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11654584)

Citation:

Pellin, E., Verdicchio, D. (2024). Interviews for CRAFT-OA. Zenodo.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11654584>



published under the license CC BY 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



CRAFT-OA is funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement no. 101094397. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

V0.1	Authored by Dirk Verdicchio, Elio Pellin	https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7297-9009 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4076-6743	28.3.24
	Feedback Isabella Meinecke	https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8337-3619	21.4.24
V0.2	ep, dve		3.5.24
V0.3	ep, dve		8.5.24
V0.4	ep, dve		8.5.24
V0.5	Translation DeepL		8.5.24
V0.6	Translation Check Andrea Hacker	https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9283-594X	15.5.24, 27.05.24
V0.7	ep, dve		22.5.2024
V0.8	ep, dve		29.5.2024
V0.9	ep, dve		5.6.2024
V1	ep,dve		12.6.2024
V2	ep, dve		12.6.2024

Frame

CRAFT-OA

The EU project [CRAFT-OA](#) will improve the technical and organizational infrastructure for Diamond Open Access publishing. This entails improving the software for publishing Diamond journals and supporting communities of practice in order to meet valid standards for Diamond OA publishing. Furthermore, the project increases the recognition, visibility and findability of Diamond OA publications and links Diamond publishing to the EOSC and other large data aggregators.

The contribution of Bern University Library, which is one of 23 institutions from 14 European countries working on CRAFT-OA, consists of a Constructive Technology Assessment for the project and interviews to identify the needs and problems of those for whom the new structures are being built: journal editors and institutional platform providers. The distinction made by DIAMAS between institutional publishers and service providers is only of very limited concern for these interviews; it is evident that the platform providers are service providers. To what extent they are also publishers, to what extent the editors are publishers according to the definition provided by DIAMAS, or whether an academic institution should be considered a publisher, would be a discussion that would not be fruitful in the context of our questions.¹

¹"The distinctive characteristic separating IPs from SPs (described more fully in the DIAMAS scoping document (Bargheer et al., 2022) is that IPs have control and governance over publishing. This means, among other things, that they own journal titles and are able to appoint editors and choose service providers." Armengou, C., Aschehoug, A., Ball, J., Bargheer, M., Bosman, J., Brun, V., de Pablo Llorente, V., Franczak, M., Frantsovåg, J. E., Hersperger, O., Klaus, T., Kramer, B., Kuchma, I., Laakso, M., Manista, F., Melinščak Zlodi, I., Mounier, P., Pölönen, J., Pontille, D., ... Wnuk, M. (2023). Institutional Publishing in the ERA: Results from the DIAMAS survey, p. 60. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10022183>.

Goal

The interviews are intended to supplement the quantitative results of the large DIAMAS survey² with qualitative research results and thus better identify needs and problems with a focus on institutional platform providers and editors. The results of the interviews highlight problem areas in institutional publishing and show the specific reasons, wishes, limitations and concepts. The interviews complement the gap analysis, which was carried out as CRAFT-OA Deliverable 3.2 on the basis of a "data based quantitative analysis" and "desk research of written studies, papers and reports".³

Together with the gap analysis, the results of the interviews make it possible to tailor the training, information and tools offered by CRAFT-OA more precisely to the needs of platform providers and editors.

Method and procedure

In May and June 2023, the Open Science Team at Bern University Library conducted a total of eleven semi-structured interviews with five editors and six platform providers from western, south-eastern, northern and central Europe. Such semi-structured interviews – also known as guided interviews – define the topics to be discussed in the interviews, but the interviewees are not offered any answers. Instead, they formulate the answers themselves. This openness of semi-structured interviews allows aspects to come to the fore that were not considered central by the interviewers in advance. The method therefore has an explorative character. At the same time, the guide guarantees that the interview has a clear focus.⁴

The topics addressed in the interviews concerned hosting, submissions and reviews, production, metrics, indexing, archiving, finance, and quality management.

All participating editors publish their journals in open access independently of commercial publishers. One journal that cooperates with a commercial service (platform) provider collects APCs, all other journals are diamond open access journals.

Of the institutional platform providers surveyed, one works with a commercial provider, all others use open-source applications (mostly OJS). The services offered by the platform providers range from mere hosting and technical support to publishing services.

The interviews were conducted and recorded online – some in English, some in German. The audio of the interviews was automatically transcribed using the tool “töggel”⁵ from “recapp”⁶,

² 685 institutional publishers and service providers from across Europe took part in the survey between March and May 2023. The survey was designed to show how institutional publishers work, the scale of and nature of their operations, the ways finances and funding are managed, how open science practices are managed, and the nature of their challenges. Armengou et al. (2023). Institutional Publishing in the ERA: Results from the DIAMAS survey. Zenodo.

Bosman, J., Kramer, B., Stojanovski, J., Melinščak Zlodi, I., Frantšvåg, J. E., Klaus, T., Schima, J., Bargheer, M., Agnoloni, T., Peruginelli, G., Franczak, M., Wnuk, M., Caliman Fontes, L., de Pablo, V., Pellin, E., Stone, G., Rooryck, J., & Manista, F. (2024). Institutional publishing in the ERA: Full country reports. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10026207>

³ Laakso, M., Edig, X. van ., Fenner, J., Armengou, C., Gingold, A., Pispiringas, L., & Šterbenc Svetina, B. (2024). CRAFT-OA Deliverable 3.2: Report on challenges and help measures faced by OA journals and platforms (Draft), p 12. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10496594>

⁴ See Kathryn Roulston, Myungweon Choi (2018). Qualitative interviews. In: Uwe Flick. The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection, London et. al. Sage. 233-249;

⁵ <https://toeggel.ch/>

⁶ <https://recapp.ch/>

then checked, edited, anonymized and presented to the interviewees for review. The transcripts were then coded and analyzed for this report.

In accordance with our data management plan, the codebook, the interviewees' contact details, the audio files and the transcriptions of the interviews were stored on an internal drive at Bern University Library, to which only project staff have access. With the consent of the interviewees, the anonymized interviews are made available for research via the project and research data repository of the University of Bern ([BORIS Portal](#)).

Evaluation

For the following evaluation, we focused on the editorial system and hosting, indexing, the production of publication formats and quality management.

