



Latin American scholarly-led regional Open Access programmes CLACSO, Latindex, Redalyc, La Referencia, SciELO meeting in 2016 in Chiapas, Mexico, to strengthen scholarly-led Open Access cooperation in the region.

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Commented [U2R1]: I like very much this photo because it represents all LATAM regional initiatives working together. Is it possible in the blog page simply to enlarge as I did here in Word? I enclose the original photo, you can adapt it as you need. And I enclose other images you can also change the size as needed. For me, the images of CLACSO are more important than my photo.

Plan S and Open Access: Q&A with CLACSO's Open Access Advisor Dominique Babini

To get us started, I wondered if you could tell us very briefly how you got involved with the Open Access debate and why it matters to you?

Working in Argentina in the central offices of [CLACSO](#) – a network of 700 research institutions in 52 countries, mainly from Latin America – we realized back in 1998 that having our member institutions publish online could help us give more visibility to research results. Publishing online would also provide scholars and wider audiences with open access to journals, books and all kinds of publications from countries where the cost of sending a printed version overseas was more expensive than printing a book or journal.

We promoted a debate on open access scholarly communications in the region, and through that, a scholar-led no-Article Processing Charge (n-APC) option was decided for the transition to Open Access for publicly funded research. Today CLACSO's [catalogue](#) has 2,953 Open Access books, and we've partnered with [Redalyc](#) to provide access to 933 peer-review Open Access journals. These services receive an average of 4 million downloads a month, from diverse audiences, as [Juan Pablo Alperin's research](#) has proved. [CLACSO's Declaration on open access to knowledge managed as a commons by the scholarly community](#) was voted by members of CLACSO in Latin America at the 2015 General Assembly.

We got involved in the international debates because we were invited to describe scholar-led no-APC/BPC alternatives from our region, and because of our concern with proposals for APCs which, from a developing region perspective, risk perpetuating within open access the traditional international scholarly communications system of past decades, with communications concentrated in 'mainstream' journals and evaluation indicators based on them. These journals are managed by commercial partners with very high and increasing profit margins paid for with research money (is this ethical?), and lack diverse contributions from developing regions, which has a negative impact on developing regions' evaluation systems.

Can you give us some background on Open Access in Latin America more generally? How are repositories being used?

The main drivers of Open Access in Latin America have been public universities and government organizations, with no outsourcing to commercial publishers, as described in the [UNESCO-GOAP Global Open Access Portal](#). Publicly funded scholar-led initiatives ([Latindex](#), [SciELO](#), [Redalyc](#)) have helped journals in the region to improve quality, to make the transition to Open Access with no APCs, and to provide [initial Open Access indicators](#). The main research universities such as the University of Sao Paulo, Mexico National Autonomous University and the University of Chile have Open Journal Systems (OJS) portals with more than 100 journals each.

With relation to APCs, a regional consortium of government offices that make centralized purchases of international journals at the national level [agreed in 2017 that expanding Open Access through payment of APCs was "impossible to undertake from a financial point of view for the participant countries"](#), and recommended that institutions do not create grants to pay for APCs.

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Repositories have been a priority for national Open Access policies and legislation in the region. National legislation that mandates deposit of state-funded research results in Open Access digital repositories was approved in Argentina and Peru in 2013; in Mexico in 2014, and a bill was introduced in Congress in Brazil in 2007 and reintroduced in 2011. Regional government agreements have also supported the development of repositories. The public science and technology agencies of 9 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru) agreed in 2012 to develop national systems of repositories in each country to coordinate funding, training, and to strengthen regional cooperation through [La Referencia](#), a federated regional network of repositories, which boosts interoperability agreements in the region, and its regional harvester, which today has 1,431,703 full-text peer-review articles, thesis and research reports. At the international level, La Referencia follows OpenAIRE interoperability guidelines, and is an active member of the Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR), working with repository networks worldwide towards a global network of repositories, and functionalities for [next generation repositories](#).

