

Scholarly communication from the perspective of Lower-Middle-Income Countries (LMICs): Investigating the potential for and impact of transformative agreements

Many consortia and institutions around the world are looking at shifting their expenditure from accessing paywalled content to publishing in open access in order to accelerate the transition to open access. While this shift may be feasible at a global scale—and would potentially cost the academic community less than what they invest now in subscriptions—such a transition would require some adjustment at institutional level. For example, those institutions that are focused primarily on teaching would have much to gain (since they do not produce research, their costs may go down), whereas research-intensive institutions might stand to pay more than they currently spend on subscriptions.

While methods to ease this transition are already being explored by those scholarly organizations who are currently engaged in transformative agreements—such as integrating grant funding into cost calculations and redistributing costs at a consortium level—there is little data around what impact there will be for institutions and consortia in countries with less financial leverage. While it is easy to conflate the socio-political issue of any given country's means and level of investment in education and research with the question of cost as a barrier in scholarly communication, the significant lack of transparency with regard to financial and publishing trends inhibits the community's ability to develop informed approaches.

In order to address this, OA2020 has put together a dedicated Working Group collaborating with library consortia, librarians and researchers in four Lower-Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) to assess the impact of transformative agreements at local level.

The group is looking to answer questions such as: What level of access to the full journal portfolios of the largest subscription publishers do institutions in LMICs have? What are the subscription costs involved? What discounting structures or waivers are being applied to those subscription fees? What are the publishing trends of their authors, in terms of number of articles published in subscription and open access journals? What costs are they currently sustaining in APCs or other publishing-related fees such as page and colour charges? What discounts and waivers are they offered?

The group is gathering quantitative and qualitative information on the financial and publishing interaction of these countries with subscription publishers. With such data, the community will be in a better position to propose and secure appropriate mechanisms to ensure that scholars everywhere benefit from the transition of subscription journals to open access. The group is aiming to share findings once the study has been completed.

OA2020 LMIC Working Group

If you would like to contribute to this effort, please [contact us!](#)

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