It proved useful to evaluate the responses of the editors and those of the platform providers separately. Although there are significant overlaps, the problems and needs of the two groups are very different and the solutions to these problems and the fulfillment of the needs of the two groups must be approached differently.

The system

Editors

Stability and support are very important

The reliability of the system is crucial for the editors' satisfaction with the hosting. It is important to emphasize that the stability of the technical systems is generally not a problem. Editors appreciate that a publication platform is maintained and further developed by a state institution, and thus has a long-term perspective via the connection to an institution or that the service provider is aligned with their values.

The needs of editors vary widely. Some want to keep as many work steps and corresponding skills as possible within the editing team; others want to be provided with a system that supports the entire process from submission to peer review to acceptance, enables version control and offers automated processes (e.g. reminder emails).

Editors emphasize and appreciate the good cooperation with platform providers. "[...] we are independent of anyone and as soon as there is any problem, the trouble shooters are there for us." (ED_01) "They are very helpful, they are very much involved in their journals". (ED_02) They see their publication as one of the best running journals on the platform or as a journal with which the platform provider develops things that are also important for the other journals.

However, there is not just need for hosting but also for support and assistance "[...] so that the scientists can then actually concentrate on editing, reviewing, publishing." (ED_03). "Well, a job I don't really like is the publishing itself; so putting the articles online, writing announcements, making sure that everybody knows we have published a new article, more articles, [...] So that's more a technical side of being a journal manager. It would be nice if they would take care of it." (ED_02)

Editors also point to the fact that hosting is free of charge or 'affordable' as an argument for choosing the platform provider and the system it offers.

For one journal that works with a commercial platform provider, the costs are a problem in that it cannot afford the most expensive version of the service offered. This means that they cannot use the system to its full potential and are left with work that could be automated if they had the money to pay for the features.

Another journal moved from an OJS platform to another, non-commercial platform because there was a change of editor-in-chief. The outgoing editor-in-chief had operated the system with staff at his institute and hosted the journal. After the change, the journal looked for a platform where it could be hosted independently of a specific chair.

Submissions and reviews rarely via the system

Of the journals operating on OJS platforms, none use the integrated workflow for submissions or for communication, contact with authors and reviewers. They see no added value in receiving new submissions via OJS and prefer personal contact with authors and reviewers. "I know it can send emails automatically, but I prefer to mail everybody individually." (ED_02) "The feedback we get from our authors is that they really appreciate this personal collaboration, that the editor writes individual emails." (ED_01) "[T]hese personalized messages that we have the right in JOU_04 have maybe more of an impact than the automated one, because there isn't a human attached to those automated messages, whereas in JOU_04, it is a collective member thing, [...] when do you think you'll be able to send us your review? And that may generate a likewise human response." (ED_04B)

For one journal, the customization options for automatic messages and reminders were an argument for opting for a commercial solution. In their opinion, OJS does not save editors enough work. There is no information as to which version of OJS the editors evaluated. Therefore, it is unclear if the functionalities in OJS are inadequate or if the journal editors are unaware of them.

Platform provider

Expectations cannot always be met

The platform providers tailor their services to the needs of the editors: (PR_01) "But we are flexible, which means that if someone says we need this or that, and if there is nothing to prevent it for security reasons, then we adapt OJS accordingly."

However, the expectations of editors do not always correspond to what the platform providers are willing or able to offer. Publishing via institutional platform providers – depending on the service model – requires a greater commitment on the part of the editors. (PR_01): "[W]e really understand Open Science as competence building in science as well. It only works if certain techniques are adopted or welcomed in science." (PR_03A): "[W]e place ourselves as a service provider, but we always say that we do not do their work" (PR_04A): "We are a publishing platform, it means that we do provide all the tools but we do not endorse the publication" (PR_01): "[...] at its core, it is very much about self-responsibility. [...] Scientists often don't have the time to acquire additional skills. And when you're overwhelmed, you fall back into the other energy level and actually demand what was always there." (PR_01): "We also have [...] cases that don't so much understand the advantages of their own freedom, but still think the traditional model and believe that we as hosters are responsible for resolving any issues."

Standards are necessary

Standards are important for platform providers (PR_01): "We need standards and guidelines and agreements and a common understanding that goes beyond our service, and which ideally is also a certain consensus beyond subject communities at an international level. Only then does it make sense to invest resources in such structures [...] in order to provide a good service for local science in the long term. Standards and guidelines are important in order to provide a good service."

Most platform providers see the retention of expertise in the editorial teams as a problem. (PR_3B): "[W]ithin the voluntary teams, people are coming and leaving". This requires the platform providers provide new training and greater support.

OJS offers a complete workflow

For the platform providers, OJS offers "everything you need for such a publication workflow." (PR_06) "You [can] map the entire publication workflow with it [...]. In other words, it generates a website for you and then you can make submissions, then you can map the entire review process with it. Then you can do the various stages, i.e. copy editing or proof reading, upload the version there, then produce, publish, distribute, search engine optimization - i.e. for Google Scholar, that's in-built if you fill in this corresponding field - the licenses go straight into the metadata. It has an OAI-PMH front in it to distribute the data."

One platform provider states that there was no alternative for him. The open source software developed in France, Lodel⁷, which he had also tested, was too focused on text production, but hosting and the provision of workflow management were important to him. (PR_03A)

The biggest problem of another platform provider is that it does not have its own IT staff to manage the system (OJS). Support is outsourced to an IT company. Changes to the system are often communicated inadequately or not at all. "We have troubles when the update of the system is done. Some features were lost in previous upgrades of OJS and then we have problems with the people who are submitting, and they are used to the previous version and features that were inside that version and they wonder why that feature is now lost; also, the Editorial staff are sometimes not okay with those updates." (PR_05B)

Advantages and disadvantages

The advantage of OJS is that it is supported by a community. (PR_03A): "[W]hat I like about OJS is that there is a huge community behind it, so if you have an issue, you try to find out if any other had it too in the forum, and if you didn't find something, then you can ask, and often times you will have answers at least to know that you're not alone with this problem and that's a huge point, I think, of interest using OJS."

