

Bundesministerium
für Forschung, Technologie
und Raumfahrt

Hurdles to open access publishing for researchers with weak institutional ties

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Identification of hurdles to Open Access publishing for researchers with weakly institutional ties - epistemic injustice in scientific communication



Our objective

To develop a set of evidence-based recommendations for publishers and policymakers aimed at eliminating or mitigating the identified burdens

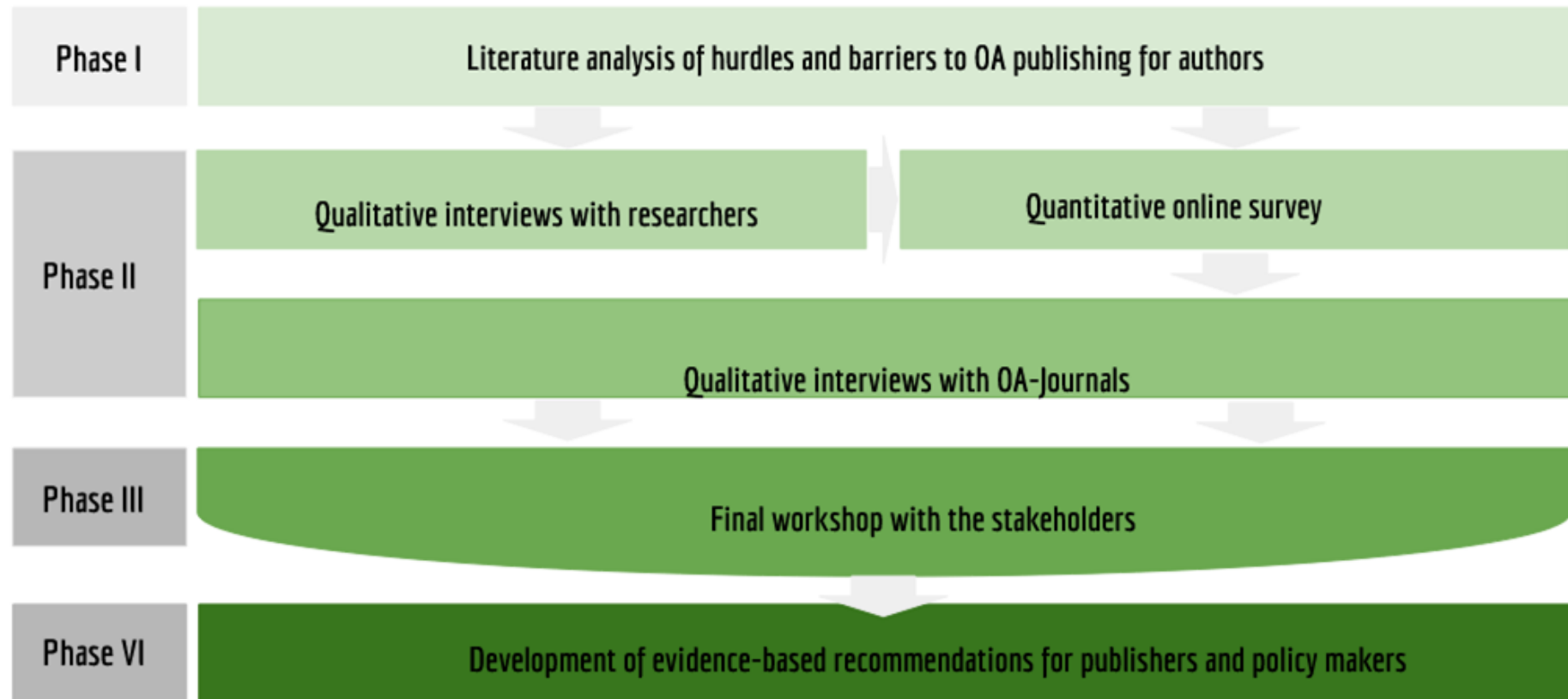


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Project structure



October 2024 - September 2025



Weakly-affiliated researchers? Who are they?

