Editorial 30(4): Views from and about *Open Access Week 2020*

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Conducted during 19-25 October, *Open Access Week 2020* promoted the theme *Open with purpose: Taking action to build structural equity and inclusion* [1]. Whilst *Open Access Week 2020* cannot be a notable week, there being a rather large number of notable weeks in 2020 that competed for attention, it contained important points for journal editorial staff to reflect upon. Especially in the case of IIER, as a small scale, very low budget, open access journal, for reasons outlined below.

However, before attempting to outline the reasons that pertain especially to IIER, it is helpful to be reminded about the wide range of perspectives to be found upon terms such as *purpose, taking action,* and *structural equity.* To illustrate the range, consider two perspectives that I found especially noteworthy, one from *SPARC* [2], the principal organiser for *Open Access Week 2020*, and the other from Danielle Padula at *Scholastica* [3], a Chicago, USA-based provider of academic journal publishing software and services.

Bias in scholarly publishing

SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) has given a forthright, even blunt and provocative statement about bias in scholarly publishing, providing an identification of the core issues [4].

> Bias is built into the foundations of research and scholarship, often so thoroughly that it is accepted as "normal" and becomes invisible to many. Many take for granted that editorial boards routinely have more representation from one or two countries than the rest of the world combined. The reality is that much of the global research community must publish in a non-native language and face rejection of their work because of judgements based on grammar, not on the strength of the ideas presented. Research infrastructure continues to be centralized in Europe and North America, drawing resources away from regional efforts that are much better placed to serve communities of scholars in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
>
> Even the dominant conception of what is considered "scholarly" and what sources are authoritative further excludes marginalized communities, minimizing the representation of the marginalized in history, creating barriers to full participation in the present, and denying resources needed to address these injustices in the future. [4]

IIER's editorial staff have very extensive, everyday experience with the aspiring authors who "must publish in a non-native language" and in SPARC's words, may "face rejection of their work because of judgements based on grammar, not on the strength of the ideas presented" [4]. It is a familiar perspective, reflected upon in a number of IIER Editorials, most recently Editorials 30(3), 29(4), 29(3) and 29(2) [5, 6, 7, 8], though I hasten to add that IIER does not make rejection "judgements based on grammar" alone. Therefore, not surprisingly, we can readily endorse *Open Access Week 2020* as promoting matters that are

especially important for IIER, or put in another way, somewhat immodestly, helping to establish the importance of IIER as an example to be emulated.

Diversity, equity and inclusion

Danielle Padula from *Scholastica* placed an emphasis upon seeking specific ideas about actions to promote "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" (DEI) in scholarly publishing [9].

> Scholastica reached out to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion advocates across the scholarly communication landscape to ask their perspectives on how the community can facilitate greater action around DEI in OA publishing, responding to the question:
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> "Considering the many facets of DEI in OA publishing, what is one area you think organizations should be focusing on right now to facilitate actionable DEI initiatives, and what questions should we be asking internally and across stakeholder groups to start that conversation?" [9]

Here it seems to me that Padula is adding *diversity* as a keyword, to rank with OA Week's *equity and inclusion*, as illustrated in another quotation that links this threesome to contemporary events:

> ... at this time of unprecedented social justice movements around the world, stakeholders are becoming more acutely aware of the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in decision making [about accepting for publication or rejecting]. [10]

Again, IIER can readily endorse the elevation of *diversity* into an important keyword, in the *Open Access Week 2020* context. Besides its intrinsic importance, there is now an operational importance for IIER. Our "ad hoc library" for composing advice to aspiring authors includes this paragraph:

> We recommend that for self-assessing the quality of a proposed submission, authors should search IIER (see http://www.iier.org.au/about/iier-search.html) using keywords that are relevant for your article. The main question will be, "Can I do as well as, or perhaps even better than, similar articles already published in IIER?" Another important question will be, "Is my topic, country context, research question, or some other aspect *under-represented in IIER* [emphasis added]?"

That is, for IIER, encouragement towards diversity is signalled by *under-represented in IIER*.

Among the responses to the *Scholastica Blog* question about facilitating greater action around DEI in OA publishing [10], two examples are especially illustrative, from IIER's perspective.

> All publishing, whether it is OA or not, is about putting resources behind the voices that the publisher believes are most important. ... Inclusion is key: Whose voices do you choose to put your resources behind? ... As publishers we have the power to include voices that may not be heard in other arenas. ... With these in mind, the questions we need to be asking are not just about what we can do to embrace and celebrate all forms

of diversity within our community, but also — critically — how we can encourage and welcome wider participation in our (overwhelmingly white, Western-focused, English-language dominated, and highly educated) community. (Mary Francis, Director of University of Pennsylvania Press) [10]

... get to know a diverse range of researchers to understand their challenges. It's too easy for publishers to put the onus for change on the research community. We need to recognise that we're a vital part of that community – publication is an enormous part of career progression (rightly or wrongly), and if our products and services aren't welcoming to all, we're complicit in maintaining the status quo. (Kim Eggleton, Research Integrity and Inclusion Manager at IOP Publishing) [11]

Reality check

Inevitably, the visions promoted in *Taking action to build structural equity and inclusion*, and in *Diversity, equity, and inclusion* are constrained. The constraints are not in technology and infrastructure services. Currently IIER's website hosting costs are very affordable [12], A$22.00 per month, including use of the *Mailman* list server editor@iier.org.au used for submissions, review advice and editorial staff traffic. There are no advertising, postage, printing or advertising expenses; no payments to *Google* or other search engines; and we do not have (or cannot afford!) the expense of a journal publishing system such as *OJS* [13], *Scholastica* [3] or others.

Thus IIER's constraints are entirely in the area of human resources, very largely represented by the associate editors, though the Editorial Board and external reviewers contribute a vital, honorary input in reviews for the 15-20% of submissions that are not subject to editorial rejection by editorial staff action [5]. However, discussion of human resourcing for a journal that we believe is a fine contributor to *Open with purpose: Taking action to build structural equity and inclusion* will be held over until IIER 31 in 2021. A rather large number of authors have been promised publication of IIER 30(4) on 10 December 2020, and as usual the Editorial is the final task prior to publication, so for the time being, "Cut!".

References

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9. Padula, D. (2020). OA Week Series: Initiating discussions about DEI in scholarly publishing. Email to *Scholastica Blog* subscribers, 21 October 2020.

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11. Scholastica (2020). Initiating more actionable discussions about DEI in scholarly publishing: OA Week Series Part 2. *Scholastica Blog*, 21 October. https://blog.scholasticahq.com/post/dei-scholarly-publishing-oa-week-series-pt2/

12. IIER's website provider is Circle Business Consulting, http://www.circlebc.com.au

13. Open Journal Systems. https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/