On the other hand, it is a problem that the OJS developer community is not large enough to update and further develop features that are available for a previous version of OJS quickly enough for newer versions. This makes it difficult to promote OJS as a professional option. (PR_01)

One platform provider suspects problems with OJS's email function: "We have emails that were set up by the editorial members and they send it through OJS to reviewers and some reviewers never got the email; maybe it went to spam folder or something and we lose a lot of time." (PR_05B)

The possibilities of OJS are communicated during the set-up phase of the journals and training is offered for the editorial teams or for the operational level. The editorial workflow, the submission process and the review process are also covered.

OJS is used in different ways

The journal editors use the possibilities of OJS in very different ways. (PR_03A): "I'd say most of them use the OJS workflow to gather submissions and then put them through reviewing. But some others, I think they still do it by email, so that the Editor-in-Chief receives some papers and then they dispatch it to reviewers. A little bit of both, I think, but mostly they are using OJS." One platform provider assumes that those editors who prefer to work by email have either not found the time to familiarize themselves or that they simply prefer email contact. Others assume that changes in the editorial boards will also change the use of the system: "We are trying to force them to do it through OJS, but some are still doing it through email, or old channels but every now and then they change the

⁷ <https://lodel.hypotheses.org/>

editorial staff and new people, that come, they want to get to know how to use OJS and submissions." (PR_05B)

One platform provider explicitly expects editors to use the system for submissions and the review process. It offers appropriate, detailed training and communicates the expectation that OJS is also used in this way so that, in the event of any complaints, it is possible to trace what happened to a manuscript and who did what when. (PR_06)

Open and commercial systems as an alternative

One platform provider works with its own open source software. (PR_04A): "[T]he submission process has to come from a repository such as arXiv, HAL or Zenodo, for instance, and then after that everything is as usual in the scientific journal because the peer review is covered by the platform. You can invite reviewers etc. Everything is covered by the platform"(PR_04B): "it's a good way for editors and researchers to plan their editorial workflow, because it's easy and quick to use." The time saved in the editorial process is emphasized: "It needs less work for more time to read the articles because there are some automatic reminders, for example. It's very useful for researchers too because they have an overview on all the work they are doing for the journal."

Another platform provider works with a system from a commercial provider. (PR_02): "Of course there are problems, we have to work out with them, and we have to discuss a lot of different things, but the collaboration is working smoothly with them." However, the contract for the system provider must be put out to tender regularly. If another provider is awarded the contract, the system has to be changed. The software currently in use has an integrated workflow that covers all work steps from submission to peer review.

The platform provider covers the basic costs. In addition, the commercial provider charges a fee per article. It is up to the editorial boards to decide whether these fees are passed on to the authors or borne by a journal.

Indexing

The fact that indexing is central to journals is not only an impression gained in day-to-day work, but also confirmed by various studies.⁸ The DIAMAS study states: "In short, a significant majority of IPSPs report having financial constraints in providing adequate resources for their infrastructure and services, particularly in the area of indexing and above all in meeting accessibility standard."⁹

Editor

Visibility carries great weight

Indexing is – unsurprisingly – considered particularly important by editors. This is because, on the one hand, support for authors and the recognition of publications in research evaluation can depend on correct, weighty indexing. "I hear this with new journals that have these problems that they can't get into Scopus, or Thompson Reuters, i.e. Web of Science; [...] And then authors can't publish there because their funding depends on something like that." (ED_03) states one editor, and another specifies: "We don't yet have a contribution from Eastern Europe, because all the scientists who are

⁸ Hunter, M.E., Dunne, L., Thomas, C., Miller, L., & Soper, D. (2022). Ask the Editors: Assessing the Publishing Needs of Faculty Editors. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 10(1), eP12912, p 9. <https://doi.org/10.31274/jlsc.12912>

Daniela Hahn, Jennifer Hehn, Christian Hopp, & Gernot Pruschak. (2023). Mapping the Swiss Landscape of Diamond Open Access Journals. The PLATO Study on Scholar-Led Publishing. Report (1.0), p 47. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7461728>

⁹ Armengou et al. (2023) Institutional Publishing in the ERA: Results from the DIAMAS survey, p 69. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10022184>

there absolutely need A-weighted journals in Web of Science for it to count as a publication for their systems." (ED_01)

On the other hand, diamond journals must strive for visibility compared to the journals of the major publishers. "If the journals that are scholar-led¹⁰ say: we won't participate, then they will provincialize themselves. So that's a challenge, because Scopus and all the indices managed by DeGruyter and Elsevier are of course working very hard to include only certain journals [...] from major publishers." (ED_01)

Lack of knowledge, lack of transparency

It would be important to get away from the non-transparent processes of indexing. "In our case, it was really almost a bit arbitrary. We had no, almost no control over whether we were included. And we didn't know what the criteria were. It just wasn't disclosed. At some point [it was] decided, yes, now it will be indexed by Web of Science. Before that, it was postponed for a year - without giving any reasons." (ED_03) "I know that there are registers that the editors would like to have the journal registered to and that we cannot." (ED_02) "what I know is what the publishers told me and that is that you usually cannot submit your journal to those lists. So we have tried to get more knowledge about how to get on the list but we didn't manage." "the publisher takes care of that, so I don't know anything." (ED_02) "these are exactly the things that we don't have deep knowledge of but are extremely relevant that we don't know, but we should know," (ED_04B)

And the editors of a journal who are satisfied with the indexing - in addition to DOAJ, EBSCO, JStor, Scopus and Web of Science in various subject-specific indexes - also suspect: "Perhaps we don't know enough about what would be available." (ED_05B)

Platform provider

Support, not responsibility

Most platform providers see the responsibility for indexing as lying with the journals and primarily consider it their task to support the editorial boards. "Editorial boards manage their applications to different databases and sometimes if they need help, they contact us." (PR_05A) "[DOAJ is] the only database that we take care of. It's the only thing we do, [...] if they want to be indexed in any other databases, they need to do it themselves. [...] it's not something that is our responsibility – other than the DOAJ." (PR_03A) "We offer support. [...] We provide information and say that if we can do something, we will. [...] And if the journals want something, we support them in everything." (PR_01)

Complexity of the requirements

The platform providers also see the complexity of the requirements as a major challenge. Information about subject-specific indexes comes from themselves as well as other sources: "So when new journals come to the platform, it allows us to discover some new databases and their own questions because no one has the same question, in order to index the journals." (PR_04B) Another problem is the large amount of (time) required to prepare the indexing through databases: "it's difficult to introduce some of the journals in indexing databases, not because they are not good, because it takes a lot of time to be able to reach some kind of databases." (PR_03A)

¹⁰ "Scholar-led publishers are just that, publishers led by scholars. I understand 'scholars' as broadly as possible, extending it to any actors who define their role as operating in a 'scholarly' capacity (library workers, independent scholars, etc.). 'Led', for me, is more specific and means managed by scholars, not just writing and editing the content, but the technical, practical and administrative sides to publishing too." Sam Moore: Open *By* Whom? On the Meaning of 'Scholar-Led'. Scholar led, 24 october 2019. <https://blog.scholarled.org/on-the-meaning-of-scholar-led/> (6.5.2014)

A platform provider working with a commercial provider of the system reports that indexing is covered by the service.