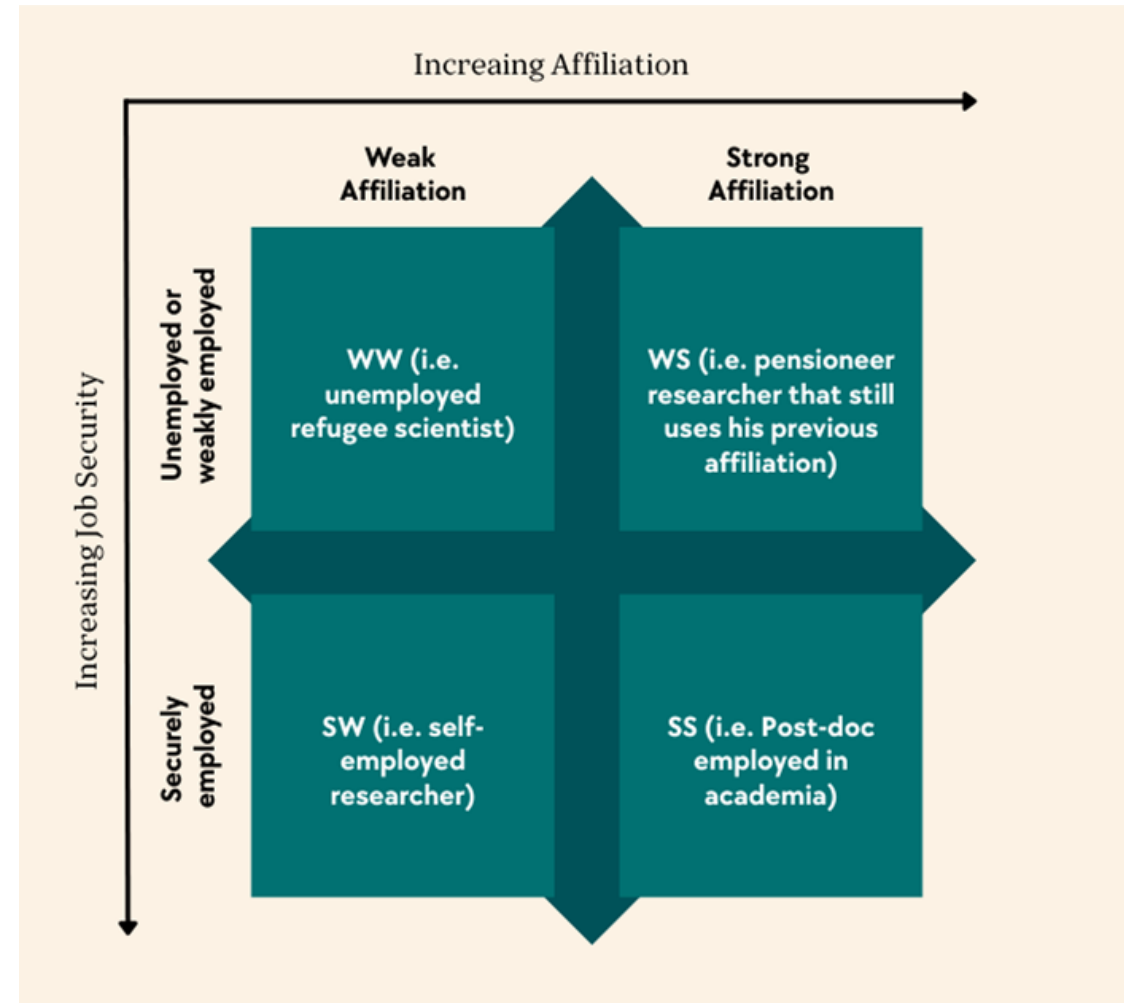


Researchers ...

