What Are the Characteristics of Canadian Independent, Scholarly Journals? Results from a Website Analysis

---

How to Cite:

Lange, J. & Severson, S., (2021) "What Are the Characteristics of Canadian Independent, Scholarly Journals? Results from a Website Analysis", *The Journal of Electronic Publishing* 24(1). doi: https://doi.org/10.3998/jep.153

Abstract

The dominance of commercial publishers (Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon 2015) has led to a discussion in Canada focusing on alternative models for supporting independent, non-commercial, scholarly journals. Although small in number, these journals represent an important contribution to Canadian and global scholarship. They also act as a counterbalance to the increasingly for-profit nature of scholarly publishing. Despite their importance, there exists no definitive list of journals of this nature in Canada, making analysis and understanding of their characteristics difficult.

In order to address this gap, the researchers undertook an analysis of the websites of 485 Canadian, independent, scholarly journals. Independent was defined as journals which are not affiliated with a commercial publisher. The researchers gathered data for each journal on their access type (e.g., closed, open access), subject area, size and

composition of the editorial team, and any affiliation(s). This data was then analyzed to create a portrait of these journals with these themes. The researchers found that most of these journals were affiliated with at least one organization, with over half being associated with two or more. They also discovered that affiliations varied depending on the discipline and that the size of the editorial team was correlated to the access type. Journals were predominantly in the humanities and social sciences, and the majority were open access (OA) without article processing charges (APCs).

While the focus of this study is on Canadian journals, this article provides a framework for other researchers to examine non-commercial, independent publishing in their own countries. Its results also provide preliminary data which may inspire future avenues of research, particularly into models for non-APC, open access journals as well as the editorial board structure and size for independent journals.

Keywords: open access, Canada, website analysis

Introduction

Today's scholarly publishing landscape is dominated by major commercial publishers. As revealed by Vincent Larivière, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon (2015), 50% of papers published in 2013 belonged to one of five commercial publishers. The influence of commercial publishers is even more pronounced in the social sciences, in which 70% of papers are published by one of five major publishers. The oligopolistic nature of the scholarly publishing industry has often meant large increases in the cost of serial publications year after year and greater article processing charges (APCs) for

commercial open access (OA) journals as compared to journals published by scholarly societies and universities (Solomon and Björk 2012).

Alongside these changes in the global publishing community, the Canadian publishing landscape has also undergone major shifts. In 2015, Canada's federal granting agencies launched their Open Access Policy on Publications. This policy requires all research articles funded by Canada's federal funding agencies be made openly available. The Canadian government further strengthened its commitment to OA by adjusting the eligibility criteria of its primary grant for scholarly journals (the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council [SSHRC] Aid to Scholarly Journals program). Journals in this program must now have either immediate or delayed twelve-month OA in order to qualify for funding. Due to these two forces—a desire for OA and the rise of commercial publishers—there has also been recognition in Canada that alternative and independent models are needed for scholarly publishing to thrive sustainably. However, establishing the scope and composition of the Canadian, independent, scholarly publishing landscape has been challenging due to a lack of sources to generate a comprehensive, singular list of these titles. Indexes such as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), ISSN, and Ulrich's Periodicals Directory have varying inclusion criteria and numbers that are often out of date. The Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) publishes a list of OA titles for libraries to use in their discovery and catalogue systems, but this list is limited to OA titles and provides only the basic information about each journal. There have been a number of studies (Couture 2020; Lorimer and Lindsay 2004; Paquin 2017) in the past reviewing Canadian scholarly journals, but each has focused on different subsections of the

industry; for instance, looking at only OA journals or going in-depth with a small set of journals to learn about their socioeconomic situation.

To complement and build on some of these existing analyses, the researchers undertook an analysis of the websites of 485 independent, Canadian scholarly journals. This analysis was intended to cover a broader swath of the Canadian independent publishing industry than previously undertaken and thus provide stakeholders with a deeper grounding in the current ecosystem's makeup. As a part of this analysis, the researchers intend to answer the following questions:

- What percentage of these journals are OA?
- Which subject areas do these journals fall under?
- What are the affiliations of these journals (e.g., university, association, etc.)?
- How large are the editorial teams?
- Is there a relationship between open access and subject area? Or editorial size?
- Is there a relationship between affiliations and subject area?

Having more definitive and accurate figures about these journals can inform policy decisions and lobbying efforts. This research will also assist in developing and tailoring publishing services by libraries as well as act as a resource for new journals to orient themselves to scholarly publishing in Canada. Without a clear picture of what these journals are, policymakers are left to guess as to the scope of the industry in Canada and its characteristics. The research will also provide a point-in-time reference for policymakers and those with a vested interest in Canadian publishing to assess changes in the landscape over time.

Literature Review

Current publishing landscape

Commercial publishers have been gradually increasing their market share in scholarly publishing since the end of the Second World War (Crow 2006; Edgar and Willinsky

2010; Hawkins and Battin 1998; Tenopir and King 1997). The increased power of the major publishers has meant less leverage for negotiation and subsequent price increases for libraries, which resulted in the "serials crisis" (McGuigan 2004; Schmidle and Via 2004; Thomes and Clay 1998). In recent years, libraries have taken a greater lead in the publishing world, establishing presses and publishing programs. Part of this has been in response to the growing oligopoly of major publishers, offering academic journals an alternative to existing commercial publishers and as a means to promote OA publishing (Bonn and Furlough 2015; Harboe-Ree 2007).

In Canada, support for non-commercial scholarly journals extends beyond libraries. For example, of note is the Canadian government's grant program for scholarly journals in the humanities and sciences (see the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals program) as well as the non-profit hosting platform Érudit and Coalition Publica. The SSHRC Scholarly Journals program provides financial support of up to $30,000 a year for eligible journals to assist in production, online dissemination, and the application of new technologies. As of 2018, the program supports over one hundred journals whose funding is subject to renewal and reapplication every three years. Coalition Publica is a partnership between the non-profit hosting platform Érudit and the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) (producers of the open source publishing software Open Journal Systems) to support scholarly publishing in Canada. Under this partnership, eligible Canadian journals may receive financial support as well as professional publishing services. In order to receive funding, both SSHRC and

Coalition Publica require journals to make their content OA within at least twelve months of publication.