Production of publication formats

The desire to move away from the predominant PDF file format is stronger and more urgent among platform providers than among editors. While editors are primarily concerned with the personnel and financial costs involved, platform providers push formats such as EPub or XML as more interesting because XML facilitates reuse, archiving, indexing and interoperability and is increasingly becoming a technical standard for publications. However, many editors show little motivation to move away from the tried-and-tested and, depending on the workflow and requirements, simple and cost-effective PDF workflow. The CRAFT-OA GAP Analysis notes that machine-readable formats are strongly recommended by Plan S and set as the standard by EQSIP V1.0, while JATS XML is required by PubMed Central, JSTOR, Portico and Scielo. "Based on the scan of software support for XML publishing, all three pieces of software had full support for such content, suggesting that for journals already operating in any of those software environments the challenges in conducting XML copyediting and publishing lie elsewhere, likely due to the lack of resources or expertise, but that would still require further investigation to confirm since the motivations are not observable based on the existing survey materials."¹¹ The results of these interviews give concrete answers from the perspective of editors and platform providers.

Editor

Still few XMLs

The answers to the questions concerning publication formats reflect the results of the Diamas survey.¹² PDFs are published by all the journals surveyed. On the one hand, because they can be produced easily and, depending on the case, without great effort. Secondly, because established journals set design standards to which the journals adhere. The processes and the variety of issue formats depend to a large extent on the financial and human resources of the journals. Some journals publish HTMLs as well as PDFs, a few XMLs. Journals consider producing XML files or will consider doing so if this format is a requirement for a particular indexing, for example. As a requirement for an XML workflow, it is expected that it can be automated with as little manual work as possible.

The input format is Word in most cases, LaTeX only for one journal.

Resources for conversion are scarce

One journal worked with a fee-based tool (CompuScript) and used it to create PDFs and HTML files for publication. As the journal's financial situation deteriorated, the tool had to be discontinued. Since then, they only published PDFs. "It's rather easy to make a pdf from a Word file." (ED_02) For the journal, which has hardly any financial or human resources, the main priority is that the production of publication formats is simple and cost-effective.

A financially better positioned journal (ED_01) has an editor and another employee who convert Word files into JATS-XML using the open-source tool meTypeset. They generate the PDFs of their

¹¹ Laakso et al. (2024). CRAFT-OA Deliverable 3.2: Report on challenges and help measures faced by OA journals and platforms (Draft), p 67. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10496594>

¹² 97.3% of IPSPs state that they publish PDFs, 40.8% publish HTML and 20.2% XML. Armengou et al. 2023: Institutional Publishing in the ERA: Results from the DIAMAS survey, p 117-118.

publication from these files using the commercial provider AntennaHouse. The XML viewer used is eLife Lens, but this will soon be replaced by an in-house development from the platform provider.

One journal has the authors' Word files revised by two freelancers according to the journal's style sheet. The conversion to HTML and PDF is then carried out by the commercial service and platform provider.

Another journal works with LaTeX throughout. Volunteers (doctoral students and postdocs) create journal-style PDFs from the LaTeX files. The journal estimates one to two working hours per paper for the layout. The journal is currently trying to finance positions for assistants to take care of the conversion so that the doctoral students and postdocs can concentrate on quality assurance. Conversion from LaTeX to XML is not yet possible. The journal would welcome such a possibility, but it "does not have many resources to do any manual conversions. This should be as fully automated as possible." (ED_03)

A further journal publishes its articles as PDFs and HTMLs. Its layout quality based on that of journals of the major publishers. "[W]e kind of mirror those journals in terms of how we look but doing so does cost quite a lot of resources and time and energy and stress, perhaps, I think it's worth it for. There is the question of legitimacy, I think JOU_04 is taken more seriously as a journal in terms of what a journal is supposed to look like. You know the big publishing houses set a standard for how journals look." (ED_04B) The HTMLs are easy to produce. However, they do not want to do without PDFs, even if their production is laborious and time-consuming. The layout is produced in Word, which is poorly suited for this purpose, and the document is then converted into a PDF. "I think there's a real value in terms of getting legitimacy as a journal." (ED_04B) The editorial board and the IT provider discussed how these laborious layout processes could be automated. "[...] you know we upload the Word document, and then a beautifully layouted issue comes out; can we not just click a button? But so far, they [the IT provider] could not offer us anything that lived up to the standards that we have for how we want a pdf to appear." (ED_04A).

Platform provider

Desire for more than PDFs

Platform providers also see PDF as the most common output format - but not to their satisfaction. The platform providers would like to offer other formats. "[W]e do not produce JATS-XML right now, but this is something that we would like to." (PR_04A) "I mean researchers do work with LaTeX, for instance, and then in the end it's always a pdf file [...]. And one thing that would be really interesting is to be able to produce something more accessible, for instance, such as HTML web pages, or accessible pdf content also, or EPub, of course, so this is the kind of product that we would like to introduce in the future." (PR_04A) In their eyes, however, the editors are not very interested in this. "[W]e are pushing for the production of JATS-XML file" (PR_03B). But: "currently our authors only publish in pdfs, mainly or JATS xml if they have begun to use it." (PR_03A) "[T]he problem is that we are pushing for other formats but not really the editors. Most of them are really satisfied with pdf files. We think it's quite a shame, because we would like to provide something more interesting like EPub for instance. We are talking with them with JATS. This is not something that they're interested in." (PR_04A)