- with varying degrees of affiliation and job security
- inside and outside academia

EISabry (2017)

- “Armchair researchers”
- ‘refugee researchers’
- citizen scientists
- scientists conducting research for NGOs or civil organizations



Tracing Weakly Affiliated Researchers (WAR)



Institute for Globally Distributed Open Research and Education (IGDORE) - a virtual research institute supporting independent and weakly affiliated scholars. It offers a credible institutional affiliation for researchers (publishing/funding acquisition etc), a supportive, global network of scholars across disciplines. Founded in 2016 by Dr. Rebecca Willén, IGDORE brings together 208 independent researchers across 20+ disciplines, living in around 45 countries.



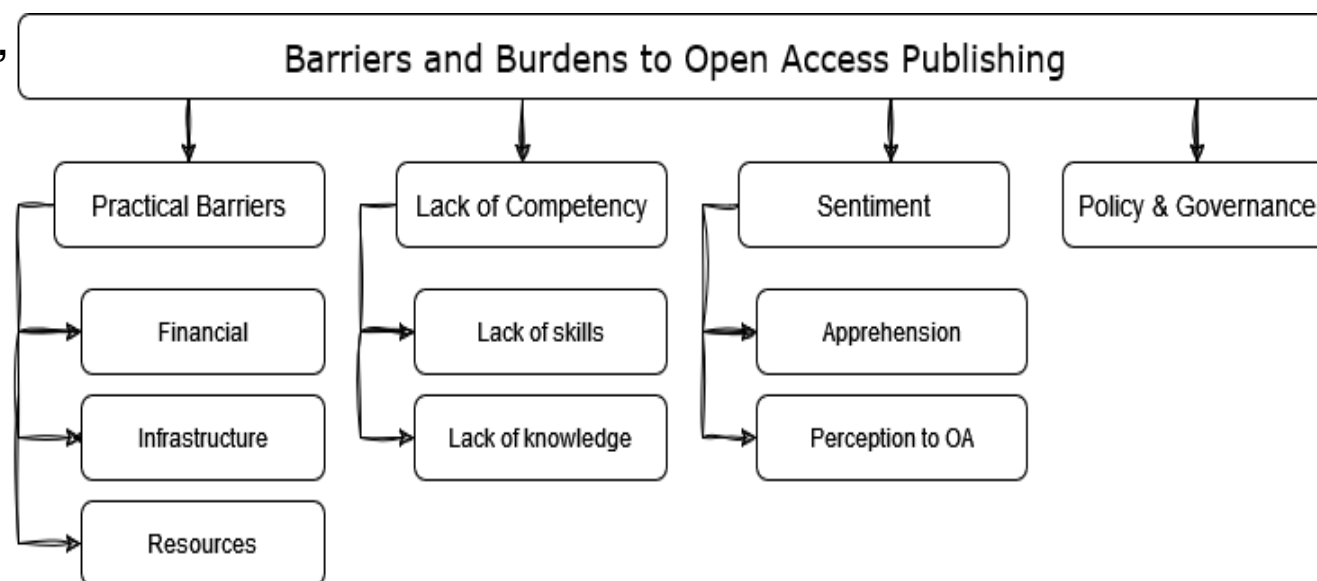
National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS) - non-profit organization providing professional affiliation, support services, and camaraderie to scholars outside of tenured academia. Based in the U.S., NCIS includes over 250 scholars from 26 countries across all disciplines, with activities and membership extending worldwide.


- International, regional, local Citizen Science associations, networks, groups
- International, regional and national NGO and Civil Society Networks
- Refugee support networks (Scholars at Risk (SAR), the Council for At-Risk Academics (Cara), Science For Ukraine etc.
- Social media groups for aforementioned categories
- Search by affiliation in reference/citation databases for “Independent researcher”/ “Independent scholar”.

