



## Plenary 2 - Discussion Prompts

*The purpose of the statement is to prompt discussion of potential strategies, principles and partnerships to steer the open access transition in scholarly journal publishing toward conditions that are fair and financially equitable for researchers everywhere.*

The transition of today's subscription-based scholarly journals to open access publishing models that is currently underway will enable unencumbered access to a vast portion of the world's latest peer-reviewed research results at no cost for learners, researchers and citizens everywhere. This constitutes an important step forward in the journey toward a scholarly communication environment that is characterized by principles of openness, equity, inclusion and diversity.

As leaders of research libraries and library consortia, we have an important professional and financial stake in this transition, which brings with it transformational opportunities but also new challenges for the research community at large—both of which are accentuated in the context of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). In order to enhance the benefits of the transition of subscription-based scholarly journals to open access models and mitigate potential risks, we invite global stakeholders to engage in discussion of principles, partnerships and actions that might address some of these key concerns:

**There is a lack of visibility into all financial streams around scholarly journal publishing and a lack of coordination among national and international entities contributing to the system.** While libraries and library consortia have traditionally held responsibility for licensing access to journals, in many LMICs, some commercial publishers sidestep the library and library consortia who might provide important context on the scholarly publishing market and the open access transition, negotiating subscription agreements directly with Ministries of Education, Research and Innovation. On the side of publishing, a great portion of fees paid by authors to publish their articles openly in fully open access and hybrid journals come from grant funding provided by international research funders, for example the Wellcome Trust, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and others. As a community, we should form and strengthen national and cross-border partnerships among diverse stakeholders to rationalize and align current investments to support the open access transition.

**The current publisher discount and waiver practices for open access publishing fees are inequitable.** Acknowledging that the subscription pricing mechanisms of publishers are opaque, subscription agreements with libraries and consortia in LMICs currently secure and govern low and no-cost access to their journal portfolios. Conversely, discounts and waivers of journal article open access publishing fees are offered to authors unilaterally, at the sole

discretion of publishers. Claiming an APC waiver or discount is an extremely challenging process for authors and, even when discounted, fees often represent insurmountable financial barriers for authors who do not benefit from grant funding that can be used for open access publishing. Centralized bilateral agreements between institutions and publishers to govern and waive and discounts on open access publishing fees and standardize processes—such as [those being negotiated by EIFL](#)—are a practical solution in the immediate term, but do not fully address the broader issue. As a community, we should involve local and international stakeholders in the reassessment of publisher discounting and waiver policies.

**In the context of transformative agreements, the global subscription expenditure is more than enough to sustain the transition of today’s scholarly journals to open access, but the money is not always where it is needed.** In many LMIC contexts, the ratio of interaction with scholarly journals weighs heavily on the side of consuming content (reading) as opposed to the producing side (articles accepted for publication). In other LMIC contexts, the opposite may be true as low-cost or free reading access to journals is offered to institutions, but the level of the research outputs (articles) in the journals of subscription publishers is such that a transition to OA would require greater investment on their part. In many countries where institutions and library consortia are already negotiating transformative agreements, models to harmonize the re-distribution of costs from reading-based to publishing-based locally are being developed and tested. As a community, we should work to promote global partnerships, principles and practices to ensure a smooth and sustainable transition of scholarly journals to open access and mechanisms that ensure authors everywhere can publish their research under equitable economic conditions.