Conversion by the platforms

Some platform providers take over the production of the publication formats for the journals they manage for which they use inhouse human resources. One platform provider, for example, has the publication formats (only PDFs) produced by a graphic designer who is permanently employed by the department of the parent organization (PR_05). Another platform provider manages the XML workflow for the publications. However, this poses the problem of scalability: "So far, we have actually

been doing this completely. You also have to see how this develops in perspective. The more publications there are, the more necessary the cooperation of the editorial teams becomes – we won't be able to do everything ourselves forever. But at the moment, it's still something we do completely, which is also included in our service, yes." (PR_06)

One platform provider, who works with a commercial provider, has no worries in this regard because the production of the publication formats is the responsibility of the service provider: "[T]hat is what we are paying for." (PR_02)

The responsibility lies with the editors

For other platform providers, it is solely up to the journal editors how they produce their publication formats. They do not see facilitating this workflow as part of their service. (PR_03 and PR_04).

"Everything that has to do with the production or generation of the journal itself is the responsibility of the editors. This also means that the typesetting and delivery of the final articles is their responsibility. You have a certain amount of flexibility when it comes to presentation. We have an attractive HTML environment. We are not quite there yet, but we may be able to present JATS XML. But we can't provide a generation environment." (PR_01) This is up to the editors, and the production processes among journals differ widely: "[W]e have [...] a journal that uses a workflow with Pandoc Scholar. But a third person does it for the editor. We have editorial teams that work with InDesign in the traditional way." (PR_01)

Platform providers want tools with which formats can be created easily and without too much effort. "One thing that I would think is interesting is that we could be able to produce the article right on the platform in the web interface and then produce several formats based on tools provided by the platform without having to rely on external tools. And in the end we could produce HTML for instance, EPub, pdf etc, or this kind of format and JATS." (PR_04A) "For me, one feature would be a really well-functioning XML-based editor in which you can create templates as easily as possible, because both editors and authors get their hands dirty in a different way and recognize certain added values." (PR_01) In order to be able to produce other formats, the platform providers like to have appropriate training opportunities "We had one request of XML format, but we do not do that at the moment. It would be great if there would be some kind of training so I can learn how to do it" (PR_05B).

Review process & quality assurance

The questions on quality assurance focused on measures relating to scientific content. The main focus was on review procedures, which pose particularly major problems for editors, plagiarism control and other ways of ensuring the scientific quality of journals.

Editors

Difficulties with quality assurance

Finding reviewers is the biggest problem for some editors. "It's almost impossible and I do this work now for 7 years and it's getting harder and harder to find reviewers. And I cannot blame them... I blame them for not responding at all on my mails, but I cannot blame them for being too busy because I know everybody is too busy and everybody wants the same people for reviews; that is the harder thing and also the most frustrating." (ED_02) "I think finding reviewers is always a struggle whether or not you're a, you know, diamond open access journal or whether you are a Sage-owned journal it's the same struggles, which is finding people who have time to do this free, unrecognised labor on top of all the other things that they're doing." (ED_04B)

The difficulty of finding reviewers can lead to compromises in quality assurance: "[I]n the beginning we used 2 peer reviewers but that's not possible at all." (ED_02)

Or journals cannot always meet their own standards. "You might sometimes find one or two voices in the Anglophone area in a certain field. We don't always manage to actually implement this principle [reviewers from different academic contexts]. For one article, there is simply only German expertise and then we deviate from our principle." (ED_01)

However, there are journals that appoint three or more reviewers¹³ for an article "Two or three experts are then also appointed as reviewers for each article. And then, however, the editor has a great deal of freedom to decide on the basis of the reviews - to obtain further reviews or to make decisions, to call for revisions. And there are no overarching quality assurance measures that we operate, i.e. that we somehow check with the editors, look at the reviews or similar. They work relatively independently." (ED_03)

The possibility of review platforms was mentioned by one journal as a quality assurance process, but was not considered for its own quality control. None of the journals surveyed use a platform that offers journal-blind reviewing.¹⁴

Open peer review is also not an option for the journals surveyed. "I don't think so at the moment, because that's the tradition in the subject with anonymous peer review, so it's not double blind for journals, but single blind. But that is the tradition and I also think that the expectation of many reviewers is that they can remain anonymous." (ED_03)

Databases facilitate the review

Quality is also closely linked to resources and good structures: "You cannot maintain a good quality with only volunteers. And I have no idea how to resolve that. It means you need money, but you also need a kind of professional structure and that's a lot of work." (ED_02)

Databases with information on potential reviewers - and the resources to maintain these databases - are important structures for peer review. "[W]e have a database of the reviewers we're contacting [...]. And we share information about who would be a good reviewer, etc, so to have a sort of common shared overview of also the process we're going through or we're following each individually with the papers we're in charge of." (ED_04C)

"We have a database for each Special Issue where we have one document that monitors the progress of each of the submissions and the reviewers who are involved. But given that we are a very interdisciplinary journal, the Special Issues, they are often, quite distinct in terms of what the different fields that they speak to and themes that they speak to. I think we have a very wide range of reviewers given the wide range of topics and themes that we publish on." (ED_04A)

"[W]hat is important is this database in the background, also about the reviewers. This is really helpful in the review process in the sense that we can also search for potential reviewers relatively quickly. And there is a huge database behind it from our side that we can use." (ED_05A)

Writing culture as an element of quality

The exchange between different writing cultures can be seen as a constructive part of the review process and specifically encouraged: "The [reviewers] are ideally from two different academic contexts, so perhaps from the Anglophone area, one from the French area or, if the publication is

¹³ In the DIAMASsurvey, 76% of IPSPs stated that double anonymous peer review is the prevailing choice. 37% declared single anonymous peer review and 33% editorial review as the preferred procedure. Armengou et al. 2023, p. 103.

¹⁴ Platforms and projects that provide high-quality peer review independent of a journal like [Peer Community in](#), Review [Commons](#) or [PreReview](#).

