



# DIAMAS

Developing Institutional Open Access  
Publishing Models to Advance  
Scholarly Communication

## The centrality of the workforce for Diamond OA: Contractual, in-kind and voluntary work

This short article explains how significant the workforce is to sustaining Diamond Open Access publishing and what challenges these workers face.

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## The centrality of the academic workforce to Diamond OA

At the heart of Diamond OA publishing and service provision is a workforce that is built on personal and institutional commitment.

This workforce can be **more central than revenue** for the sustainability of Diamond OA publishing. The conditions of employment and compensation for Diamond OA are determined by the relationship between those contributing to scholarly publishing and the higher education and research institutions where they are based.<sup>1</sup> In the DIAMAS Study, it was reported that nearly 60% of all institutional publishing service providers (IPSPs) depend on a parent organisation in some way to sustain their work.<sup>2</sup>

Publishing organisations rely on a skilled workforce to carry out their mission. **Without this workforce, many journals would not survive.** This workforce can include **employees, contract workers, unpaid staff, graduate students, and others.**<sup>3</sup> They oversee the publishing process and content dissemination, they provide technical services such as applying (persistent) identifiers and digital preservation, they prepare communications and marketing materials, they take responsibility for business processes and publication policies, and more.<sup>4</sup>

Researchers are involved in scholarly publishing as journal editors-in-chief, editors, reviewers as well as authors. Some researchers view their involvement in journal publishing as an opportunity to advance or influence the direction and focus of their field, or to advance it. This can be seen as part of their broader responsibilities to contribute to their academic community and their institution's reputation or as part of their professional development. By serving as editors or reviewers, they can ensure that high-quality research is published in their field. Reviewing manuscripts or editing journals involves providing valuable feedback to peers, which is crucial for maintaining the standards and integrity of academic publishing. Participation in scholarly publishing activities, including serving as an editor, can also enhance the researcher's professional reputation and foster collaboration within his or her field. Institutional

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<sup>1</sup> Brun, Pontille, & Torny, (2024), D5.1 IPSP Sustainability Research Report (1.0), Zenodo, p. 49, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10907086>

<sup>2</sup> Armengou, et al., (2024), Institutional Publishing in the ERA: Results from the DIAMAS Survey, Zenodo, p. 39, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10022184>

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, programmes that offer fellowships, internships, or assistantships to graduate students that can serve as examples of how to properly recognise and support this work, including the MSU Press Editorial Assistantship at Michigan State University, <https://grad.msu.edu/news/call-applications-msu-press-editorial-assistantship>, and the Graduate Assistantship in the Writing Program at New York University, Gallatin School, [https://gallatin.nyu.edu/admissions/graduate/GAships/ga\\_writingprogram.html](https://gallatin.nyu.edu/admissions/graduate/GAships/ga_writingprogram.html).

<sup>4</sup> Brun, Pontille, & Torny, p. 49



publishing often brings visibility and prestige to the institution while contributing to the researcher's career development. These roles can enhance the researcher's visibility and networking opportunities within the academic community.

However, researchers often contribute their time and expertise to institutional publishing activities without any other specific form of reward or remuneration. This is especially the case for editors and reviewers, as authors are often rewarded for the number of articles they write, while, unfortunately, reviewing and editorial work remains largely invisible. While authors of scientific articles, reviewers and scientific editors are rarely compensated by publishers, their contributions may be considered paid for by the higher education and research institutions that employ them. In this light, the contributions of editors and reviewers are a form of **in-kind support** that institutions provide to the publishers.<sup>5</sup>

When Diamond OA publishers are based at academic institutions, the contributions of academic employees may either be considered **in-kind support** that the parent institutions provide to their publishing outfits or they become a core part of their work. These vital in-kind contributions should **receive better recognition from higher education and research institutions as part of research career evaluation**.<sup>6</sup>

