

Diamond Open Access and journals published in the field of Library and Information Science: a study on the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

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Abstract

Open Access (OA) advocates are increasingly recognizing that the Article Processing Charge (APC)-based model should be overcome to develop alternative solutions capable of enabling the full and definitive establishment of OA in scholarly publishing. The Diamond OA model is seen as one of the possible solutions even if the journals using this model must cope with sustainability problems along with visibility issues. With the aim of assessing its current use among the Library and Information Science (LIS) Diamond OA journals, this study analyses their presence in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

Key words: scientific publishing; open access; diamond open access; library and information science.

Introduction

For several years, among researchers and the scholarly community, increasing criticism has been directed at the Article Processing Charge (APC)-based model adopted by a significant proportion of Open Access (OA) journals, since this has primarily benefited commercial publishers and conflicts with the principles of Open Science (1). The use of APCs has also been associated – along with the current research evaluation system that prioritizes quantitative over qualitative indicators and the “publish or perish” culture – with the proliferation of the so-called “predatory journals” (2, 3). In this context, the Diamond Open Access (Diamond OA) publishing model, defined by the absence of charges for both authors and readers, has increasingly attracted considerable attention as a possible alternative to other OA publishing models (4, 5).

The Diamond OA model is mostly supported by academic institutions, public bodies, non-profit organizations and is considered an inclusive model as it offers authors with fewer financial resources, or living in low-resource developing regions, the opportunity to publish their works (6, 7).

Diamond OA matches closely with the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (8) by supporting

principles such as openness, equity, integrity, accountability and collaborative knowledge sharing. This publishing model promotes fair access to scholarly outputs and embraces linguistic and cultural diversity. As declared at the Second Global Summit on Diamond OA held in Cape Town in December 2024, “sharing knowledge is a human right” and “scholarly knowledge must be a public good and must be accessible to all communities” (9).

According to a study published in 2021, Diamond OA journals are predominantly small-scale, community-oriented and non-profit journals, grounded in local contexts, funded by public resources and supported mainly by voluntary community work (10). Over the years, the number of Diamond OA journals has grown significantly and today this publishing model is committed to meeting high quality standards while addressing various challenges related to technical issues, management, visibility, and sustainability (11). The essential need to strengthen cooperation within the Diamond OA ecosystem is also increasingly recognized. Numerous initiatives worldwide support the Diamond OA publishing model and have contributed to enriching the debate (12). Among them, the European project DIAMAS (<https://diamasproject.eu/>) developed

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several tools and resources to support Diamond OA publishing, including the Diamond OA Standard (DOAS) (13), detailed guidelines (14), and an extremely useful and practical self-assessment tool (<https://diamas.fecyt.es/>) to facilitate Diamond OA publishing practices and evaluate their sustainability (15). This last tool is designed to analyse the level of compliance with the DOAS, and generates a useful final report with the obtained scores.

In collaboration with CRAFT-OA (Creating a Robust Accessible Federated Technology for Open Access), which is another Horizon Europe-funded initiative, DIAMAS has been working for some time on the Diamond Discovery Hub (DDH) (<https://ddh.diamas.org/en>), an authoritative European-level list of Diamond OA journals designed to enhance their visibility within the academic community. Journals must meet specific criteria to be included in the DDH, for example, a valid and verified ISSN, selection of contributions through an explicitly stated evaluation process, no subscription fees, etc. (16).

Furthermore, in January 2025 the European Diamond Capacity Hub (EDCH) (<https://diamas.org/>) was officially launched, offering a set of tools and resources to support the development and sustainability of Diamond OA publishing in Europe.

During 2025, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ, <https://doaj.org/>) – partner in the European CRAFT-OA project since 2022 – announced its intention to increase the visibility of Diamond OA journals within its index (17). DOAJ is a multidisciplinary database of peer reviewed, gold and Diamond OA journals. Founded in 2003, it currently indexes 22,568 journals. Recognised as an authoritative source for identifying OA journals, DOAJ applies strict inclusion criteria, which are widely considered the actual gold standard for assessing the quality and transparency of OA publishing. Moreover, this directory is widely referenced in Open Science policies, funder mandates, and institutional guidelines as a trusted list of OA journals.