Despite efforts to grow alternative publishing models, the major commercial publishers continue to be an attractive option to journals. The journal *Cultural Anthropology*, a major publication of the Society for Cultural Anthropology (SCA), notes the varying services commercial publishers can offer. Among them are managing production processes, handling file management systems, preparing and editing metadata, supporting and maintaining the online publishing platform, and general administration (Elfenbein 2014). Although the SCA made the decision to leave the commercial publisher Wiley-Blackwell to pursue OA for their publication, former managing editor Tim Elfenbein admits:

This is one of the hardest parts about setting off on your own. When a large commercial press such as Wiley adds another journal to its collection, it will in all likelihood already have a well-tested platform to sit on. The cost of building that platform and the rest of its publishing systems is spread across a huge number of journals, which means that the company can afford dedicated technology and infrastructure services. . . . For the SCA, everything is being built anew, and our systems are breaking all the time. It could take us years and a whole lot more investment to fix all the bugs in our systems, and that signals a level of vulnerability we did not have when we were publishing with Wiley. (294)

The vulnerability of journals which are not attached to commercial publishers was also expressed in a 2017 report by a working group of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL): "Canadian scholarly societies are sometimes drawn to

major for-profit publishers, attracted by their well-developed infrastructure, extensive marketing reach, and guaranteed revenue, among other things" (4). Furthermore, the shift to OA has been particularly challenging for many of these journals. Heather Morrison (2016) interviewed fifteen participants from small, scholar-led journals to understand the effects of open access on their publications. Morrison found that many of them were uncertain and "concerned about survival . . . in an open access future" (83). In such an environment, the services and reach offered by the major commercial publishers will continue to be tempting as the funding of non-commercial journals remains precarious and patchwork.

Not surprisingly, the myriad of threats for these journals has meant that many independent journals cease publication. Bo-Christer Björk, Cenyu Shen, and Mikael Laakso (2016) discovered that of 250 open access "indie" journals, only half were still in publication twelve years later.

Journal surveys

Given the previous literature, scholars and other stakeholders have been aware of the vulnerability of independent Canadian journals for over a decade. This has led to several studies which reviewed the Canadian publishing landscape and socioeconomic condition of these journals.

In 2015, the non-profit hosting platform Érudit undertook a survey of Canadian journals in order to assess their socioeconomic situations (Paquin 2017).[1] The focus of the survey and interviews was to better understand the economic structure of these journals as well as their income and expenditures. In a report of the survey's results, Émilie Paquin (2017) does not state how they assembled the list of journals, but the researchers sent 337 journals a survey (69 completed) and conducted 36 interviews. The journals included open access and subscription journals as well as commercial and non-profit journals. The report noted a great heterogeneity amongst

the journals in terms of size of editorial structures, business models, and revenues. Paquin (2017) noted the influence of associations and universities as journal publishers (6) as well as a significant category that fell into "Other." The report concluded with various recommendations to stabilize revenues for these journals, including gathering more detailed information about their financials and the development of a partnership model between Érudit and the CRKN (Paquin 2017).[2]

An earlier study that reviewed the financial situation and composition of Canadian journals was undertaken by Rowland Lorimer and Adrienne Lindsay (2004). The focus of this study was to understand the readiness and ability of humanities and social sciences journals to adapt to an online environment. In addition to collecting demographic information about the discipline and the affiliation with other organizations, Lorimer and Lindsay retrieved information about the total number of subscribers and subscription fees.

The most recent analysis of Canadian scholarly journals was undertaken in 2020. In an unpublished report, Marc Couture (2020) compiled and reviewed a list of open access journals in Canada. In particular, he was interested in comparing the demographics of journals which were indexed in the DOAJ versus those that were not. The author collected similar demographic information about the journals as did Lorimer and Lindsay (2004) and Paquin (2017) (e.g., discipline, affiliation, number of articles published, etc.).

Although not Canadian specific, Brian D. Edgar and John Willinsky (2010) surveyed 998 journals publishing on the Open Journal System (OJS) platform. They noted that

over half were published or sponsored by an academic department, whereas non-profit publishers and research units made up 16% and 10%, respectively. Independent groups were represented in 10% of the responses, whereas scholarly societies published 32% of the journals in their sample.

Comparison between these sources is difficult as each has different inclusion criteria: OA (Couture 2020), humanities and social sciences (Lorimer and Lindsay 2004), or hosted on OJS (Edgar and Willinsky 2010), whereas Érudit's survey was broader in focus (OA and subscription journals from all disciplines). They also used differing methodologies, such as surveys, interviews, and website analysis, leading to differences in the size of their sample sets (from 69 to 998). With this in mind, the researchers hope to fill a gap in reviewing the websites of all independent scholarly journals in Canada. This would allow the researchers to be broader in their coverage (e.g., not just those using the OA model or supported by OJS) while focusing on an understudied but important subset of Canadian journals: those operating outside of the main commercial publishers.

This analysis will also permit the researchers to account for the recent changes in the Canadian publishing landscape, such as the launch of the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications in 2015 and the changes to the eligibility criteria of the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals. By including non-open access journals in the analysis, the researchers hope to obtain a broader picture of the Canadian, non-commercial landscape that builds on the work of Couture (2020).

Gérard Boismenu and Guylaine Beaudry (2004) noted that non-profit publishers have a significant role to play in the Canadian publishing landscape and that they are "instruments of recognition, legitimation, acknowledgement, dissemination, and enhancement of scientific knowledge" (346). Boismenu and Beaudry (2004)saw these journals as important counterpoints to the increasingly commercial operations of scholarly publishing. As such, the researchers hope to add to the body of knowledge about these important instruments of scholarly dissemination in Canada.

