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# CO-CREATING A HEALTHY AND DIVERSE OPEN ACCESS MARKET: WORKSHOP REPORT

Workshop Report commissioned by  
Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association  
(OASPA)

Authored by  
Victoria Ficarra, Rob Johnson  
Research Consulting



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# SECTION ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Recognising the importance of a healthy and diverse OA market, in early 2021, OASPA sought to develop a better understanding of 'the open access market'. It was understood that this needed to include an assessment of the roles of different actors in shaping the market and an acknowledgement that open access publishing is not always delivered through market mechanisms. The work aimed to identify influential factors and drivers to bring about positive change in this area.

Research Consulting was commissioned to assist in this work, in collaboration with a small steering group of OASPA members. An Issue Brief<sup>1</sup> was developed to review the current state of the open access market and in July 2021 a range of stakeholder representatives were engaged via two workshops.

This report acts as a companion document to the Issue Brief, and summarises the key points discussed during the stakeholder workshops. To better contextualise the issues discussed in this report it is recommended that the Issue Brief is read first. Whilst there were two separate workshops, this report presents a combined view from all participants. Anonymised quotes from participants are included throughout this report to illustrate the points discussed.

### Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the input from workshop participants and the OASPA steering group whose insights have contributed to the finished text of this workshop summary report. Any errors or inaccuracies are the responsibility of the authors alone.

### 1.2 The three pillars of the OA market

Discussion of the open access market within the workshops centred around three key pillars: Market, Regulation and Community.

These three pillars cannot be considered in isolation from one another as they overlap and intercept in multiple ways, as Figure 1 illustrates. The unifying concept for these three pillars is co-creation:

*Co-creation occurs when different parties work together to produce a mutually valuable outcome.*

These three pillars, and the unifying concept of co-creation, were the foundational concepts explored via the workshops.

**Figure 1: The three pillars of the OA market**<sup>2</sup>



1. Johnson, R., Ficarra, V. 2021. Co-creating a healthy and diverse OA market: Issue Brief, OASPA.  
2. Rajan, R., 2019. The Third Pillar: The Revival of Community in a Polarised World.

# SECTION TWO

## Methodology

### 2.1 Approach

In early July 2021 OASPA and Research Consulting ran two workshops for a broad range of stakeholder representatives on developing a healthy and diverse open access (OA) market. The workshops each ran over three hours, and were scheduled to cover multiple time zones, with the aim of capturing global perspectives. Nevertheless, a limitation of this work is that voices from low-and-middle-income countries were underrepresented in the workshops. Invited stakeholders included academics, funders, publishers, advocacy bodies, infrastructure and service providers, research performing organisations and libraries. In total 31 representatives of these stakeholders attended the workshops, and a full list of attendees can be found in Appendix A.

The workshop content was identical for both sessions and aimed to explore the following questions:

- What do we mean by the open access market?
- What are the characteristics of a healthy and diverse open access market?
- What roles do market forces, regulation and the community play in creating the market?
- How can different actors collaborate to 'co-create' a healthy and diverse market?

### 2.2 Workshop outline

During the workshops, participants were asked to contribute via plenary and breakout discussions, Mentimeter (an interactive tool), Google documents and the meeting chat. The majority of the workshops were spent in breakout discussions centred around the three pillars of the OA market. Participants were split into three breakout groups, with each being designated a pillar to explore further.

Breakout groups discussed the following questions for each pillar:

- What would prioritising this approach achieve? How is this better than the other approaches?
- What are the negative consequences when choosing this approach?
- What are the practical challenges to adopting this approach? How severe are they?

In the second part of the breakout group, groups were asked to think about how market, regulatory and community actors can work together to co-create a healthy and diverse market.

### 2.3 Managing competition law risk

In order to reduce the risk of inadvertently breaching competition law, all discussions took place in accordance with a 'Managing competition law risk statement', issued to participants prior to the workshops.