Italian, an Italian, one from the German area. We simply try to bridge the problem that the academic writing cultures are so different and that they have very different ideas of what a good contribution is. And we also try to do a bit of educational work with the reviewers, to really raise their awareness of the fact that there are different writing cultures and that ideally the reviews are written in a different language to the articles. And the reviewers should at least receive critical feedback from an academic writing culture that is not that of the article. Built into this review system is a kind of hope or utopia that participation in this review system will also make the writing cultures more compatible with each other." (ED_01)

Different perceptions of scientific quality and unidentifiable authors are perceived as an additional burden. "We are a European journal, but then all of a sudden we get 3-4 articles from India or a few articles from Iran and we see that they usually don't meet our quality levels. Of course there are exceptions in some. [...] and we also have had kind of a ghost authors that we couldn't Google for example. You try to find, and you cannot find them anywhere, but there's an article of 8000 words with everything and a name; so somebody has written it." (ED_02)

Plagiarism control does not carry much weight

Not all journals carry out plagiarism checks. Some do so because they don't have the resources, others don't see the need for it "We don't do it at all. And in our field, plagiarism is not such a huge issue." (ED_03) Some journals use plagiarism scanners that are licensed by their institution (e.g. PlagScan) or are provided in the system by the commercial platform provider: "It's even done automatically, I think? Then you can see at a glance what percentage of existing text is in there. And if the number is high, you take a closer look at the report. Then you have a whole report with the sources and so on. So with the iThenticate system." (ED_05B)

Platform provider

Review is a matter for the editors

The platform providers also see the problem that reviewers are hard to find: "For some disciplines, it's hard to find reviewers since this is a small country and if it's some specific field, everybody knows each other, and we have like double blind review process. That was the problem." (PR_05B) "I think the biggest challenges as it is for all is to get reviewers and to have the reviewers to do the review in time." (PR_02)

The tasks of the editors and the platform providers are often distributed in such a way that the platform providers have no role in the current review process: "We're not at all concerned. We never intervene in the reviewing process." (PR_03A)

One platform provider offers help, but sees the editorial boards as having the competence "they know their subjects and everything and they know the people, so I think that is best to be done by the editorial board, but if they need help, we help." (PR_02) However, the editors of books receive help: "But for the books we are really helping the editorial boards to talk to the reviewers and to try to get them in time with their reviews and everything. So it takes a lot of time. So I think we can find reviewers, but it's hard anyway." (PR_02)

One platform provider requires a precise description of the review process for conference proceedings, which is then published: "[W]e simply need people to know whether there was an editorial review and only the conference committee had a quick look at it or whether external reviewers were invited after all." (PR_06) This platform would be interested in using open peer review procedures: "What I personally would like to see - but this has not been brought to us, I just think it's a cool feature - is the topic of open peer review." (PR_06)

Plagiarism tools are not offered

Tools for checking plagiarism are not offered, also with a view to mandatory peer review: "[W]e're not talking about a lot of seminar papers here, we're really talking about individual articles that are reviewed by experts. Personally, I don't think that's very effective. But that's my personal opinion. The bottom line is that I don't advocate it either, but we don't require it. We don't offer it." (PR_01)

"No, we do not provide any solution for that. We encourage them to do so, but we do not have tools to offer." (PR_03A)

Plagiarism checking tools are sometimes available via the parent organizations, but outside of the publication software: "Yes, our university uses Turnitin for plagiarism checks." (PR_05A) Or the platform provider carries out the check itself outside of the publication software provided, such as CrossRef similarity checks/Turnitin. "[W]e actually have to do it ourselves. [...] we do this by looking at the plagiarism reports, and as soon as we notice something like whole sentences that are not referenced, we go to the editors and say, here's the problem." (PR_06)

However, plagiarism tools within the publication system are definitely a wish: "[T]his is something that we would like to provide in the future. [...] This is our goal to be able to provide the service integrated in the platform for the first submissions." (PR_04A)

Further quality assurance measures

In addition to the mandatory peer review, platform providers carry out further quality checks: "[W]e have organized quality assurance processes that go through all of this once a quarter for each journal. In other words, once a quarter we go through each journal, distributed resources, and carry out quality control, also on the occasion of new issues, and simply check whether they are still correct and whether the visibility is still right. We also check the systems for visibility. As part of this quality assurance, we also always check whether the metadata is filled in correctly and whether it is complete. Of course, we only do this by way of example. And then there's the red card or the yellow card if there are problems. Thanks to the cooperation, we also have players who provide feedback, i.e. the National Library complains loudly if the metadata is not complete." (PR_01) "We have a publishing committee on the university and the publishing committee is responsible for all the publishing processes and decisions at the university. (PR_05A)

Or a committee of the platform provider monitors the quality of the publications: "[W]e have the publishing committee at PLAT_02 that follows what they are doing within the editorial board and checking that everything is done right and things like that." (PR_02)

Findings, conclusions

1

Trust in the platform providers is particularly important to editors. This is regardless of whether editors prefer manual or automated processes. Editors have greater trust in the platform providers if they share and support the mission of their journal. The basic requirements for platform providers include operating a stable system, being approachable for the editors and having the resources to find efficient solutions to any problems that arise.

For their part, the platform providers expect extensive standardization of formats and processes and further improvements to the technical basis for the infrastructures and services - e.g. through CRAFT-OA and DIAMAS.

2

Concerning the scope of support services provided by platform providers, there is a difference between the expectations of editors and the self-image of platform providers. While editors usually want the most comprehensive support possible for post-publication (metadata, formatting, indexing, corrections, promotion), platform providers do not see themselves as publishing service providers, but rather as providers of infrastructure and tools. Platform providers expect editors to view the technical and organizational activities associated with publishing as part of their responsibility as editors of a scholar-led journal.

The services offered by the Capacity Hub and the Capacity Centers should be designed in such a way that editors are offered direct assistance in post-publication. Where this is not possible or not desired, the publishing skills of editors should be increased through training and guidance.

Platform providers should be supported in such a way that they can offer corresponding services even if they have little or no additional resources available.

The Capacity Hub and the Capacity Centers must consider the different cooperation arrangements between editors and platform providers (ranging from simple hosting to publishing-like services). Ideally, they offer tools, services and information that support the different editor cultures and needs in a modular system.

