

Transcript of video contribution by

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Hi. My name's Jessica Lange, and I'm the Coordinator for Scholarly Communications at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. My role on campus has several pieces to it. I oversee the management of McGill's Open Access Repository eScholarship, as well as its Open Access Journal Scholarly Publishing program. Just based off the open source software OJS or open channel system. Additionally, I generally do outreach and awareness around open access and other issues in scholarly publishing on campus.

I was really excited to speak with you today and I wanted to focus on one question in particular. So what inequities do I perceive in the context of open access publishing and what are some of the root causes for that and challenges to addressing them? I've been in this role since 2016, and it's been really interesting to see how the publishing landscape has shifted even in just the past seven years.

The main shift I've noticed, and maybe many of you have as well, is the rapid growth of article processing charges or APCs. We know that APCs are now growing well past the point of inflation and correlate to forces beyond, you know, what does it actually cost to publish an article? So higher APCs are correlated to a journal's prestige, its impact, its profit model.

Thus the more in demand a journal is, the higher its APC is likely to become. And in some ways APCs have become, or open access, rather, has become a victim of its own success. As open access becomes more required by funding agencies, it's something that authors are going to request more, open access becomes more of a commodity. And so APCs rise because there's increased demand and commercial publishers in particular are incentivized to maximize APC profits.

It's not hard to imagine how this creates significant inequity issues. Early career researchers, researchers from the Global South or at smaller, less resourced institutions, etc., don't have access to the capital required to pay these charges. And even in a resource-rich country like the United States, we still see these inequities playing out. I'd really recommend reading this article I've referenced here "Who is writing open access articles? Characteristics of authors at PhD-granting institutions in the U.S." They summarized pretty, pretty clearly that in general, the likelihood for a scholar to author an APC open access article increases the male gender employment at a prestigious institution, association with STEM disciplines, increased funding and a more advanced career stage.

And they sort of summarize it by saying "participation in APC publishing appears to be skewed towards scholars with greater access to resources and job security". And as I mentioned, this is

in the United States, which is a relatively, you know, well-resourced country. So what can we do? I want to just very briefly mention a couple of Canadian initiatives that are happening.

So, for example, in Canada, we have the Partnership for Open Access, which is where libraries are sort of joining together to support Open Access publishing, in particular a lot of Diamond Open Access publishing in the humanities and social sciences. So this is an initiative between Érudit, a Canadian nonprofit journal hosting platform and CRKN, Canada's national licensing body. So the libraries pool the funds together, and then those get put back out to Canadian journals, open access journals, in particular.

Additionally, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations, CFLA, recently released a statement on secondary publishing rights. Copyright legislation in Canada is not yet there, but we're beginning to see advocacy for this. And myself personally, I have generally advocated for the Green Open Access route, with repositories as an affordable, locally supported and owned open access infrastructure. So these are some initiatives locally that might assist in fostering a more equitable system.

But beyond that, though, we'll need to continue to drive to support cultural change in the academy and in how we think about research. And so while we can try to create more affordable open access options for researchers, if they still feel they must publish in X or Y journal and that journal charges whatever that APC is, then APCs are going to continue to rise.

So they continue promotion of initiatives like Dora and some of the other initiatives I've listed here where we are starting to rethink about how we value research and how we define research excellence. So continuing these conversations between universities, funders, researchers, etc., will need to continue to happen.

Thank you.