**Figure 2: Key stages of our approach**



## SECTION THREE

# What is the market?

### 3.1 Contention in the use of the term 'market'

There was contention over the use of the term 'market'. It was argued that the term reflects the perspective of the Global North, obscuring the fact that in many disciplines and regions of the world, open access publishing is not delivered through market mechanisms at all. It was also observed that references to 'the open access market' risk isolating open access from the broader concept of open science. However, others argued that we should not shy away from acknowledging that there are costs associated with publishing, and that market mechanisms are widely used as a means of meeting these costs.

Whilst there was recognition that most other options could also be contentious, various alternatives such as 'system', 'environment', 'ecosystem', and 'landscape' were suggested. The term 'market' is used for consistency throughout the remainder of this report, but the contested nature of the term is acknowledged.

*"Whilst there may be a tendency to avoid using the term 'market', from the author perspective... by definition it is a market, and we shouldn't shy away from acknowledging this."*

### 3.2 The OA market does not exist in isolation

It was suggested that the OA market cannot be looked at in isolation from the wider subscription publishing market, as the two are becoming ever more closely intertwined. Doing so could result in a failure to recognise that change must come from the wider scholarly communications landscape.

*"It's the elephant in the room. Is it fundamentally okay to talk about it being a market, or should we start to shift the whole discussion around what is good for society?"*

### 3.2 The socio-technical context

A fundamental question raised was: 'is it a market or is it a community?' Several participants argued that if the aim of OA is to create a knowledge commons, then framing a discussion of the market in purely economic terms risks missing the point. A number of participants recognised that, when seen in this light, scholarly communication cannot be considered a 'normal' market and publications cannot be treated like other commodities.

There was agreement that wider cultural and socio-technical considerations must therefore be taken into account when seeking to understand and shape the open access market.

#### Key takeaways:

- The term 'market' is highly contested, and in many regions of the world the market fails to meet the needs of researchers.
- Change in the open access market cannot happen without change in the wider scholarly communications landscape.
- The market cannot be understood in isolation, but is shaped by the wider cultural and sociotechnical forces at play within academia.

## SECTION FOUR

# Understanding the problem

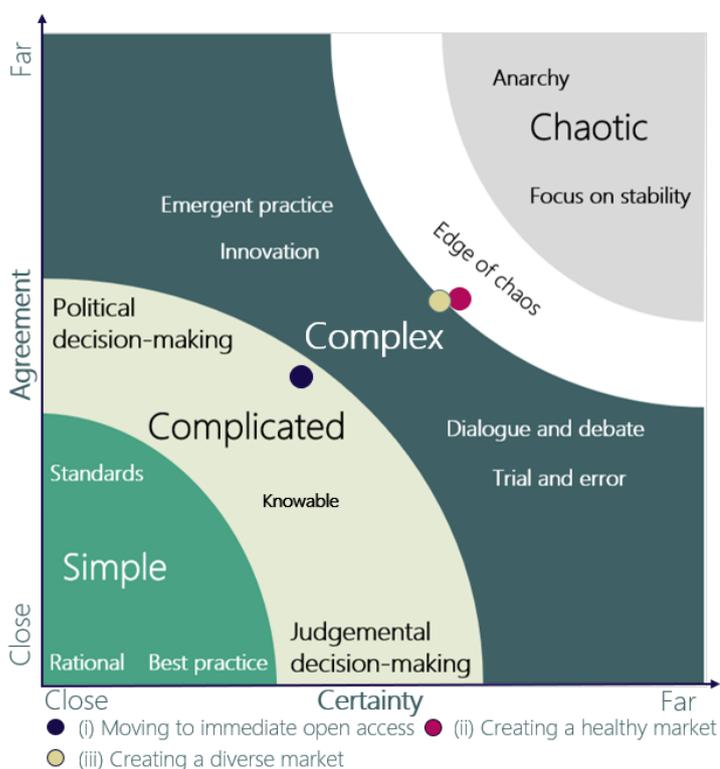
### 4.1 Assessing complexity

The creation of a healthy and diverse open access market represents a wicked problem: one “whose social complexity means that it has no determinable stopping point”. The Stacey matrix (pictured below) was used as a means of exploring the factors which contribute to complexity in the context of the open access market.