3

Platform providers consider the possibility of processing submissions and peer review via the system to be important for the reproducibility of processes and to make work easier for the editors. A considerable proportion of editors consider the reduction in workload to be less important than the supposed loss of direct contact with authors and reviewers. At the same time, many editors shy away from the initial effort involved in setting up the processes and therefore do not fully utilize the potential of the platforms. As a result, the advantages of software support over "manual" workflows go unrecognized. Providing easy to use templates in different languages for communication with reviewers and authors would help to reduce the initial effort.

Furthermore, additional OJS plug-ins that facilitate the work of editorial teams could generally increase the willingness to use the workflows offered in OJS (provide different formats, plagiarism check etc.).

4

The interviews confirmed that peer review is one of the biggest problems for journals, be it finding or managing reviewers. This is not a problem specific to Diamond Open Access. Accordingly, the further development of Diamond Open Access does not offer any solutions. A closer organizational and possibly technical link with institutionally supported/financed review platforms would be worth considering here - especially as Peer Community In (PCI) is already to be integrated into the Discovery Hub.

5

An open and clear formulation of expectations and requirements by the platform provider as to how the publication system should be used seems necessary. The interviews suggest that ambiguities in the division of tasks and workflows between platform providers and editors are not uncommon and lead to dissatisfaction. Ideally, both editors and platform providers are clear from the outset about who is responsible for what and record the division in writing. Due to the variety of services offered

by different IPSPs, the IPSPs should communicate these transparently and for some IPSPs an agreement would be advisable.

6

Registering journals for indexing is an overwhelming task for editors and a challenge for platforms. The fact that many editors consider the indexing process to be obscure indicates that the providers' processes are not transparent and that the indices are compiled randomly and arbitrarily. More transparency and reliability are urgently needed. A better overview of the requirements of different indexes and a clearer division of tasks between editors and platform providers would also be very helpful. CRAFT-OA's Diamond Discovery Hub will play an important role as an information platform and infrastructure for automatic/semi-automatic indexing. It is central to a higher appreciation, better perception and wider dissemination of Diamond OA publications.

The indexing service providers would have to be called upon by the Diamond community in a public statement to make their processes more transparent and reliable (more professional). Even if it must be assumed that little or nothing will change in the first step, it would make it clear that this is a structural problem.

7

There is an urgent and definite need for plagiarism checking tools within publishing systems and good (open source) tools for producing publication formats with as little manual work as possible. In the production of publication formats (especially XML), it is worth considering whether the Capacity Centers can not only offer training material created by CRAFT-OA¹⁵, but also build up know-how and capacities for training and support in the use of open source tools.

¹⁵ Kupreyev, M., Fenner, J., & Müller, L. (2024). CRAFT-OA Deliverable 2.2 Reusable curriculum for upskilling trainings (Draft.), p 26 Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10943284>

Appendix

Interviews editors

Name [name of interviewee]

Name of the journal

Specialized spectrum of the journal

Issues/year [continuous publication or issues].

How long has the journal existed?

How long has she been OA?

Online and print?

1. Hosting

- 1.1. Which software / system do you use to publish the journal [OJS, Janeway, Lodel, Wordpress, Pubpub.org]?
- 1.2. What do they appreciate about the current system? What advantages and disadvantages does it have? [Problems with the applications/software? Where are there gaps? What runs well, what runs sluggishly? Are there breaks between the applications?]
- 1.3. Is the publication part of an institution or network [library, infrastructures EU...]?
- 1.4. Are there people employed by you or your institution who provide technical support for the journal? [Editorial office, library]
- 1.5. Is this solution secured in the medium, long term [permanent positions or project positions for conversion or similar]?
- 1.6. Which languages in your editorial system do you use? [would you like to use other languages?]
- 1.7. Have you ever been confronted with data protection issues or had problems implementing data protection requirements?
- 1.8. Are you satisfied with the division of labor between the service/hosting provider and the editorial team? Does this division of labor allow you to operate the journal sustainably?
- 1.9. Is this division of tasks regulated in a contract (SLA, service level agreement, service contract)

2. Submissions and reviews

- 2.1. How do you manage submissions, assignment of reviewers? [Submission system like OJS etc., email, third party, publisher, automatic assignment].
- 2.2. What are the biggest challenges in the review process? [Finding reviewers, managing the reviewer pool, communication/mediation between reviewers and authors].
- 2.3. What quality assurance processes do you have in place for reviews?
- 2.4. How do you communicate with your authors? [editorial system, e-mail]
- 2.5. What are the advantages, what are the disadvantages? [Where is there a need for improvement? What is going so well that you don't want to change it? What works, but is too costly?]
- 2.6. Does your journal have its own e-mail address? [Does the service provide a mail address?]

3. Production

- 3.1. Which input formats do you work with? [Word, LaTeX ...]
- 3.2. Do you have templates for the authors, an editing tool?

- 3.3. What formats do they produce? [JATS xml, html, EPub, PDF...]
- 3.4. How do they produce these file formats? [Layout program (InDesign), Word, Edition tool, Pandoc workflow].
- 3.5. What is done externally, what internally? [refers to question 3.4.]
- 3.6. What could make this work easier for you? (Facilitate work from input format to output format, automate) [Is the existing solution enough, do you need better tools, do you need a third party provider?].
- 3.7. Are there any output formats you would need or want but can't produce? [JATS xml, html...]
- 3.8. Can you do the plagiarism check in the editorial system or would you like to do the plagiarism check in the editorial system?

4. Metrics

- 4.1. How important are metrics to you? [e.g. altmetrics, IF, download counts, page views, citations, etc.].
- 4.2. What metrics do they use or would like to use? [Accdepted Rates, Download and Access Statistics (Standards according to Jan is Counter), Turnaround Time; Altmetrics, Google Citations, Impactfactor, Citescore....]

5. Indexing and dissemination

- 5.1. Are they satisfied with the findability, the distribution?
- 5.2. Is the publication indexed in DOAJ? In Redalyc, PubMed, Web of Science, Scopus library catalogs (list WP 5 with indexes).
- 5.3. Is your journal in OpenAire?
- 5.4. In which languages, in which language is metadata captured?
- 5.5. In which languages do your publications appear? Have you ever had problems with publications in certain languages? [Special characters, display on web pages]
- 5.6. Are the languages of your publications a disadvantage in indexing?
- 5.7. What identifiers do you use [DOIs, ISSN, Orcid, ROR].
- 5.8. How are the identifiers created? Who bears the costs?
- 5.9. Are there identifiers you would like to use but are not getting?
- 5.10. What kind of support would you like to have here? [financial, technical, consulting, etc.].
- 5.11. Do you use CC licenses, which ones? Are there any requirements for this? [from whom?]
- 5.12. If not, why?