Scoping literature review on barriers to OA publishing



- Data sources : Dimensions, Scopus, WoS, OATP
- 1,877 papers selected
- 113 papers included in the review
- Time span from 2003 to 2023



- 
- 82 barriers identified
 - grouped into 4 clusters
 - sub-clustered based on thematic affinity



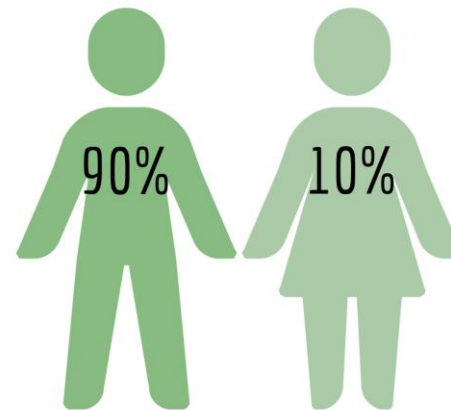
Kaliuzhna, N., Aydin, Z., Müller, P., & Hauschke, C. (2025). Hurdles to open access publishing faced by authors: a scoping literature review from 2004 to 2023. *Royal Society Open Science*, 12(8).
<https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.250257>

*1-st stand of research February - October,
2024*

10 Qualitative interviews with weakly-affiliated researchers



- 4 — independent researchers
- 2 — citizen science researchers
- 1 — refugee researcher
- 1 — retired researcher
- 1 — researcher working for a non for profit organization
- 1 — researcher from the industry sector



Gender representation of participants



Geographical coverage



Affiliation specific barriers experienced by WAR researchers

- Editorial bias based on affiliation ➡ *rejections*
- Technical limitations of submission systems (e.g., pre-registered affiliation databases without the option to enter a custom affiliation) ➡ *inability to make a submission*
- Lack of support & guidance on selecting high-standard journals ➡ *risk of falling into predatory journals*
- Unaffordable APCs ➡ *Fewer solo-author papers; collaboration mostly with those who have funding*
- APC waivers tied to countries Gross National Income (GNI) per capita ➡ *WAR researchers from developed countries are not eligible for APC waivers*
- Concerns sharing home address with publisher ➡ *Hesitance and indecisiveness about whether to submit a manuscript*

... but after finally getting a paper published it becomes an invisible research (“publishing into a void”) *Papers by independent researchers are not making it to journal press releases or scientific journalists’ overviews*