### 4.2 Assessing the level of agreement and certainty

When asked to assess the level of agreement and certainty on (i) moving to immediate open access (ii) creating a healthy market and (iii) creating a diverse market, participants detected significant distinctions in the complexity of these issues. Moving to immediate open access was seen as being a ‘*complicated*’ issue, whereas creating a healthy and diverse market was seen as a ‘*complex*’ issue, on ‘*the edge of chaos*’, as seen in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Open access on the Stacey Matrix**



*“I would guess that among this group, we don't all think a healthy market means the same thing... we're probably not picturing the same endpoint.”*

There was agreement that progress is challenging because a ‘successful’ OA market will look different to different stakeholders. In addition, regional differences in the market need to be recognised to mobilise a cohesive global shift. Other workshop participants countered that there is general agreement about the direction of travel towards a healthy and diverse OA market, but that there is disagreement over the best strategy to get there.

There was further disagreement over the order in which actions must be prioritised. One school of thought argued for collectively moving to OA and working to resolve market problems simultaneously, whereas a strong opposing view argued that the former must happen first, with market problems addressed later. The dichotomy of these views only further illustrates the difficulty in tackling this issue.

#### Key takeaways:

- The shift to immediate open access is complicated, but progress can be made through a process of political decision-making.
- The creation of a healthy and diverse open access market is complex. We are at a stage of dialogue, debate and innovation rather than decision-making.
- A key source of tension is whether to prioritise the move to immediate OA and resolve market problems later, or reform the market as an integral part of the transition to OA.

## SECTION FIVE

# Characteristics of a healthy and diverse OA market

## 5.1 Characteristics of a healthy and diverse OA market

Throughout the workshop sessions, attendees were encouraged to provide feedback on a list of proposed characteristics for the OA market, as originally prepared for the Issue Brief. This section outlines these characteristics, and summarises the feedback from participants.

### Proposed characteristics of a healthy and diverse OA market

1. Efficient, sustainable dissemination of high-quality peer-reviewed outputs containing original research or scholarship.
2. Readers are able to access research outputs free of charge and with minimal restrictions on reuse.
3. Authors (and libraries or funders acting on their behalf) are able to publish their research either at no charge or at an affordable price.
4. A diversity of workflows, languages, publication outputs, and research topics that support the needs and epistemic pluralism of different research communities.
5. Regular arrival of new entrants and the continued presence of small and medium-sized enterprises within the market.

Characteristics 1, 4, and 5 generated the most feedback from participants. For the first characteristic, participants observed that sustainability means different things for different stakeholders. It was also questioned whether this meant sustainability of organisations or of systems. Participants further noted a need to clearly define terms such as 'high quality', and 'affordable price'. Others questioned the use of the term 'peer-reviewed outputs', arguing for a broader definition encompassing other outputs such as preprints.

Participants recognised the importance of bibliodiversity and noted that a plurality of business models would be necessary to deliver it. However, as market mechanisms tend to favour homogeneity, maintaining and enhancing diversity was felt to depend primarily on regulatory or community-based actors.

Finally, there was debate about the role of publishers, and the extent to which this should be foregrounded in the characteristics. Tensions were observed between the desire for new entrants and the need for stability in the system, and between the respective roles of small and large players.

## 5.1 Developing a vision for the OA market

Participants opined that it was difficult to define these characteristics in the absence of a shared vision for the OA market, which is currently lacking. This shared vision would also need to take into account considerations around governance, interoperability and infrastructure, and some suggested should be underpinned by a principle of 'equity'. These discussions indicate that further work is needed to reach any form of consensus on what is meant by 'a healthy and diverse OA market'.

### Key takeaways:

- There is presently little agreement on the characteristics of a healthy and diverse OA market.
- Sustainability, quality, diversity and equity are seen as desirable in principle, but difficult to define or implement in practice.
- A fully-formed vision of a healthy and diverse OA market requires broader consultation, with no guarantee of a consensus being achievable.