Methodology

In order to conduct the website analysis, the researchers assembled a preliminary list of Canadian scholarly journals. This initial list of journals was compiled from several sources in fall 2019:

- Ulrich's Periodicals Directory (567)
    - Search strategy: Status:("Active") Serial Type:("Journal") Content Type:("Academic / Scholarly") Key Feature:(+"Available Online") Country of Publication:("Canada")
- Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) list of open access journals (497)
- All journals on the Érudit site (204)
    - Removing any that were "Cultural" type, as they did not meet the inclusion criteria of scholarly
- Journals that received the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals grant in 2018 or 2015 (182)

- Journals that are current members of the Canadian Association of Learned Journals (CALJ) (110)

These lists were combined and then de-duplicated matching on title and/or ISSN. Note that the researchers did not use the DOAJ as these titles were already captured in Ulrich's (Ulrichsweb n.d.).

Ulrich's Periodicals Directory is a major source for journal information and is the "authoritative source of bibliographic and publisher information on more than 300,000 periodicals of all types of academic and scholarly journals" (Ulrichsweb n.d.). The directory contains information about journals internationally and is a standard reference source for information on periodicals. Despite its broad coverage, not every journal is included as smaller, less-established journals must apply for inclusion. As such, it could not be the definitive source for locating journals. By combining Ulrich's with the other lists, the researchers hoped to capture the fullest extent of independent, Canadian scholarly journals. That stated, each journal source has limitations. For example, the CRKN list contains only open access journals, the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals only applies to humanities and social science journals, and journals must be members of CALJ or Érudit in order to belong to their lists.

From this initial list of 1,195 journals, the researchers and three student assistants manually reviewed all the websites in order to assess if they met the study inclusion criteria:

- **Independent**: Journal is not affiliated with a commercial publisher (e.g., Springer, Elsevier, Sage, etc.). Non-profits, such as Érudit, Cambridge University Press, and the University of Toronto Press, were included.

- **Active**: Journal has published an issue in the last three years.
- **Scholarly:**Definition adapted from the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals: "peer-reviewed academic publication that disseminates the results of original scholarship."
- **Canadian:** Definition adapted from the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals. At least one-third of the core editorial board is affiliated with a Canadian institution.

The researchers excluded journals if they were:

- Student journals
- Archived journals (e.g., they had published in the last three years but had ceased operations)
- Conference proceedings
- Professional or trade publications

Following the review of websites for these criteria, there remained 485 journals. Based on the website review, the researchers removed journals for the criteria below (some journals were removed on the basis of two or more criteria):

- 187 that were not Canadian
- 169 that were inactive
- 135 that were student journals
- 63 that were not scholarly
- 41 that were commercial
- 20 for which we could not locate sufficient information (i.e., website not available or editorial information not present)

Although the data was initially assembled in winter 2020, it was reviewed and updated in summer 2020. The full dataset underlying this paper may be found at https://doi.org/10.7939/DVN/EPSJJR, available under a CC-BY 4.0 international license.

Data coding

Journals were assigned one of four subject areas. For ease of analysis, journals were tagged with only one subject code.

- Health and life sciences (HLS)
- Humanities and social sciences (HSS)
- Interdisciplinary (INTER)
- Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

In cases in which journals were assigned a subject heading in Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, this was mapped to one of the four subjects above. In the absence of a subject classification in Ulrich's, a determination was made by the researchers, consulting subject headings for the journal in sources such as OCLC's catalogue WorldCat. When more than one subject was dominant in the journal's description, it was coded as interdisciplinary.

Journals were also assigned one of three classifications for access type:

- Open access (OA)
- Delayed open access (DELAY)
- Not open access (CLOSED)

Delayed open access was applied to any journal whose archives were open after a certain period (e.g., twelve months, twenty-four months, etc.).

The researchers also collected data about the size of the editorial teams, breaking them down into two divisions: named and unnamed. Editorial positions were counted as named if the person held a title (e.g., editor in chief, copyeditor, webmaster, etc.).

Positions were counted as unnamed if a person was given no title but was listed as part of an advisory board, scientific committee, and so forth.

Journals were additionally tagged according to five possible affiliations. Journals could have more than one affiliation.

- Non-profit publisher/host (e.g., Érudit, the University of Toronto Press, etc.)
- Library (the journal was hosted by a university library)
- University (the journal was affiliated with a department/centre/unit at a university, not including the library)
- Association (the journal was affiliated with a society, association, etc.)
- Other

Affiliations were determined by reviewing the journal's website(s). An affiliation was counted if an entity was named on the website. Common sections this information was located under was "About" and "Journal Sponsorship."

In cases in which a journal had more than one website, the site which had been more recently updated was used as the primary source of information.

Results

Following the data coding of the 485 journals, the researchers analyzed the data on several themes including access type, subject area, affiliation, and editorial size.

Access type

With the growth of open access, examining how many journals support an OA model is increasingly relevant. In the dataset, over half were fully open access (n = 292), while the remaining were evenly split between closed journals and journals with a

delay (see Figure 1). Of the journals which had a delay, the dominant delay period was twelve months (*n* = 86). A minority had a delay longer than twelve months (n=7), while only four had a delay of six months.

