

Theological Librarianship Talks Open Access

Launching an Open Access Journal - Can You Make the Investment?

by Lisa Gonzalez, KnowledgeBase and License Manager Librarian, Private Academic Library Network of Indiana

While many libraries are finding ways to provide access to open access journals by modifying their collection development policies to include them or developing procedures to process open access journals alongside their paid counterparts, some libraries are also seeking further ways to support the ambitious goal of helping more paywall journals make the transition to open access.

Just as dedicating staff time to selecting, cataloging, and managing access to open access journals represents a cost in staff time for the library, so does committing the library to stepping into a new role as a publisher. I'd like to offer my reflections on the launch of an open access journal, *New Theology Review (NTR)*, while I was the electronic resources librarian at Catholic Theological Union. I'd especially like to address the costs in staff time with regard to marketing and building a reputation through familiar discovery tools authors, readers, and library selectors use to discover and evaluate an open access journal. The library will see these tools from a different perspective once it has assumed the role of publisher.

The initial launch of *NTR* was advanced by a fortuitous convergence of events: the library director's enthusiasm and commitment to open access, her direct experience with OJS software as an editor at *Theological Librarianship*, and the urgent need to find a new home for a print journal with longstanding institutional support (both faculty time and institutional funds).¹ The scholarly reputation of the journal was maintained by ongoing institutional support for the faculty editors, who also received a modest stipend. My role focused on providing support for improved discovery for the journal through DOI registration with Crossref, and marketing the journal's open access policies through inclusion in SHERPA/RoMEO and DOAJ. (SHERPA, Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access, is a project in the UK "dedicated to promoting the implementation and use of Open Access repositories"; RoMEO, Rights Metadata for Open Archiving, is the project which birthed SHERPA; and DOAJ, with which you may be more familiar, is the comprehensive Directory of Open Access Journals maintained by the University of Lund.)²

Librarians are familiar with DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers) and Crossref as mechanisms for promoting access and discovery of electronic journals, including open access journals, but are less familiar with serving as providers of these identifiers themselves. DOIs are a key part of sharing metadata about journal articles across many online discovery mechanisms and are key to the functioning of altmetrics products. Membership in Crossref as a publisher enabled the library to assign DOIs to the articles published in *NTR*.

Crossref allows publishers eighteen months to implement DOIs on the publisher's platform, and this allowance of time was needed for learning the technical requirements for implementing DOIs using both the OJS and Crossref platforms. While the OJS platform includes a Crossref plugin, the library still needed to send the DOI metadata to Crossref in order to register the DOIs. Without proper registration, the DOIs present on the landing page for each journal article would not resolve properly. Since DOIs cannot be changed after registration, it is important for the publisher to make sure they are permanently associated with that article once the DOIs are included with the published article. Once a DOI is included with a published article, it will become available to web crawlers as well as to readers visiting the journal's website and copying the DOIs manually or through the use of citation software.

Once the library was ready to activate the OJS Crossref plugin for DOIs, and DOIs were assigned to the first issue of *NTR* that would include them, there were some difficulties transmitting the data. This resulted in a high percentage of unresolved DOIs, which indicated that readers were clicking on a DOI and receiving an error message. In retrospect, it would have been helpful for the library to have additional assistance from both OJS and Crossref. Crossref is used to working with publishers using their own platforms and expected the library as publisher to have more direct access to

¹ Jeffrey Beall, Melody Layton McMahon, Kathleen Mulhern, and Jennifer Woodruff Tait. "Libraries, Religious Publishing, and Conversations on Faith." *American Theological Library Association Summary Of Proceedings* 69 (2015): 150.

² These and many other Open Access acronyms are helpfully defined at <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/glossary.html>.

the developers of the platform. Because OJS is an open source project, support was only available through the use of discussion forums, too slow for the library's timeline for fixing the problem.

In addition to Crossref, the library worked with both SHERPA/RoMEO and DOAJ as a publisher, providing data to authors and other libraries seeking to evaluate the reputation of the journal. A SHERPA/RoMEO listing includes the authors' rights as far as self-archiving. While it may seem unnecessary to pursue this listing for an open access journal, authors may want to self-archive their open access publication for a variety of reasons — on their own website or on their own page in the library's institutional repository. Both options provide greater exposure to open access publications for potential readers and authors in their discipline.

Pursuing the SHERPA/RoMEO listing also helped the library evaluate its own standing with potential authors as an open access publisher. This required the library to interpret the journal's copyright policy according to SHERPA/RoMEO'S priorities, which included the fact that the author retained copyright while agreeing to publish using a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives license.³ The library also needed to interpret the policy in light of SHERPA/RoMEO'S categories of archiving policies, determining that the journal's policies placed it in the Green category, which allows the author to archive pre-print, post-print, and/or publisher's versions of articles. The listing in SHERPA/RoMEO explicitly articulated the library's support as a publisher for the author's right to archive and share publicly different versions of their own work.⁴

The DOAJ listing also gave the library an opportunity to review how explicitly the commitment to open access was expressed now that the library was a publisher.⁵ Some authors associate article processing charges (APCs) with all open access journals, and the DOAJ application asked for an explicit declaration. The journal's web page was not explicit on this matter, so wording was added to make it clear that there were no charges required to publish in the journal. The DOAJ application also asked for standard editorial policies such as whether the journal relied on double blind peer review and what the standard time frame was from submission to actual publication. This information is aimed at potential authors who would be using DOAJ to evaluate the quality of the publication and the ease of working with the publication. Pursuing DOAJ listing helped the library see its publication through the eyes of authors. Scholars seek to publish not only in journals with the appropriate scope for their work but also in journals that have a reputation for employing appropriate peer review techniques and which treat authors fairly by publishing their work in a timely manner.

While libraries may struggle to market their library services, much less the library's publishing program, effectively, marketing this open access journal through discovery tools helped illuminate the importance of reputation building from the publishers' perspective. The library's success with the journal's transition to open access benefited enormously from the accrued reputation of the journal. Ongoing support for content discovery helps maintain the journal's reputation, and is an area where librarians can more directly contribute.

As with any new library program, libraries should consider carefully how to compensate library staff equitably for the increased skill level involved in every phase of introducing a library publishing program. Faculty may have more flexibility in terms of their time commitment for this work, and will have more incentive as far as seeing the work translate directly into advancing their career within the tenure and promotion system than library staff. Libraries should be careful about evaluating a skill set that is new for library staff, and be cautious not to underestimate the time or training required to maintain an appropriate skill level for the work.

Besides supporting the editorial and production processes, marketing and reputation building are a key part of a publishing program. The library must step away from the emphasis on open access solely as a public good and vie to make the library's publications more visible and desirable in the marketplace of scholarly publishing. Without this recognition of quality and significance from authors, potential editors, and readers, the library's publications may struggle to find an audience to sustain them.

³ <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

⁴ SHERPA/RoMEO, *New Theology Review*, <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/issn/0896-4297/>.

⁵ DOAJ, *New Theology Review*, <https://doaj.org/toc/2169-1088>.