II-st stand of research December 2024 - January 2025

The IDAHO project global survey on equitable and diverse OA publishing

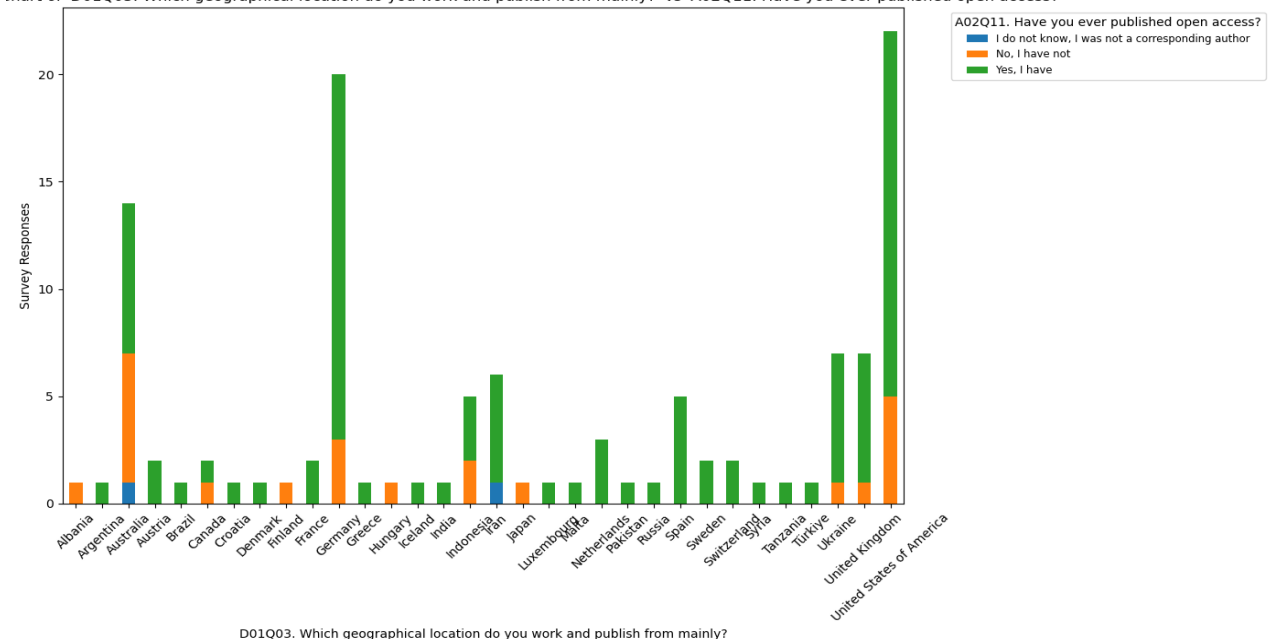


Demographic assessment of participants

- participants from 35 countries
- all continents represented
- majority published OA
- participants from Australia, Germany, and United States divided on publishing OA



Chart of 'D01Q03. Which geographical location do you work and publish from mainly?' vs 'A02Q11. Have you ever published open access?'



D01Q03. Which geographical location do you work and publish from mainly?



Burden Assessment

PRACTICAL				POLICY AND GOVERNANCE			
High article processing charge	I cannot afford participation in foreign conferences (visa, accommodation cost, etc.)	There are not enough reputable OA journals within my research domain	OA publishing brings extensive administrative burden	I am not eligible for an APC waiver	There are no rewards for publishing OA		
	I have no funding to cover article processing fees	Lack of subscription access to English-language journals so I cannot prepare up-to-date research	It takes extra...	My institution does not have an institutional repository	I do not get any support from my institution	I have no incentives to publish OA	
Pre-registered databases on publishing platforms do not list "independent researcher" as an affiliation status		My research was deemed unsuitable for publication because it focu...	None of these apply to me	APC waiver policies are inconsistent and not transparent from the publishers side	I am overwhelmed with my teaching or other duties and have limited time available for research and publishing	None of these apply to me	
	My paper was desk-rejected because of my affiliation status						
				I want to retain copyright and copyright retention policies from the publisher side are unclear	OA journals are not indexed in preferable databases	There is not enough mentoring for Early Stage Researchers on how to publish OA properly	I face legal barriers for OA publishing
							My ...
PERCEPTION OF OA				COMPETENCY			
I do not want to pay big publishers even more money	Many of OA journals are predatory with low scholarly rigor	I believe that OA papers are cited less, but I want to get recognition for my work	I believe that OA papers have lower readership than subscription based content	OA articles are at a high risk of being plagiarized, scooped or misused	None of these apply to me	I am not sure how to deposit in a repository	
	OA papers are of low prestige	Uncertainty about copyright and concerns over breaching publishing rights	OA journals are poorly preserved	OA journals are of a low quality		I do not know how to publish OA	I received a review report in which credibility of my research was question...
It is not prestigious to publish in repositories	I would prefer not to share research which has not been peer reviewed	OA journals have lower impact factor than paywalled journals	None of these apply to me	I do not think it is important or necessary to ...	I am aff...	My English...	

III-st stand of research March 2025 - June 2025



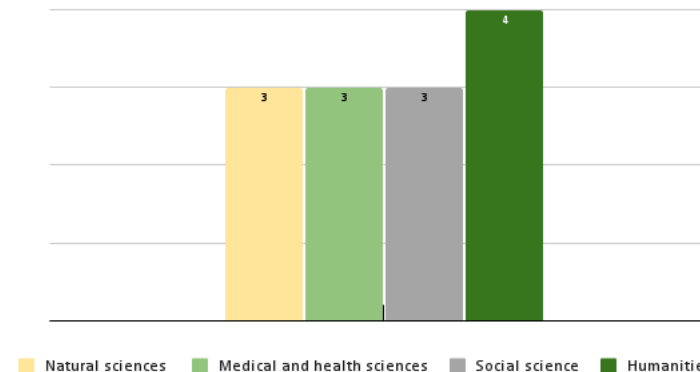
Awareness of and Strategies Applied by Editors to Support Researchers with Weak Institutional Ties

