

The Platform Developers in a Federated Model of Diamond Open Access

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In their recent discussion paper “Towards a Federated Global Community of Diamond Open Access,” Pierre Mounier (OpenEdition, OPERAS) and Johan Rooryck (cOAlition S, *Glossa*) propose a means of organizing various Diamond Open Access initiatives inspired by a number of current factors shaping open access (OA) today. These include the long-standing Diamond OA publishing models that prevail in Latin America; the findings of the OA Diamond Journals Study (2021); the Action Plan for Diamond Open Access (2022); and growing political support from UNESCO, as well as actors in Europe, for Diamond OA.

Having endorsed the Action Plan for Diamond Open Access, as well as participating in key DOA events, PKP welcomes Mounier and Rooryck’s admirable leadership in proposing a Global Diamond Federation. Their efforts have given a name and global prominence to a model of OA that we have supported and have been deeply involved in for over two decades. Based on this experience, we’d like to contribute by articulating a place for an initiative like ours, the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), within a Global Diamond Federation (GDF) model. In doing so, we hope to provide additional

considerations in bringing forward a federated approach to strengthening DOA on a global scale. We are raising PKP's place in the GDF because we believe that we can help Mounier and Roorcyk (M&R) extend and strengthen their plans for Diamond OA by taking advantage of what we bring and what we've learned about this community.

PKP “Should Have a Role”

It is not that we have been left out of the GDF plans. M&R write in their discussion paper of how the GDF's Board “should have a role for organizations that serve Diamond OA as global infrastructures, e.g., SCOSS, DOAJ, and PKP.” As to that role, they go on to note that “representatives [of such organizations]... should be able to participate in the [GDF's] special interest committees.” While the opportunity for such representation is appreciated – whether it involves setting metadata standards or deciding on licensing choices – we think much is to be gained by building on the role we and the other organizations are already playing in Diamond OA, much as M&R hold up the examples of Redalyc and others.

For while M&R have set out to “propose to establish a global research infrastructure for Diamond Open Access... [that] will aim at providing resources and services to Diamond Open Access communities worldwide to strengthen their role in scholarly communication,” these three organizations – along with many others (including, among open source publishing platform developers, Coko, Janeway, Lodel, and PubPub) – have a claim to already offering resources and services to such communities on a global scale.

Federated Model Alignment

With so many moving *parts* (read, organizations) in the “community-driven Diamond scholarly communication ecosystem,” as the Action Plan for Diamond Open Access aptly calls it, it will be no small feat to articulate for Diamond OA both the current and the desired global infrastructure. To assist, we'll address in this paper the scope and nature of PKP's place within the Diamond OA community, offer an example of what its active research program brings to the table, and suggest how our integration into the proposed GDF might be portrayed, given global infrastructures (especially platform developers), such as PKP, have yet to be assigned a place within the encompassing circles of M&R's “global four-level federation” (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. The federation structure visualized (from Pierre Mounier and Johan Rooryck, “Towards a Federated Global Community of Diamond Open Access”).

Among the four parts of the global federation, PKP is most closely aligned with the role of the proposed Diamond OA Capacity Centers (DCC), which are to operate at the national, local and disciplinary levels. The Centers would provide “close support to journals” through a broad range of services. Over the last two decades, PKP has been enabling journals to offer Diamond OA by providing them with, in effect, a number of the services assigned to the DCC, including “technical tools” such as “a submission system and platform, dissemination platforms” as well as “guidelines” including “best practices, and training of editors.” PKP is moving into providing “mediation for copy-editing/typesetting services.” It also offers linkages for these journals to scholarly publishing organizations such as Crossref, ORCID, and DOAJ. With the support of the communities involved, these services are often provided in local languages.

PKP is providing the technical tools with its publishing platform at the national level – for example, with country portals for Morocco, Viet Nam, and Nepal – and at the local level, with university portals at UNAM, Universitas Pendidikan, Heidelberg, and others. Now, open source publishing platform developers, such as PKP, do not cover all of the services proposed for the DCC. They do not tend to provide, for example, “financial administration... [and] assistance with legal matters related to governance and ownership.” There is room, then, for providing these additional services through the organizations that M&R hold up as examples of national DCCs, whether in Croatia (HRČAK), France (OpenEdition), or Spain (FECYT). Such groups are eminently suited for convening editorial events on Diamond OA

approaches to the legal and financial aspects of scholarly publishing in ways that are tied to the communities they serve.