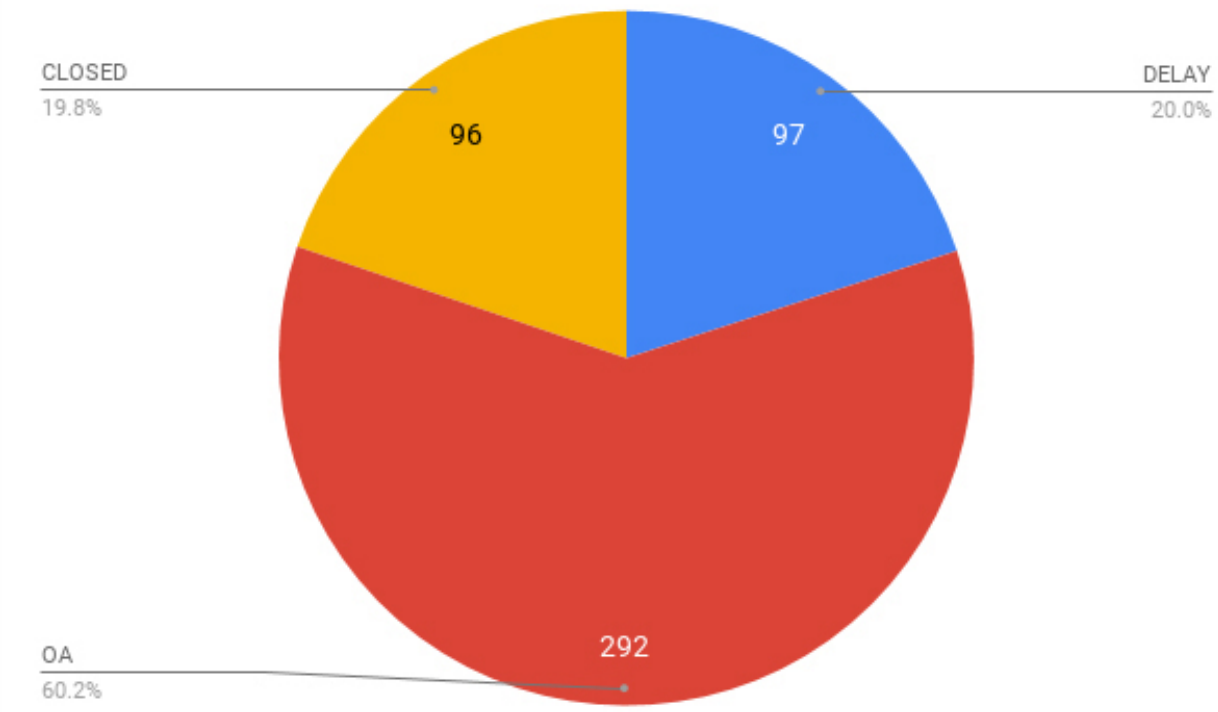

Figure 1.

Percentage and count of journals by access type

Although APCs are common in OA publishing, only 10 of the 485 journals had these fees.

Subject area

Journals in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) represented the greatest number in the dataset (*n* = 367; see Figure 2). Given the dominance of HSS journals, it is not surprising that 22% of all journals in the dataset currently receive funding from

SSHRC's Aid to Scholarly Journal program (2018) (*n* = 108). STEM and HSL journals were in the minority, accounting for 12.6% (*n* = 61) and 8.7% (*n* = 42), respectively. Only fifteen journals were coded as interdisciplinary, and these typically fell in the intersection of health and social sciences (e.g., *Canadian Journal of Aging*, *Drogues, santé et société*).

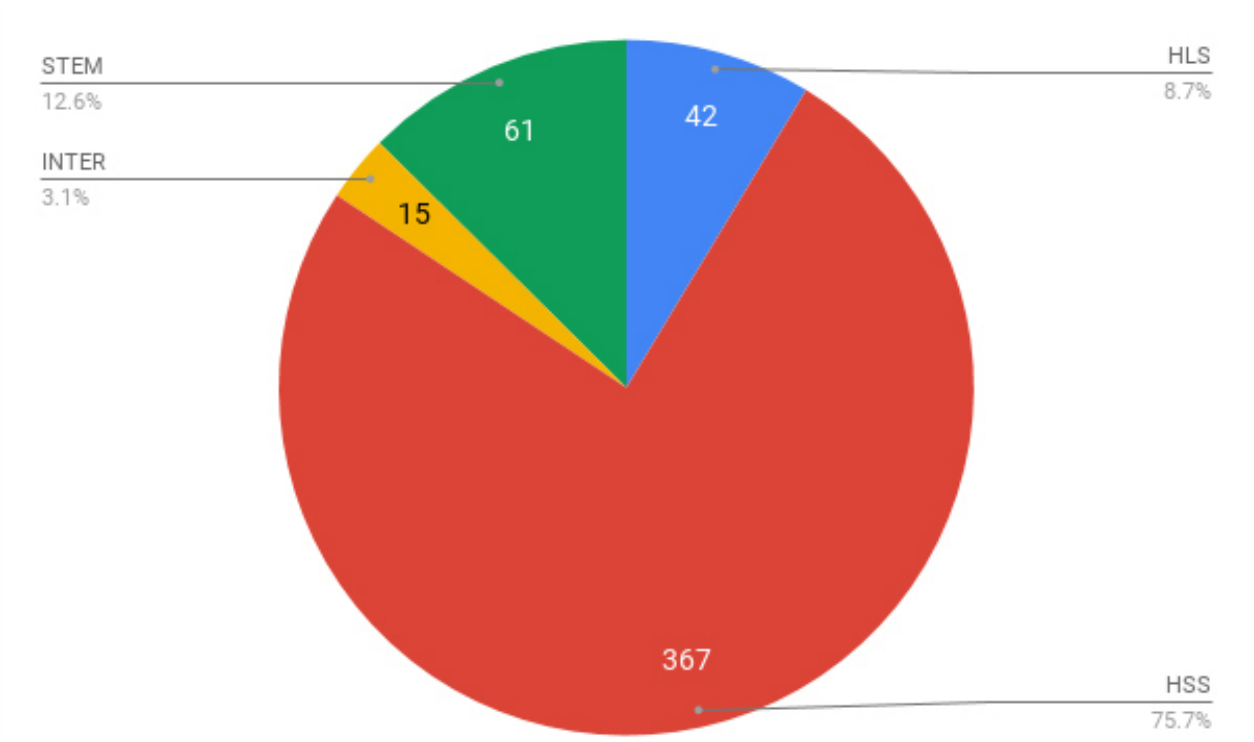

Figure 2.