Among its various activities, DOAJ participates in the Horizon Europe project ALMASI (Aligning and Mutualizing Nonprofit Open Access Publishing Services Internationally, <https://almasiproject.org/>), which seeks to strengthen non-profit OA publishing in Africa, Europe, and Latin America by providing free editorial services to authors and readers. In addition, DOAJ is

among the founding members of the Open Journals Collective (OJC), a collaborative initiative that enables libraries to support high-quality, community-led Diamond OA journals (18).

This paper retrieves and analyses the Diamond OA journals published in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) and indexed in DOAJ. The aim is to provide a general overview of the current situation in this complex landscape, which might be useful for librarians interested in publishing in Diamond OA journals. At the same time, it is intended to promote this OA model among the LIS community, highlighting that the APC-based OA is not the only option for authors to publish and disseminate their work in OA journals.

DOAJ and LIS Diamond OA journals

A search was conducted on 21st January 2026, to establish the number of Diamond OA journals published in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) and indexed in the DOAJ.

Journals' metadata were extracted from the exportable version of the DOAJ Public Data Dump (19), a mass file download of journal information in CSV format. Then, journals indexed under the DOAJ subject category "Bibliography. Library Science. Information Resources" were selected and, to exclusively focus on Diamond OA titles, those that charge APCs were excluded. The retrieved journals and their metadata were subsequently analysed to examine language of publication, licensing model, publisher type and country, and peer review practice (titles and metadata are available on request from authors).

The search retrieved 190 Diamond OA journals out of a total of 220 OA journals identified in this subject area, corresponding to 86% coverage.

The analysis of the publication languages (including bilingual and multilingual journals) shows a strong predominance of English, although 31 different languages are represented. The six most represented publication languages are: English (156 journals), Spanish (43 journals), Portuguese (39 journals), French (16 journals), Indonesian and Italian (11 journals each). Despite the number of researchers in non-English countries growing worldwide, and publishing standards and recommendations which promote equity, diversity and multilingualism, English is still the dominant language in scientific publishing, also in the LIS category, among the Diamond OA journals indexed in DOAJ. This in-

evitably creates barriers and imbalances by benefiting the native English speakers (20). While Artificial Intelligence (AI) resources may help in overcoming language barriers (for example by facilitating translations), the scholarly community should start thinking about the possibility of accepting publications or publishing material in languages other than English.

All retrieved journals, apart from one, adopt the Creative Commons (CC) open licenses (<https://creativecommons.org/>), as also recommended by the DOAJ itself. The most frequently used licenses are CC BY (88 journals), CC BY-NC (37 journals), and CC BY-NC-ND (34 journals). While CC BY is the most common license, reflecting a significant commitment to openness and reuse, a substantial proportion of journals apply more restrictive variants, particularly those limiting commercial reuse or derivative works. The substantial use of these restrictive licenses limits text and data mining, derivative works, and commercial reuse, which are increasingly emphasised in Open Science policies as key enablers of innovation and knowledge transfer. This suggests that there is only a partial alignment with Open Science goals: access is ensured, but full reusability is not yet universally embraced.

As for publishers and governance, most journals are published by universities, public research institutions, and scholarly or professional associations. Among them are, the American Library Association (ALA), the European Association for Health Information and Libraries (EAHIL), the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), the Canadian Health Libraries Association (CHLA), the CILIP Library & Information Research Group, and the US Medical Library Association (US MLA). Commercial publishing is almost entirely absent; which is logical when considering that Diamond OA entails no fees from both authors and readers and is in itself an equitable alternative to commercial publishing. Only one commercial publisher, De Gruyter, appears in the dataset with one of its two titles published under a Subscribe to Open model (S2O). S2O is an OA model in which all articles published in a subscription journal during a given year are made permanently OA, if the journal reaches its annual financial targets, typically based on subscriber participation (<https://subscribetoopencommunity.org/>). Diamond OA journals in the LIS category indexed in the DOAJ are published across a wide range of countries. The most represented publisher countries are the