## SECTION SIX

# The role of the market

### 6.1 The role of the market is politically charged

Workshop participants recognised the contentious nature of the market's role in scholarly communication. Many objected to the use of the term in principle, as noted in section three, but others argued for a pragmatic recognition of the role market has assumed within scholarly communication. Market actors can scale and operate globally in a way that governments and community actors find difficult, and this enables changes to be delivered at speed where market forces and community needs align.

*"Market actors are able to act in an agile fashion, they can move quickly and they can respond to need."*

### 6.2 Pure market forces are frequently blunted

It was recognised, however, that there is a fundamental challenge in aligning market forces to reach community goals in scholarly communication. Institutions and researchers themselves, often fail to behave as rational economic actors for wider sociocultural reasons. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, market forces alone also fail to enable the open sharing of findings, data and innovations. As a result there is significant intervention in the marketplace by public and not-for-profit actors, who fulfil multiple roles, and take a variety of legal forms. As a result, we are in a 'mixed economy', within which procurement mechanisms are complex, service requirements are poorly defined and transparency is difficult to achieve.

*"There are certain things inherent in scholarly communication that prevent us from just being purely market driven."*

### 6.3 The potential for change is contested

The nature of competition in the market is slowly changing, as open access entails a greater focus on delivering a service to authors. Some argued that a move from a 'journal-centric' to an 'article-centric' system would open up new possibilities, while others saw the move to open science, the COVID-19 pandemic and a growing awareness of social justice concerns as potential harbingers of change.

In most cases, however, there was recognition that the open access market is being progressively integrated into the wider publishing market. Experimentation persists, particularly in the nascent OA monographs market, and the pandemic has accelerated the pace of change. Nevertheless, the academic incentive system, industry consolidation and the power of branding are significant barriers to the development of a healthy and diverse market.

#### Key takeaways:

- While market mechanisms dominate many forms of scholarly communication, their use is politically charged.
- Scholarly communication is a 'mixed economy', with some free market elements and some socialistic elements.
- Open access is changing the locus of competitive advantage, but market forces alone appear unlikely to deliver a healthy and diverse market.

## SECTION SEVEN

# The role of regulation

### 7.1 The case for intervention in the marketplace

Participants agreed that regulation could speed up progress, with several citing progress towards OA in Europe as a result of the Amsterdam call for Open Science and the creation of cOAlition S. A top-down approach like this can then filter down into a more community-led approach, with national governments playing a crucial leadership role at the start. It was noted that cultural change is what leads to changes in the market, but instigating this kind of change is challenging. Participants suggested that governments have a role in creating standards and norms around best practice but often struggle to operationalise them. A further comment was made that stronger open mandates are needed and could play a major role in shaping a healthy and diverse OA market.

*"When I look at the way that research funders have changed the landscape... we wouldn't be where we are now in the open access arena if it had not been for those interventions."*

### 7.2 The challenge of building consensus

Participants recognised that governments across the globe differ widely in their levels of engagement with open access, and that building international consensus on any form of regulation is challenging. Wide variation in the needs of researchers globally mean governments have differing priorities when it comes to access, equity

and sustainability of publishing services. The work of intergovernmental bodies like UNESCO and the European Union was seen as crucial as a means of facilitating international alignment, but the prospects for global agreement appear poor.

*"Unless we are effective at finding a way for regulation to move...globally, I don't think we're going to make the progress through regulation that we might otherwise desire, because science remains a global effort."*

### 7.3 Limitations of government interventions

Participants reached a common view that government interventions can work, but only up to a point. Namely, governments are not closely engaged with the process and change continually, meaning that progress can be slow. In addition, OA is such a small part of a government's research and development budget that it is hard to secure their attention and commitment.

#### Key takeaways:

- There is good evidence that regulation can be effective in shaping the scholarly communication marketplace.
- Comprehensive regulation of the global market would require a level of international consensus that looks unlikely in practice.
- The effectiveness of government and funder interventions are constrained by slow decision-making and the limited attention and resources devoted to open access.