Percentage and count of journals by subject area

Open access and subject area

As mentioned previously, open access journals represented 60% of the dataset overall. Within the disciplines, this breakdown was consistent in the HSS journals and health journals (i.e., 64% and 59% of HSS and HSL journals were OA, respectively; see Figure 3). However, in STEM the percentage of open access journals was 38%. The sample of

interdisciplinary journals was too small to make any strong conclusions, although 67% of those journals were open. It is unclear why independent STEM journals are less likely to be open access, although the push by the SSHRC program to OA has probably encouraged greater development in HSS. The dominance of Canadian Science Publishing within the STEM journals may in part explain the lower number of OA titles as Canadian Science Publishing journals are typically closed.

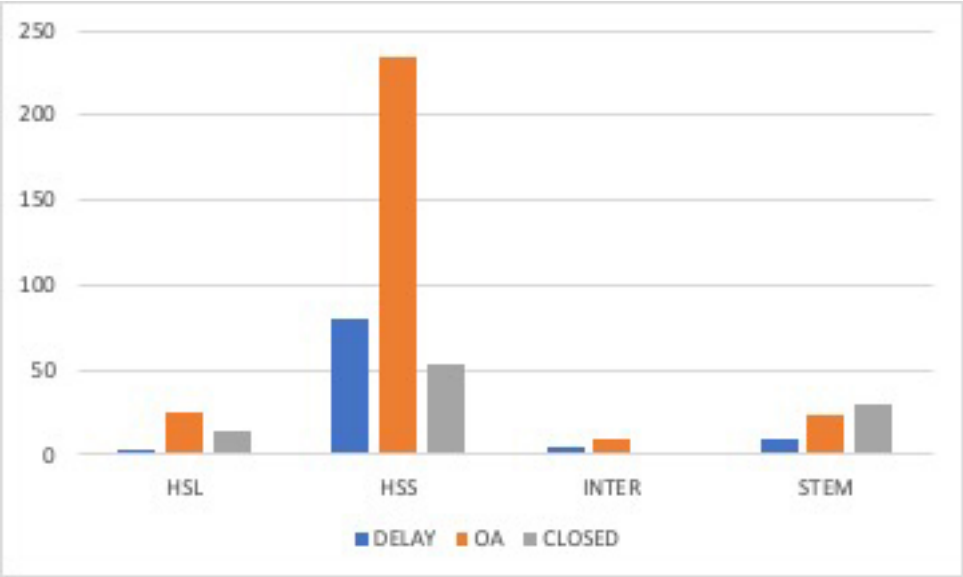

Figure 3.

Access type by subject (count)

Affiliation

As noted in the data coding section, affiliation is defined loosely, requiring only that the journal identify an organization on its website. This could take the form of language on the journal's website that they were "supported by" or "affiliated with" or "hosted by" a certain organization. While we are unable to determine the extent and nature of these affiliations, it is clear that outside organizations do have a role to play in Canadian independent publishing. For example, out of 485 journals, only 8 had

no listed affiliation. The majority (n = 287) had two affiliations, and 19 had three affiliations.

Overall, the spread of affiliations was equally divided between associations, libraries, non-profit publishers, and universities (see Figure 4). "Other" typically included institutes which were not part of a university but occasionally represented other organizations which could not be classified under the other headings.

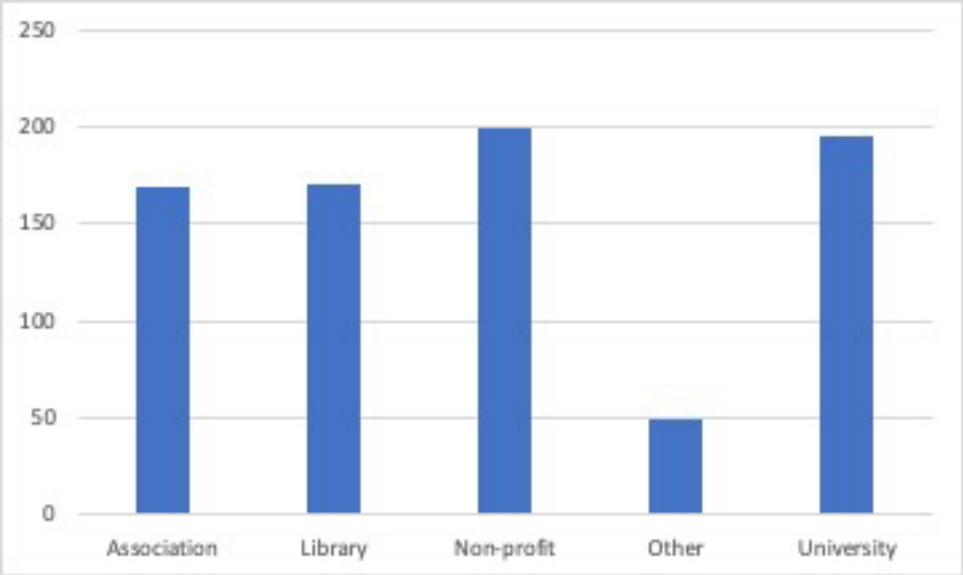

Figure 4.

Total number of journals affiliated with each kind of organization (journals may be affiliated with more than one organization)

The most common pairings were:

- Universities with non-profit publishers/hosts (n = 74)
- Associations with non-profit publishers/hosts (n = 76)
- Libraries with universities (n = 60)
- Associations with libraries (n = 47)

Of the affiliations, there were several which had a large number of journals associated with them. This included the non-profit hosting platform Érudit and Canadian Science Publishing (*n* = 127 and 25, respectively).

Government funding and affiliation

The authors hypothesized that journals which received government funding would not have as many affiliations as unfunded journals since they were receiving financial support from another source. The opposite was found to be true: funded journals were more likely than unfunded journals to have two or more affiliations (79% versus 58%, respectively). Affiliations in this case could demonstrate greater support for a journal or correspond to a journal's "prestige" and longevity. The government funding program (SSHRC) has strict criteria and a competitive process to grant assistance, so as a result, journals that receive the financial support typically represent older, more established journals in the Canadian scholarly community. Teasing out further if a greater number of affiliations corresponds to a journal's long-term success would be an interesting area of additional inquiry.