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When the Open Access Act for Publicly Funded Research was passed in Argentina in 2013, what was the reaction from the research community? Are there any learnings for the implementation of Plan S?

In the case of Argentina, the Ministry of Science first consulted the members of the national system of research institutions that receive public funds for research, then appointed an [Expert Committee](#) on repositories, which contributed, with the Ministry, to drafting the 2013 legislation. This requires publicly funded research results to be deposited in Open Access repositories no later than 6 months after publication. The Expert Committee is active in the National System of Digital Repositories, evaluating new repositories, funding requests, according standards and procedures, among other activities.

The reaction from the research community has been similar to that in many other countries with Open Access policies and/or legislation. Research institutions and researchers support Open Access because it improves visibility of research results, but it creates tension with the contracts they have signed with publishers, and with their need to publish in ‘mainstream’ journals that are given priority for tenure and promotion. This is the case even in disciplines publishing on local topics in local peer-review journals, in the local language, as is the case in agriculture, health and social science research, among others.

For the implementation of Plan S, we agree that evaluation systems need review at global level. From a developing region perspective, this review should look at giving adequate value to knowledge produced by less privileged institutions and countries, in a diversity of formats – not only journals – and would be a contribution to global research and development agendas.

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Now that Plan S is being promoted worldwide, what changes – if any – do you think you’ll see? Is Argentina likely to join?

We agree with the need to “Make full and immediate Open Access a reality”.

In its present drafting by funders with [an estimated of 3.3% of articles published globally](#), Plan S looks like an acceleration plan for Europe’s most privileged research institutions which can cover APCs for their research community, and ensure compliance with the Plan S requirements.

Looking at international research and policy agendas on priority sustainable development issues, it strikes us at CLACSO that the development of an inclusive and participatory global Open Access scholarly communications system is not given due priority.

If Plan S wants to become a global proposal for “making full and immediate Open Access a reality”, then we would critique the lack of global consultation with diverse stakeholders, in a diversity of disciplines, geographical and institutional realities, in different regions, prior to launching the principles and implementation guidelines.

As an example, we see no questioning in Plan S if scholarly communication needs to be a market, or whether it can be increasingly managed by the scholarly community with support from research funding agencies, as is the case in Latin America. Why promote APCs globally without even knowing if the publishers will provide “transparent costing and pricing” and will accept caps? Acceptable caps may differ greatly from region to region.

Plan S comes at a time when we see growth in non-profit Open Access initiatives, so we have to ask if Plan S is a way of ensuring a predominant role for journals with APCs in the future of Open Access? Is global Open Access about transforming the market from pay-to-read to pay-to-publish, or both during the transition period?

In Latin America we have a different view. Scholarly communications are managed by the scholarly community, with its own journal platforms and repositories, and supported by public funds as part of the public infrastructure needed for research. It is not a market, as is reflected in the short presentation “[AmeliCA versus Plan S](#)”.

Plan S funders should support these diverse realities.

Today, the technical criteria of Plan S clearly favour APC-based publishers and are generally in line with technical industry standards; not even the 1400 journals awarded the [DOAJ Seal](#) can by default be said to fulfil every criterion, as expressed by a recent study about [how few open access journals are Plan S compliant](#). As expressed in the study, the current timeline will remove the n-APC-journals from the market, leaving the APC-based journals the winners.

Repositories and other innovative platforms should have more importance in Plan S. Any proposal for accelerating open access in global scholarly communications should consider the recommendations of the [Harvard-MIT feedback](#) to “see Plan S make better use of the global network of open-access repositories”, and the recommendations in the [COAR Next Generation Repositories Report](#) to advance innovations in research communications. As stated in [COAR’s feedback on Plan S](#), “The distributed nature of repositories allows them to be responsive to local needs and priorities, while also ensuring some financial sustainability because they are, in most cases, services provided directly by research institutions (universities and other). Interoperability of repositories at the regional and international levels is crucial to support the development of cross-repository services”.