It can furthermore be difficult to distinguish between the in-kind contributions that researchers make and those contributions that are purely voluntary. **Voluntary work** for institutional publishing organisations can also arise when academic employees undertake publishing tasks not stipulated in their job descriptions as part of the research time they are allotted by their university or when it exceeds the employees' assigned workload, amounting to uncompensated overtime. When contributions to institutional publishing activities are voluntary, they can constitute donated time beyond the contributors' salaried time. Sometimes, these unrecognised contributions are described as a 'labour of love'.<sup>7</sup> In such cases, the institutional publisher must make sure that the relevant employees are not subject to (self-)exploitation, and consider their editorial work as a **voluntary contribution** to the publishing organisation. The lack of remuneration or recognition invisibilises the labour behind institutional publishing, which **creates inequity and poses a sustainability challenge for Diamond OA**.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 50

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 51

<sup>7</sup> Adema & Moore, (2024), 'Just One Day of Unstructured Autonomous Time': Supporting Editorial Labour for Ethical Publishing within the University, *New Formations*, 110-111, p. 18, <https://doi.org/10.3898/NewF:110-111.01.2024>

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell, C. (2024). The Library as Sustainable (and Equitable) Diamond Open Access Publisher. For a panel entitled *Show me the Money. Decoupling OA from pre-publication charges*. Conference presentation at OASPA 2024 Conference, Lisbon, Portugal. [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dfShpKZXJBGfmAjC\\_aN564LGruhDG0at](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dfShpKZXJBGfmAjC_aN564LGruhDG0at)

Reduced dependence on in-kind and voluntary contributions can result from negotiations between institutional publishers, service providers, parent organisations, and individual researchers. Staff skills, availability and motivation depend on the compensation, rewards, recognition, and job security that they receive from parent organisations. **Better recognition by higher education and research institutions** of the publishing services' mission and the importance of its workforce can significantly strengthen institutional Diamond OA publishing going forward.<sup>9</sup>

Institutions can **provide appropriate recognition and incentives as part of research and researcher assessment to recognise the central role of the institutional publishing workforce**. Acknowledgement of their contributions boosts morale and motivates staff, enhancing the quality and efficiency of publishing services. The institution should appropriately recognise in-kind and voluntary work for institutional publishing. There are steps institutions can take to provide better recognition. Recognition may include career advancement opportunities, financial compensation, formal awards, or course releases.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, one of the aims of responsible research assessment reform (e.g. CoARA) is to recognise and reward a broader diversity of valuable contributions to science and society, including service to the research community. This includes contributing to scholarly communication. One significant way universities can do this would be to allow their research and teaching staff to use work time for institutional publishing activities.<sup>11</sup>

**Recognising the value of publishing activities within an institution** can lead to increased support, adoption and resources for Diamond OA journals. When institutions understand that publishing is a core part of the research lifecycle, they are more likely to allocate the necessary funding, technology, and staff to support these activities. This could include investing in advanced publishing platforms, data and information management systems, and staff professional development.<sup>12</sup>

High-quality publications reflect positively on the institution's brand and reputation. By ensuring that publishing activities are recognised and valued, institutions can build a strong academic brand that differentiates them from competitors and highlights their commitment to research excellence. The workforce's central role in **ensuring quality, driving innovation, and maintaining ethical standards** highlights their indispensable contribution to the success of research dissemination. Recognising their work can

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<sup>9</sup> Brun, Pontille, & Torny, p. 51

<sup>10</sup> Collister & Cantrell, (2021), Language, the Status Quo Bias, and Open Access Advocacy, Pittsburgh, U.S.A., [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1m62Ka9v0bZDGnw3pHgm2XCPz4l4OGMZNcga1Habalbs/edit#slide=id.g64153bf263\\_1\\_16](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1m62Ka9v0bZDGnw3pHgm2XCPz4l4OGMZNcga1Habalbs/edit#slide=id.g64153bf263_1_16)

<sup>11</sup> Brun, Pontille, & Torny, p. 78

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 78



improve support, quality, and impact of publications, foster a culture of scholarly quality, and enhance the institution's overall reputation and competitive edge. By continuing to maintain institutional publishing through in-kind support, and by further prioritising and investing in publishing services and their workforce, institutions can ensure their research outputs achieve the prominence and influence they deserve.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 78



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