## SECTION EIGHT

# The role of community

### 8.1 The complexity of defining communities

Participants recognised that the term 'community' is a complex one. It can mean many different things, and individuals can belong to different communities and be part of regulators or markets at the same time. An important point emerging from the discussions was that the local context plays a significant role in the perspective of a given community.

*"Communities are so different we should think of them as living in completely different realities."*

### 8.2 The role of communities in governance

One point discussed was the importance of communities taking an active role in governance. Participants argued that there was a particular place for community governance of service providers, most notably in relation to the scholarly communication infrastructure, on which all participants on the market rely.

Participants asserted that communities drive market demand but, due to the current academic incentive structure, this does not necessarily mean that we are moving towards a healthy and diverse OA market.

Creating a market that operates in the best interests of society at large relies on governments and regulators to represent the interests of the public, who as taxpayers ultimately underwrite the OA market, and should therefore derive benefit from its activities.

*"Very often we talk about researchers as though we are individuals and we are not. We are actors within an institutional context and within the community context."*

### 8.3 Engagement of researchers

It was highlighted that researchers themselves might not be interested or engaged in developing a healthy and diverse OA market, but their support is key in delivering change. There is a responsibility for stakeholders to shape the market in ways which are both attractive to researchers and operate in their interests. Part of this involves liaison with institutions to ensure they are facilitating change locally.

It was suggested that a significant part of this relies on efforts to transform researcher assessment and evaluation. Thus, communities and their representatives (e.g. learned societies, scientific academies and libraries) must work with funders, institutions and publishers to drive the creation of a healthy market.

#### Key takeaways:

- The term community is complex and local context plays a significant role in the differing challenges and circumstances communities face.
- Communities can and should play a key role in governance, and can drive market demand.
- Engaging researchers remains a challenge but their support is key. Representatives of the research community have a critical role in ensuring the market meets researchers' needs.

# SECTION NINE

## Conclusion

### 9.1 The global context

*“In co-creation, there’s always one side who is creating more than the other.”*

Perhaps the most important consideration in the development of a healthy and diverse OA market is ensuring global voices are heard. As highlighted in these workshops, global contexts differ considerably and this impacts which measures are appropriate and achievable, as well as the pace towards achieving them. There are existing mandates and decisions made by actors in high-income countries which appear simply unworkable, or culturally tone-deaf, to researchers in low-and-middle-income countries.

Thus, whilst higher-income countries may be able to mobilise change more easily, efforts must be made not to perpetuate the existing inequalities and imbalances of power that are evident in research geopolitics.

There is a need for further cross-stakeholder consultation to develop a shared vision for the OA market, but these efforts must resist the temptation to privilege any single approach, whether market, government, or community-led. Instead, we must recognise that the most appropriate solution will vary according to the local context and each community's needs.

*“I think the solution is a mix of intervention from regulators, markets and communities.”*

### 9.2 Developing a vision for the OA market

Through the lens of the foundational concepts of market, regulation, community and co-creation, OASPA engaged stakeholders on the topic of how to develop a healthy and diverse OA market. This work has made it clear that:

- the OA market must be recognised as part of the wider market for scholarly communications; and
- it is not a 'simple' market with monetary gain as its primary goal, but is the product of a wider cultural and socio-technical system.

*“The experience we just had with COVID gives us some clues as to what co-creation might look like.”*

The problem of creating a healthy and diverse market is a *complex* one, verging on being *chaotic*. There is a lack of general agreement on the end goal and what steps should be taken to get there, but the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that change is possible when co-creation occurs. OASPA can facilitate the creation of a healthy and diverse OA market in three main ways:

1. Strengthening community representation in the governance of publishing services and infrastructure.
2. Developing norms and standards for responsible behaviour in the OA marketplace.
3. Supporting efforts to transform researcher assessment and evaluation mechanisms.