Access type and affiliation

The researchers were interested to see if the type of affiliation was correlated to different access models. For example, libraries have long been strong supporters of the OA movement, and the researchers hypothesized that journals affiliated with a library would be more likely to be OA. This assumption was borne out in the data as libraries supported predominantly open publications: 153 out of 170 OA journals were affiliated with libraries. Non-profit publishers, in contrast, were more likely to be affiliated with journals that had a delay: 78 out of 200 journals with delayed open access were affiliated with non-profit publishers. This may be due to the influence of

the non-profit hosting platform Érudit, as a typical model on their platform is to have a twelve-month delay. Universities and "Other" also demonstrated a greater likelihood to be affiliated with an open access journal: 123 out of 195 university-affiliated journals and 30 out of 48 "Other'" affiliated journals.

Affiliation and subject area

The researchers wanted to see if affiliation had any connection as well to the journal's subject area. This would tease out which types of affiliations are the major players in each subject area and if they differed between subject areas. For example, were libraries more likely to be affiliated with HSS journals, and so forth? After reviewing the data, several connections were established:

- The majority of HSL and STEM journals were affiliated with associations (n = 29, 69%; n = 33, 54%, respectively; see Figure 5).
- Universities and libraries were particularly prominent in humanities and social sciences. They were affiliated respectively with over 48% and 40% of the humanities and social sciences journals in the sample (n = 175; n = 148).
- Science journals had distributed support; half were affiliated with an association while almost 43% were affiliated with a non-profit publisher (this is likely due to the prominence of Canadian Science Publishing).

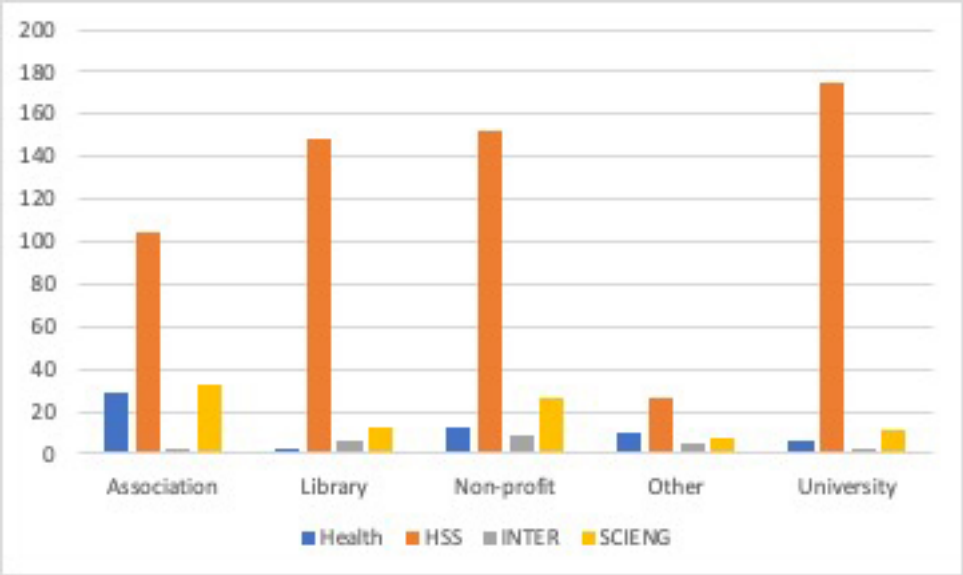

Figure 5.

Count of journals by subject affiliated with a particular organization

Editorial size and composition

Finally, the researchers wanted to examine the characteristics of the journal's editorial team in terms of size and composition. As labour is typically the primary input for a journal's activities, understanding the makeup of its editorial team is critical to understanding the size and scope of the work invested in a journal.

Editorial positions were counted as named if the person held a title (e.g., editor in chief, copyeditor, webmaster, etc.). Positions were counted as unnamed if a person was given no title but was listed as part of an advisory board, scientific committee, and so forth.

Total editorial size

- The majority of journals (n = 306) had between one to six people in named editorial positions (e.g., editor in chief, managing editor, etc.). Thirty-six

percent of journals had between one to three people in named positions (*n* = 176), while 27% had between four to six people (*n* = 130). The mode was three people in named positions (*n* = 130).

- Sizes of editorial boards (e.g., editorial advisory board, scientific committee) varied greatly from journals with no advisory board to one with 352 members.

Although no great differences were discerned by subject area, the researchers did note that the size of the editorial team corresponded to the access type, with closed access journals having a greater number of named positions on average (twelve compared to five and seven for delayed and open access journals). On average, closed access journals had twenty-seven editorial board members, whereas delayed or open access journals had twenty.

Discussion

Editorial size and open access

Although preliminary, the finding that OA journals have smaller editorial team sizes is worth further study. Several scholars have noted the absence of data on labour in OA journals, while some credited labour as the primary glue holding these journals together. For example, Björk, Shen, and Laakso (2016) noted in their case study on the independent, scholar-led OA journal *Electronic Journal of Information Technology in Construction* that "[w]hat probably has saved the journal (which has no income but is fully based on volunteer work and the access to a free server) is the tiered managerial structure of up to ten co- and junior editors, which helps in spreading the workload of overseeing the review of submitted manuscripts"(para. 33). Models or additional case

studies investigating the labour structure of OA journals may illuminate further how these journals operate, particularly in contrast to commercial or subscription-based, closed journals.

Multiple affiliations

Although none of these journals had a commercial publisher, calling them "independent" may also be misleading as the majority had at least one affiliation, and more than half had two. This indicated that the support and organizational structures of these journals are complex and not single tiered. Although the current study is unable to demonstrate the exact nature of these relationships, this is also an area of future investigation.

The multi-tiered affiliation structure of the *McGill Journal of Education* may give insights into what these relationships look like. In an article on the history of the journal, the authors note that "[w]e are currently supported directly by a SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals award and indirectly by our partners: Open Journals Systems (OJS), the McGill Library, and McGill's Faculty of Education. . . . We belong to Érudit (a consortium of journals in Québec that distributes our content worldwide) as well as associations such as the Canadian Association for Learned Journals. We are also supported through our editorial alliance with French universities in Québec, which allows us to enjoy a wider bilingual presence provincially, nationally, and internationally" (Strong-Wilson et al. 2019, 8).