13 Qualitative interviews with scientific journal editors

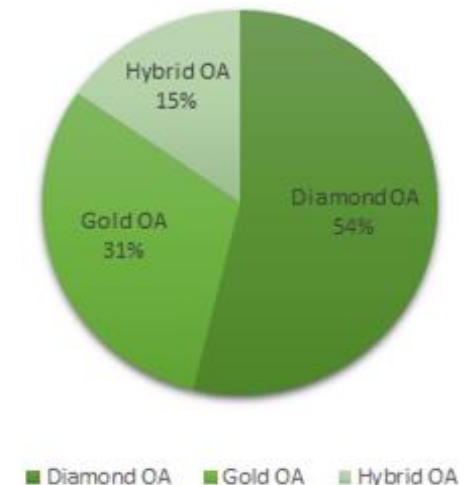


Key objectives:

- Assess journal editors' awareness regarding the obstacles that weakly affiliated researchers (WARs) face in publishing OA
- Evaluate the inclusion of WAR as a distinguished category of researchers in journal policies
- To explore the strategies or efforts that journals/publishers have implemented to support WAR and facilitate their engagement with OA publishing

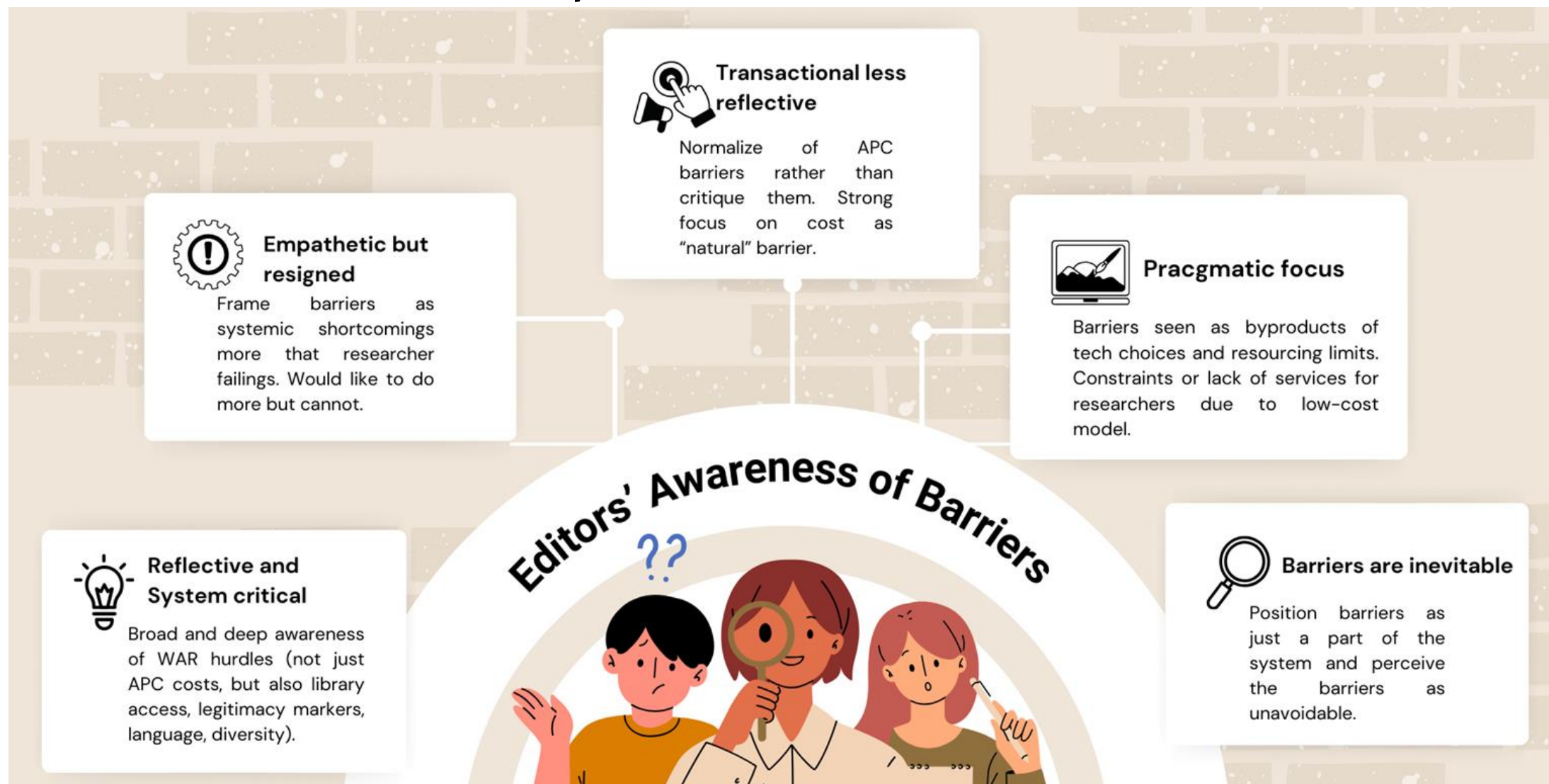


Research areas of journals in our sample



Journal business models

Qualitative interviews - Scientific Editors



Strategies applied by editors

Methodological guidance
& language editing

Authors in artistic domains may face challenges in structuring academic papers; Non-Western authors may follow alternative methodological approaches.

Double anonymous peer
review

Reduces biases related to reputation, affiliation, gender and geography, ensuring evaluation based on the scientific merit of the manuscript.

Promoting inclusive
journal business models

Advocating for Diamond
OA



Based on the study findings, the following

**five recommendations for
inclusion are proposed:**

Recommendations for inclusion



Transparency and flexibility of APCs



Recognition of diverse affiliations



Offer multilingual author support



Strengthen truth



Streamline submission workflow



Recommendation 1

Increase Transparency and Flexibility of APC waiver policy

- Expand diamond open access models
- Offer tiered or sliding-scale APC models
 - journal sets different fixed price levels depending on certain factors:
 - institutional funding level
 - grant funding availability
 - support authors from underrepresented regions/communities and backgrounds
- Provide a clear, explicit waiver policy on the website, outlining eligibility criteria