United States (33 journals), Brazil (26 journals), Indonesia (12 journals), Spain (11 journals), and Poland (10 journals), followed by Iran, Canada, Italy, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom (7 journals each). These data show that the distribution is not uniform among different countries. The US is experiencing a growth in the publication of Diamond OA journals, also following the 2022 White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy requests to develop policies and open published research which is federally funded by the end of 2025. Latin America has always been considered as having a strong OA tradition (partly because of the presence of SciELO, the scientific electronic library online, <https://www.scielo.org/en/>) and Brazil, in particular, hosts the highest number of Diamond OA journals in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), according to a recent study analyzing the geographic and linguistic coverage of gold and Diamond OA journals (21). Indonesia is a "pioneer and a regional leader in Diamond Open Access" with the largest Diamond OA presence in Asia (2581 Diamond OA journals and 90 APC) (22).

Peer review models used by the Diamond OA journals indexed in the DOAJ are predominantly traditional and anonymised. Double-anonymous peer review is the most common model (134 journals), followed by single-anonymous peer review (32 journals) and peer review without specification (21 journals). Alternative models remain marginal, with open peer review adopted by only 6 journals. The debate on the many flaws of the traditional peer-review process, and the discussion on the opportunities offered by other non-traditional and more open forms of review – falling under the large "open peer review umbrella" – are still on, but it is clear that the scholarly community is still relying on traditional peer review systems to ensure ethics and quality in scientific publications (23).

Cross-check with Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus

Numerous studies have shown that Diamond OA journals are underrepresented in traditional databases, particularly in the field of humanities (21). On this basis we decided to cross-check the retrieved Diamond OA LIS journals against the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection and Scopus citation databases to assess their presence and, therefore, their visibility.

Among the 190 Diamond OA journals retrieved from

DOAJ, 40 journals (21%) are currently indexed in the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection, with two additional titles expected to receive an Impact Factor in 2026. Analyzing the ranking of these journals, 2 journals are ranked in the first quartile (Q1) and 5 in the second (Q2). A parallel cross-check was performed with SCImago Journal & Country Rank (SJR, <https://www.scimagojr.com/>), a public portal providing scientific indicators for journals and countries which is based on data from the Scopus database. The results showed that 58 of the Diamond OA journals identified via DOAJ are indexed in that database, corresponding to 30% of the sample. Analyzing the ranking of these journals, 7 are ranked in Q1 and 12 in Q2.

The only journal that ranks in Q1 in both the databases is the Journal of the Medical Library Association (<https://jmla.mlanet.org/ojs/jmla>).

30 journals are indexed in both these databases; 10 appear only in the WoS Core Collection and 28 only in Scopus. The remaining 122 journals (64%) are not indexed in either of these two databases. While there is a substantial overlap between the two databases, differences in DOAJ journal coverage reflect their distinct indexing policies. On the whole, Scopus provides a broader overall coverage, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, whereas WoS shows stronger representation of the biomedical sciences. Differences are also evident in geographic and language coverage. WoS has historically prioritized English-language journals and publications from Western countries, while Scopus indexes a larger proportion of non-English journals and titles originating from Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa (24-26).

Conclusions

The vast majority of OA journals publishing in the field of Library and Information Science and indexed in DOAJ, as shown above, are Diamond OA journals. However, their actual full compliance with all the current Diamond OA standards could be better ascertained by their own editorial committees, applying, for instance the mentioned DOAS self-assessment tool which, just to give an idea of its complexity, covers seven areas: Funding; Legal Ownership and Governance; Open Science; Editorial Management and Quality; Technical Efficiency; Visibility and Impact; Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB), including Multilingualism and Gender Equity.

The transition to a full compliance with the proposed standards will certainly require some time and will probably not be possible for all journals. In addition, some new achievements in the development of more effective procedures (such as those concerning the peer review process) will be necessary before journals decide to fully embrace different editorial practices. More difficulties, also in terms of financial sustainability, will probably be encountered by journals when growing into more successful and impactful publications (27). However, this high predominance of Diamond OA journals in the LIS category indexed in DOAJ might also be an indication of the great awareness and consideration that librarians and information specialists have towards those ethical principles which historically are both at the core of the OA movement and of their own profession.

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