6. Finance

- 6.1. How is the journal funded? [professional society, funding institution, crowdfunding, university, etc.].
- 6.2. How many staff work for the newspaper? [People, approx. FTE]
- 6.3. What kind of revenue does the journal have? [Subscriptions print version, APCs, funding institutions]
- 6.4. Is that enough for the production of the Journal?
- 6.5. Published Guidelines [ethics.]

7. Follow-up questions

- 7.1. What do you see as the three biggest challenges for the sustainable operation of the journal?
- 7.2. What stands in the way of change/improvement?

Interviews platform providers

Basic data [Preliminary- by mail]

Name [name of interviewee]

Name of the platform [ditto]

What services, what infrastructure do you provide for OA journals?

Subject range of journals [from which disciplines, no sub-disciplines, more like medicine].

How many people are employed at your institution to maintain the journals? Divide into tasks: Technology, Services, etc. [FTE. see 7.2.]

User group: Who uses the service? Is the service reserved for a specific group? Who is addressed by the service? [Are the users more likely to be publishers or other service providers, members of a particular institution, e.g. researchers as opposed to students.]

Number of journals? [ditto]

Since when does the platform/service exist? [Foundation of the platform/service]

Only OA or also CA? [Number]

Journals with APCs? [Does the service cover journals that require APCs or are only Diamond OA journals supported].

Online and print? [Print by a publisher, print on demand offer via the system].

1. Hosting

- 1.1. What software / on what system does the service use ? [OJS, Janeway, Lodel, Wordpress, Pubpub.org; Marcalyc, SciFlow etc., other third party providers like Allenpress (Peertrack), Wiley (Editorial Manager) or Ubiquity]
- 1.2. What do they appreciate about the current system/software. What are the advantages and disadvantages? [Problems with the applications/software? Where are there gaps? What runs well, what runs sluggishly? Are there breaks between the applications?]
- 1.3. Is the service part of an institution? [University, library]
In a network? [Infrastructures EU...] [Does the service belong to an institution or is it independent. -> Question 1.5]
- 1.4. Is their service financially/personally secure in the long term? [Sustainability of the service. Can the service be provided on a permanent basis? Finances via budget of an institution or must funds be obtained regularly -> 7.3 see 7.3]
- 1.5. Is data protection a problem for you? Have you ever had problems implementing data protection requirements?
- 1.6. Are they satisfied with the division of labor between you and the editorial teams? Is this division of labor sustainable for everyone?
- 1.7. Is this division of tasks regulated in a contract (SLA, service-level agreement, service contract)?

2. Submissions and reviews

- 2.1. How can submissions, assignment of reviewers* be managed on your platform? [Submission system like OJS etc., email, third party, publisher].
- 2.2. What are the biggest challenges in the review process? [Finding reviewers, managing the reviewer pool, communication/mediation between reviewers and authors].
- 2.3. How do you communicate with your editors? [Editorial system, e-mail, newsletter] How do you inform about new features? Are there regular meetings?

- 2.4. What are the advantages, what are the disadvantages of your practice? [Where is there room for improvement? What is going so well that you don't want to change it? What works, but is too costly?]
- 2.5. Do your journals have their own e-mail addresses? [Does the service provide a mail address?]

3. Production

- 3.1. What submission formats do you support? [What is accepted as submission: Word, LaTeX, directly via an input tool ...]
- 3.2. Do you offer templates for editors* , an editing tool? [ditto]
- 3.3. In which formats can the editors publish? [JATS xml, html, EPub, PDF...]
- 3.4. How do they produce these file formats? [Layout program (InDesign), Word, Edition tool, Pandoc workflow].
- 3.5. What is done externally, what internally? [refers to question 4.2, 4.4]
- 3.6. What could facilitate, automate the work from input format to output format? [Is the existing solution sufficient, do we need better tools, do we need a third-party provider?]
- 3.7. Have your editors requested formats that you cannot offer? [ditto]
- 3.8. Can you provide plagiarism check in the editorial system? [ditto]
- 3.9. Do you have special journal types that have special requirements (e.g. data journals, video journals, handling of supplements)? How well can these requirements be implemented with the publication system you are sending out?

4. Metrics

- 4.1. How important are metrics for your journals? What metrics do you offer? [Accepted Rates, Download and Access Statistics, COUNTER ,Turnaround Time; Altmetrics, Google Citations, Impactfactor, Citescor....]. how were the data collected (e.g. citations)? What standards?

5. Indexing and dissemination

- 5.1. Are they satisfied with the findability, the distribution?
- 5.2. Are the journals indexed in DOAJ? In Redalyc, PubMed, Web of Science? Library catalogs, national or institutional CRIS
- 5.3. Are your journals in OpenAire?.
- 5.4. Which languages do you offer in your editorial system, are available in your editorial system? [would you like to offer more languages? Which ones?
- 5.5. In which languages, in which language metadata is captured?
- 5.6. In which languages do the publications appear?
- 5.7. Do you notice a disadvantage in indexing because of the languages? (When metadata is sent to another system or indexes).
- 5.8. What identifiers do you use, do you offer (DOIs, ISSN, Orcid)?
- 5.9. How are they created? Who bears the costs?
- 5.10. Which CC licenses can be used?
- 5.11. Are there any requirements for the editors regarding the licenses?
- 5.12. If not, why?

6. Production

- 6.1. Do you have long-term archiving? How do you do it?

7. Finance

- 7.1. How is the service financed? How are the journals financed?
- 7.2. What kind of revenue does the service have? Is that enough for sustainable operation? [-> 2.5]

8. Quality management

8.1. Published guidelines (ethics..)

8.2. What internal quality assurance processes do you have in place to ensure quality of service and a good user experience. [Metadata, multilingualism, backups, archiving].

9. Closing questions

9.1. What do you see as the three biggest challenges for the sustainable operation of the service?

9.2. What do you see as the three biggest challenges for journals

9.3. What stands in the way of change/improvement?