# APPENDIX A

## Stakeholder list

**Table A1: Workshop 1 attendees**

Name	Role	Affiliation	Country
Andrea Powell	Director of Outreach and Publisher Coordinator	Research4Life	UK
Anna Vernon	Head of Licensing, Jisc Collections	Jisc	UK
Cameron Neylon	Professor of Research Communication	Curtin University	UK
Ginny Barbour	Director	Australasian Open Access Strategy Group	Australia
Iryna Kuchma	Open Access Programme Manager	EIFL	Ukraine
Jadranka Stojanovski	Member of Executive Assembly	OPERAS	Croatia
Jean-François Dechamp	Policy Officer, Open Access	European Commission	Belgium
Johan Rooryck	Executive Director	cOAlition S	Belgium
Katharina Rieck	Open Science Manager	Austrian Science Fund (FWF)	Austria
Lars Bjørnshauge	Managing Director	Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)	Denmark
Liz Ferguson	Vice President, Open Research	Wiley	UK
Martin Eve	CEO	Open Library of Humanities	UK
Niamh O'Connor	Chief Publishing Officer	PLOS	UK
Robert Kiley	Head of Open Research	Wellcome	UK
Stephen Pinfield	Professor of Information Services Management	The University of Sheffield	UK
Susan Murray	Executive Director	African Journals Online (AJOL)	South Africa
Vanessa Proudman	Director	SPARC Europe	Netherlands

### Workshop facilitators, including OASPA steering group

Claire Redhead	Executive Director	OASPA	UK
Caroline Sutton	Director of Open Research	Taylor & Francis Group	Norway
Catriona Maccallum	Director of Open Science	Hindawi	UK
Eelco Ferwerda	Independent Consultant	Freelance	Netherlands
Rob Johnson	Managing Director	Research Consulting	UK
Victoria Ficarra	Researcher	Research Consulting	UK

# APPENDIX A

## Stakeholder list

**Table A2: Workshop 2 attendees**

Name	Role	Affiliation	Country
Ann Michael	Founder, Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Board	Delta Think	US
Arianna Becerril-García	Executive Director of Redalyc/President of Amelica	Autonomous University of the State of Mexico (UAEM)	Mexico
Elizabeth Marincola	Senior Advisor for Open Science	African Academy of Science (AAS)	Kenya
Hans de Jonge	Head of Open Science Policies	Dutch Research Council (NWO)	Netherlands
Kamran Naim	Head of Open Science	CERN	Switzerland
Kathleen Shearer	Executive Director	Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR)	Canada
Lidia Borrell-Damián	Secretary General	Science Europe	Belgium
Niels Stern	Director	OAPEN Foundation	Netherlands
Paul Ayris	Pro-Vice-Provost	University College London (UCL) Press	UK
Ralf Schimmer	Director, Scientific Information Provision	Max Planck Digital Library	Germany
Rhodri Jackson	Publishing Director, Open Access and Asia Journals	Oxford University Press (OUP)	UK
Sarah Whalen	Director of Business Strategy & Portfolio Management	American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)	US
Stephan Kuster	Head of Institutional Relations	Frontiers	Switzerland

### Workshop facilitators, including OASPA steering group

Claire Redhead	Executive Director	OASPA	UK
Caroline Sutton	Director of Open Research	Taylor & Francis Group	Norway
Catriona Maccallum	Director of Open Science	Hindawi	UK
Eelco Ferwerda	Independent Consultant	Freelance	Netherlands
Rob Johnson	Managing Director	Research Consulting	UK
Victoria Ficarra	Researcher	Research Consulting	UK

# WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

## Co-creating a healthy and diverse open access market

### About OASPA

<https://oaspa.org/>

Representing a diverse community of organisations engaged in open scholarship, OASPA works to encourage and enable open access as the predominant model of communication for scholarly outputs. We are committed to our mission of developing and disseminating solutions that advance open access and ensuring a diverse, vibrant, and healthy open access community.



### About Research Consulting

<https://www.research-consulting.com/>

Research Consulting is a mission-driven research and scholarly communication consultancy, working with national and international organisations to help them make the most of their research processes and findings. We are active participants in the research ecosystem, and our work covers all aspects of the research life-cycle – including policy, funding, management, publishing and knowledge exchange.



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