A similar string of affiliations was noted in the 2008 article about the *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, which mentioned support from the University of Alberta Department of

Sociology and the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals program, as well as publishing and subscription management by the University of Toronto Press and hosting services by the University of Alberta Libraries (Haggerty 2008).

These layers of support and affiliation combine to provide a strong, foundational base for the *McGill Journal of Education* and the *Canadian Journal of Sociology* and underline how interlocking ties can form a strong knot. It would be interesting to see if multiple affiliations correspond to journal success and longevity and, in the absence of multiple affiliations, case studies on how these journals continue to publish and exist in the long term.

Libraries as publishers

Given the growth of libraries as publishers, it is perhaps not surprising that libraries are affiliated with as many journals as associations, university departments, and scholarly societies. While earlier studies on the Canadian scholarly landscape focused on the role of associations, universities, and presses in publishing, teasing out separately the role of libraries may be a path forward for partnerships and sustainability. This study affirms the earlier findings by CARL that "library-based publishing services can be a key component in a more comprehensive national sustainability strategy that provides cost-effective publishing support for Canadian journals while also advancing a more viable open access publishing model" (Canadian Association of Research Libraries 2017, 14).

Open access

The dominance of open access in the dataset is reflective of changing trends in scholarly publishing. In 2017, only 25%, or 8, of the journals in Paquin (2017) were open. This could be due to a difference in sample inclusion (e.g., Paquin included commercial journals). It could also be due to the change in the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals program which requires journals must now be open within twelve months. The change in SSHRC's funding eligibility would have greatly influenced the HSS journals in the sample.

Even though the majority of the journals operated in an OA model, very few (n = 10) charged APCs. This is perhaps not surprising as APCs are less common in HSS and are often higher, and more common, in commercial publishers (Willinsky 2017). However, the absence of APCs for the OA journals should lead to further inquiry into how these journals operate and manage any expenses or costs. For example, do they run entirely on volunteer labour and in-kind contributions? As more OA advocates argue for the "diamond open access" model of publishing (i.e., no charges to authors or readers), understanding how existing journals operate in this model can provide important lessons for other journals pursuing a no-fees, OA publication.

Dominance of humanities and social science journals

Humanities and social science (HSS) journals represented the majority of journals in the dataset by a wide margin (60%). It is unclear why HSS journals represent a significant portion of Canadian, independent, scholarly journals. A quick search of peer-reviewed journals by discipline in Ulrichsweb suggests HSS journals are more common than health or STEM journals (which represent 23% and 32% of Ulrich's

indexed journals, respectively, compared to 44% for HSS journals). This difference may be due in part to the SSHRC Aid to Scholarly Journals program. Another possibility is that HSS journals produce fewer issues and receive fewer submissions, thus they do not require the large, dedicated resources of scale offered by commercial publishers. There is some evidence that researchers in the humanities and social sciences produce fewer papers than researchers in engineering, natural sciences, and health and medical sciences (Shin and Cummings 2010). It would have been interesting if the researchers had collected data on the journals' article output over a specific time frame to assess if there was any correlation to discipline. Regretfully, this data was not collected due to time constraints. Future studies may look at the publishing patterns of independent journals based on discipline and determine the feasibility of independent publishing for journals with large outputs.

Additional observations

Although anecdotal, the researchers made several other observations which may lead to areas of further inquiry. For example, the researchers noted that francophone journals, particularly those in Québec, were more likely to be affiliated with a university department and more likely to include a set of unnamed positions in the form of a scientific committee. In general, francophone periodicals were strongly represented in the sample, suggesting an area for further inquiry into the specific publishing landscape in Québec as compared to the rest of Canada. Further investigation could be undertaken to examine the publishing culture in Québec and francophone Canada and whether their models for affiliation and support differ.

Limitations

Although every effort was made to arrive at a comprehensive list of Canadian journals meeting the inclusion criteria, it is possible that journals exist which we did not locate. As there is no comprehensive list of Canadian journals, assembling a custom list will naturally mean overlooking some journals.

This study also represents a single point in time. As the scholarly communications landscape moves quickly, it is possible that journals have changed since the time of data collection (e.g., they are now OA, they have ceased publishing, etc.). The researchers reviewed the data in summer 2020 to update entries to minimize this limitation.

In relying on journal websites, the researchers depended on the journals themselves to disclose these pieces of information. In particular, the association between a journal and another organization was often difficult to locate, and some journals had more than one website to consult. Although the researchers endeavored to be comprehensive in locating this information, it is possible that all relevant information was not fully disclosed by the journals on their websites or that the researchers may have missed the information if it was located in an unintuitive location. This was similarly true for information such as APCs as well as the composition and size of the editorial team. We had to exclude any journal for which we could not locate editorial information as we could not confirm if the journal met the inclusion criteria of Canadian otherwise.

Given the aforementioned limitations, the researchers recommend this research be considered a bird's-eye view of the Canadian, independent scholarly publishing landscape and not a definitive analysis with numbers and findings that are absolute and fixed.

Conclusion

There continues to exist in Canada a large set of scholarly journals which are not affiliated with commercial publishers. The data has highlighted several key characteristics of these journals: they are predominantly in the humanities and social sciences, they operate primarily on OA models which do not charge APCs, and they are affiliated with multiple organizations. Furthermore, for the journals which are OA, they are more likely than closed journals to have smaller editorial teams. The cross-organizational affiliations demonstrate the collaborative nature of scholarly publishing in Canada and that no one organization "holds the key" to independent publishing. This can help inform future national conversations towards the key stakeholders. It may also spur stakeholders to develop more systematic means to track and compile a list of these journals. The researchers removed over 600 journals from an initial list of 1,195 in order to conduct this research. Of particular concern is the high number of inactive journals (169) which were still included in various periodical directories. Without accurate, up-to-date data on independent Canadian journals, policymakers and Canadian scholarly publishing supporters cannot easily advocate for resources and support or influence policy decisions with evidence.