 - avoiding time consuming back-and-forth communication with editors or publishers
- Create transparent, automatic waiver and discount systems



Recommendation 2

Accept and recognize Diverse Affiliation Types

- Allow “independent researcher” as option in submission systems
 - Make sure customized affiliations can be typed in (Independent researcher/Independent scholar/Consultant/Writer etc.)
- Train editorial teams to avoid biases
 - Institutional and prestige bias
 - Favoring manuscripts from well-known universities or research institutes
 - Excluding work from lesser-known institutions or independent researchers
 - Language and geographic bias
 - Preference for native English writing
 - Prejudice that research in disciplines requiring extensive facilities or infrastructure (e.g., physics) cannot be of high quality if conducted by independent researchers without institutional support



Recommendation 3

Enhance Multilingual and Author Support Systems

- Develop submission platforms with multilingual interfaces
- Offer language editing
 - Provide professional (affordable) editing support for non-native English speakers
- Support Indigenous knowledge research dissemination



Recommendation 4

Strengthen Trust, Quality, and Preservation Signals

- Promote robust peer review and editorial transparency
- Ensure OA journals are made visible and discoverable
- Display clear licensing and copyright policies



Recommendation 5

Streamline and Simplify Submission Workflows

- Provide low-bandwidth submission options
 - mobile-friendly portals
- Offline submission kits
- Provide author friendly submissions
 - Consider submission by email option



Vielen Dank!

Project website <https://projects.tib.eu/idoaho/>
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Resources

- <https://freevectormaps.com/germany/DE-EPS-01-0001?ref=atr>

