Webinar - Funding Open Access after the Transformation – Q&A

Panelists: *Vivian Berghahn, Evgeniya Lupova-Henry, Judith Fathallah and Chair by Raym Crow*

Q. How will the microdonations work? Will they be variable or will there be a set price per article?

AT-F: We enable sending small amounts per minute (e.g. 1 cent per minute) in a similar way to what other Web Monetization initiatives suggest.

This is still something we are researching, and we could make the amount depends on the amount of funding that the library or researcher is willing to pledge.

Q. How can you make quartz funders transparent?

AT-F: Quartz Funders might choose to publicly share how much they pledged to the initiative, and we believe it is something they will be willing to do. We cannot probably make this information available without their consent though.

Our platform cooperative will be as transparent as feasible, such as telling that 95% of funding came from university libraries if that is the case and if we cannot share the names of all libraries.

Q. Question for Quartz, would it only work for micro-donations? Or, would it be possible for libraries to make deals with journals through Quartz?

EL-H: We have been thinking about providing a possibility for libraries to have a whitelist of journals they want micropayments to be sent.

Q. With the payments through Quartz, what will the publisher use the funds for? I would expect most diamond journals would already have a financial support mechanism and micropayments would not be an assured income. How do you imagine this will help the publisher?

EL-H: Some fund their journals from their own money and use volunteer work, so having an additional source of funding would be welcome. If a journal receives funds but do not need them, they can also donate to other community initiatives.

Q. For Evgeniya - How many journals and libraries have expressed interest in taking part in Quartz OS so far?

AT-F: Our current priority is testing the technology. For that, we are developing pilots with 5 committed journals and a university library. We have over 300 interested projects and people, some with more commitment than others. The efforts to grow the community will follow after we obtain more funding and prove our technology to work and be of interest to the OA community.

Q. Are the microdonations meant to be temporary to aid a more permanent/sustainable transition? If not, is it that different than paying to read a paywalled article?

AT-F: We consider the micro-donations as a complimentary source of income, at least for the short and medium term. This is different from subscriptions because donations are voluntary. We see many similarities with the subscribe to open model, and we will explore how we can combine the two to support OA journals and libraries.

Q. @QuartzOA: How can you ensure the sustainability of funding when the dynamics/influx of microdonations is barely foreseeable?

AT-F: In the short term, we aim to position Quartz OA as a diverse stream of funding (not the principal one).

In the mid time, our initiative can prove to be of interest by showing the interest and commitment of journals and libraries. That is what would ensure it is an attractive and sustainable source of funding. Bootstrapping a diverse and committed community is therefore our biggest challenge, and we would love to have the support of committed early adopters to ensure this happens.

Q. Thanks Judith. Are librarians not running a risk of being prescriptive to the researchers if they produce lists of OA Journals?

JF: I don't think it's prescriptive particularly. It might be taken as a recommendation, but given that the publishers that are OBC members have undergone rigorous quality checks, the recommendations would be ones that librarians could have confidence in. One could say that choosing to subscribe to a particular journal or set of journals is a similar recommendation, which libraries already do.

Q. RE QuartzOA micropayments at the point of reading, have libraries raised any concerns that they risk losing control over their budget? Or can you set limits?

EL-H: Libraries decide how much they are willing to pledge.

Q: AI companies like Open AI (Chat GPT) benefit from having more high-quality information available on the open Internet, so why not ask them to donate to OA publishing?

AT-F: That is a great insight! We could try to find the best way to convince these companies to give economic support to OA.

Q. Is the Quartz plugin legal with respect to GDPR and European directives regarding storage of personal data?

AT-F: Currently Quartz OA does not store personal data, just the login information of journals and researchers as well as the transactions that happened within the system. Future versions would even enable other service providers for the microdonations, such as libraries managing the accounts of their researchers.

Q. Do all OA book publishers sell POD versions of their books, and if so, are there data that show how much income is derived therefrom in relation to the overall cost of running the program? (We did this at Penn State Press when we started several book series in 2005.)

JF: Mostly they do, though this slightly depends on the format of the book (e.g., some experimental works require digital affordances). Income-related to overall cost: small. Open Book Publishers would be one of the higher, they report 38% of revenue from print sales (revenue not profit) but Mattering Press e.g., much less, 5-10% at most.

Q. Another way to pose Richard's question is to ask about the incentives built into the models. (i.e., does the S2O model provide incentives to the publisher to lower the subscription thresholds? Does the OBC model provide incentives for libraries to participate?)

JF: The benefits that the OBC offers to libraries (other than the need to support a fairer and more equitable OA landscape, which many librarians subscribe to) are, briefly: ease of comparison between initiatives for local and global relevance, easy integration into workflows/high-quality metadata, rigorous quality checks on OA publishers (due diligence), and the benefit of being part of a community devoted to resource sharing and sharing of best practices. Its a lot easier for librarians to support multiple initiatives through an OBC package than to seek out, compare, and choose each one separately.