The fact that very few of the OA journals in this set charge APCs is intriguing and worth further inquiry. Current studies looking at the diamond open access model are currently underway (e.g., Coalition S, a group of national funding agencies in Europe, is currently undertaking a study in this area), and the fact that so many Canadian journals currently operate in this manner may be an area for further investigation for scholars both inside and outside the country.

Beyond the above, this work offers other areas of research activity: What are the relationships and support mechanisms in place between the various affiliated organizations and journals? Are these strong and secure or tenuous and unstable relationships? Will libraries play an even larger role in the support of these journals in the future? How will libraries collaborate alongside existing partners? Do francophone journals have a different publishing ecosystem, and what does that look like? If we believe in the importance and value of these journals, then these questions are worth exploring further. In the interim, we hope this initial analysis has provided a jumping-off point for these conversations and a basis for further inquiry in this area.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Minnie Bearchief, Katie Maxfield, and Emma Uhl, former University of Alberta School of Library and Information Studies students for helping us compile some of the early versions of the list of journals for this paper.

Bibliography

Björk, Bo-Christer, Cenyu Shen, and Mikael Laakso. 2016. "A Longitudinal Study of Independent Scholar-Published Open Access Journals." *PeerJ* 4: e1990. https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.1990.

Boismenu, Gérard, and Guylaine Beaudry. 2004. "Scholarly Publishing and Public Service." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 29 (3): 343–358. https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2004v29n3a1452.

Bonn, Maria, and Mike Furlough, eds. 2015. *Getting the Word Out: Academic Libraries as Scholarly Publishers.* Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Canadian Association of Research Libraries. 2017. *Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group: Final Report*. https://www.carl-abrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CSPWG_final_report_EN.pdf.

Couture, Marc. 2020. "Canadian OA Scholarly Journals: An Exhaustive Survey." Unpublished manuscript. https://r-libre.teluq.ca/106/.

Crow, Raym. 2006. "Publishing Cooperatives: An Alternative for Non-Profit Publishers." *First Monday* 11 (9). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v11i9.1396.

Edgar, Brian D., and John Willinsky. 2010. "A Survey of Scholarly Journals Using Open Journal Systems." *Scholarly and Research Communication* 1 (2): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.22230/src.2010v1n2a24.

Elfenbein, Timothy W. 2014. "Cultural Anthropology and the Infrastructure of Publishing." *Cultural Anthropology* 29 (2): 288–303. https://doi.org/10.14506/ca29.2.06.

Haggerty, Kevin D. 2008. "Taking the Plunge: Open Access at the 'Canadian Journal of Sociology.' Case Studies in Open Access Publishing. Number Five." *Information Research: An International Electronic Journal* 13 (1): 1–12.

Harboe-Ree, Cathrine. 2007. "Just Advanced Librarianship: The Role of Academic Libraries as Publishers." *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 38 (1): 15–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/00048623.2007.10721264.

Hawkins, Brian L., and Patricia Battin, eds. 1998. *The Mirage of Continuity: Reconfiguring Academic Information Resources for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources.

Larivière, Vincent, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon. 2015. "The Oligopoly of Large Publishers in the Digital Era." *PLoS ONE* 10 (6): e0127502. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0127502.

Lorimer, Rowland, and Adrienne Lindsay. 2004. "Canadian Scholarly Journals at a Technological Crossroads." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 29 (3): 253–275. https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2004v29n3a1467.

McGuigan, Glenn S. 2004. "Publishing Perils in Academe: The Serials Crisis and the Economics of the Academic Journal Publishing Industry." *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship* 10 (1): 13–26. https://doi.org/10.1300/J109v10n01_03.

Morrison, Heather. 2016. "Small Scholar-Led Scholarly Journals: Can They Survive and Thrive in an Open Access Future?" *Learned Publishing* 29 (2): 83–88. https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1015.

Paquin, Émilie. 2017. "Shaping a Collective Future: An Investigation into Canadian Scholarly Journals' Socio-Economic Reality and an Outlook on the Partnership Model for Open Access." http://www.erudit.org/public/documents/Canadian_Journals_Socio-Economic_Study.pdf.

Schmidle, Deborah J., and Barbara J. Via. 2004. "Physician Heal Thyself: The Library and Information Science Serials Crisis." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4 (2): 167–203. https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2004.0036.

Shin, Jung Cheol, and William K. Cummings. 2010. "Multilevel Analysis of Academic Publishing across Disciplines: Research Preference, Collaboration, and Time on Research." *Scientometrics* 85 (2): 581–594. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-010-0236-2.

Solomon, David J., and Bo-Christer Björk. 2012. "A Study of Open Access Journals Using Article Processing Charges." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology* 63 (8): 1485–1495. https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.22673.

Strong-Wilson, Teresa, Mindy Carter, Jérôme St-Amand, and Sylvie Wald. 2019. "Can We Interest You? The McGill Journal of Education." *Scholarly and Research Communication* 10 (2): 1–13. https://doi.org/10.22230/src.2019v10n2a317.

Tenopir, Carol, and Donald W. King. 1997. "Trends in Scientific Scholarly Journal Publishing in the United States." *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 28 (3): 135–170. https://doi.org/10.3138/JSP-028-03-135.

Thomes, Katherine, and Karen Clay. 1998. "University Libraries in Transition." *ASEE Prism* 7 (8): 26–29.

Ulrichsweb. n.d. "Frequently Asked Questions." https://www.ulrichsweb.com/ulrichsweb/faqs.asp.

Willinsky, John. 2017. "Modelling a Cooperative Approach to Open Access Scholarly Publishing: A Demonstration in the Canadian Context." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 42 (5): 923–934. https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2017v4n5a3264.

Notes

1. The report was published in 2017, but the data was collected in 2015. [^]
2. This partnership model was realized with the launch of Coalition Publica in 2017. Read more about this initiative at their website. [^]