Plan S acknowledges repositories because of their “long-term archiving function and their potential for editorial innovation” but it should also consider repositories’ value for their capacity to provide open access to diverse contents and formats of the research cycle, their distributed-collaborative-non-commercial status, and their potential for providing next generation repositories functions (COAR), including developing peer-review functions to deliver indicators for evaluation, interoperate with research management information platforms and support re-use of research results. We welcome the [Harvard and MIT recommendations for Plan S implementation](#): “we recommend that Plan S broaden the green

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OA option (OA through repositories), to make it less onerous and more viable for researchers. In its current form, the Plan S green option is needlessly and even harmfully narrow and difficult”

A very positive recommendation in Plan S is that publishers should facilitate deposit in repositories.

The implementation guidelines on Plan S – and previous blogs in this series – have outlined the possibility of a standardisation of fees, and/or a cap on Article Processing Charges (APCs). How would that impact researchers in Latin American countries?

A reasonable APC for a European or North American research institution can be unaffordable for a developing region institution. Are waivers a solution? Who will control whether waivers are sufficient and adequate to ensure less-privileged researchers to publish, and don't become a marketing strategy for future sales? Not all developing countries or less-privileged institutions in developed countries are included in lists of countries that can apply for waivers.

From a Latin American perspective, a region with no APC, Plan S gives too important a role to publishers that charge APCs. Is it for this result that we we have worked on scholarly-led initiatives in the past two decades? To prepare journals from developing regions to enter the Open Access market? A market with [such extreme profits due to the peculiarity of the economics of scholarly publishing](#)? In a market where prices are defined by a few companies, will their shareholders accept to downsize to a profit related to real costs? Does Plan S have the mechanisms to ensure publishers will be paid fairly for services provided? As [Martin Eve](#) mentions, the legal status of government funders requiring transparency of costs from corporate suppliers is “unclear”.

We agree with [Peter Suber](#)'s comment on Plan S

“If the plan wants to sustain fee-based Open Access journals by paying APCs, as it does, then it should also want to sustain no-fee Open Access journals”.

That would help less privileged institutions and countries not only access but also publish in Open Access journals.

We should be wary that the idea that [“Plan S can galvanize advocates to align their efforts to shake up the publishing system”](#) does not end up shaking up the funding system to align funders for providing the funds needed for a generalized APCs market solution.

With Plan S the big money still goes to publishers. After 20 years of Open Access, is this a desirable outcome? From our perspective, more money should go to building and improving public infrastructure for open access and open science.

The debate about Open Access – and the potential for Plan S to restrict publication in certain paywalled journals which are considered highly prestigious – also calls into question systems of recruitment and reward in universities, where Journal Impact Factor is still considered an important indicator of research quality. What's the state of play on evaluation in Latin America? Are other metrics being taken into consideration, and have you seen any novel approaches?

This is the reality of the academic reward system in which everyone is trapped. For the implementation of Plan S, we agree that evaluation systems need review at global level. From a

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developing region perspective, this review process should allow for complementing traditional indicators from 'mainstream' journals with new indicators.

In the case of Latin America, UNESCO has funded the improvement of web visibility of bibliometric indicators from the two main Open Access peer-review journal databases, SciELO and Redalyc, and a [book](#) has been published describing those indicators as a contribution to evaluation systems. As far as we are aware, these indicators are little used in evaluation systems in our region, which still concentrate on the impact factor of 'mainstream' journals for promotion and evaluation. An exception is the National Research Council of Argentina, which has included the indicators from Redalyc and SciELO, together with indicators from WoS and Scopus, for evaluating journals where social science researchers publish.

CLACSO is engaged in a regional discussion about evaluation which started a few years ago with SILEU-Latin American and the Caribbean University Evaluation System, the first phase of a major evaluation discussion in the region.

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