Rather than assigning to the DCC a distribution of technical tools, including publishing platforms, Diamond OA is arguably better served by continuing to have these systems managed and distributed by open source platform developers, such as PKP, and Lodel in the case of OpenEdition. Part of this involves the platform developers working on a global scale to coordinate services with industry organizations such as Crossref, ORCID, and DOAJ. By operating on an international scale in helping journals adhere to common standards, the platform developers are able to garner the resources through grants, memberships, and services needed to build and sustain this distribution and access to open source platforms.

Monitoring Global Progress

A further aspect of what PKP brings to the GDF's mission – to “advocate for this scholarly communication model, and to monitor [Diamond OA's] progress worldwide in the interest of equitable and inclusive Open Science” – is its standing as research and development (R&D) initiative. For example, PKP is in a position to update the 2021 OA Diamond Journals Study, which undoubtedly did a great deal to put this publishing model on the map. The study concludes that “it seems probable that there are up to 29,000 diamond OA journals,” while finding that 60 percent of its survey respondents were using PKP's Open Journal Systems (OJS) as their publication system.

Here the good news is that PKP is able to use its popularity within this community to place such estimates on more solid ground, with the results demonstrating both the continuing growth and greater scale of the Diamond OA community. The OJS platform includes a beacon that enables PKP to study software usage within this community. The publicly available data set reveals that 44,776 journals, publishing 1,603,583 articles, were actively using OJS in 2022 (publishing at least five articles that year). An earlier (now somewhat dated) study found that 84.2% of the journals using OJS are Diamond Open Access. This places the Diamond OA count for 2022 at an estimated 37,700 journals.

Add to this the Diamond OA journal counts for Kotahi, Janeway, Lodel, and PubPub, as well as WordPress and others, and it adds up to a body of published work being published that is not so much a research “archipelago,” as the OA Diamond Journals Study portrays it, but a considerable portion of the research activity going on today. The

growth in Diamond OA, which PKP has been witnessing, in the thousands of journals annually, is coming from neither the traditional high-production research facilities nor the Diamond OA Centers or Hubs. It is the result of researchers' initiatives following, in part, the growth in Global South higher education institutions, with the addition of 30,000 new institutions from 2006 to 2018 (for a total of 70,000), with the Global North holding steady at 20,000 institutions in that period (World Higher Education).

Board, Hub, Center, and Community Balance

The sheer size and growth rate of the Diamond OA community raises a question for this model of federated Diamond OA. There needs to be recognition of how small a proportion of the Diamond OA community that the proposed Hubs and Centers represent, whether operating at the regional, national, local and disciplinary levels (with the exception of the remarkable Relawan with 16,413 member journals). While M&R presented a limited number of examples, one can still see that most of the Diamond OA publishing activity happens elsewhere, with journals forming without additional organizational structures to support them beyond the open source platforms they may have had locally installed (Fig. 2).

The Diamond OA Capacity Centers and Hubs are bound to find it a challenge to reach out, beyond the interests of their own sets of journals, in an effort to develop capacities within the broader community of publishing activity. The GDP Board will likewise be tempted to stay focused on the interests of its Hub membership. These natural organizational tendencies could pose a representational risk to the federated model. That is, what will appear to be a privileged minority of Diamond OA journals within Hubs and Centers could be accused of harboring resources – despite the equity-based spirit of this publishing model – that are intended to serve and expand the Diamond OA community's capacities.

This potential risk for the model speaks directly to the role that PKP plays today, through our approach to open source platform developers in Diamond OA. Platform developers are acting as agents of a wider, equitable distribution of infrastructure development in ways that need to play a central, well-supported role in the federated model. This inclusion of platform developers in the model's governance is one way of ensuring a greater service to the broader community.

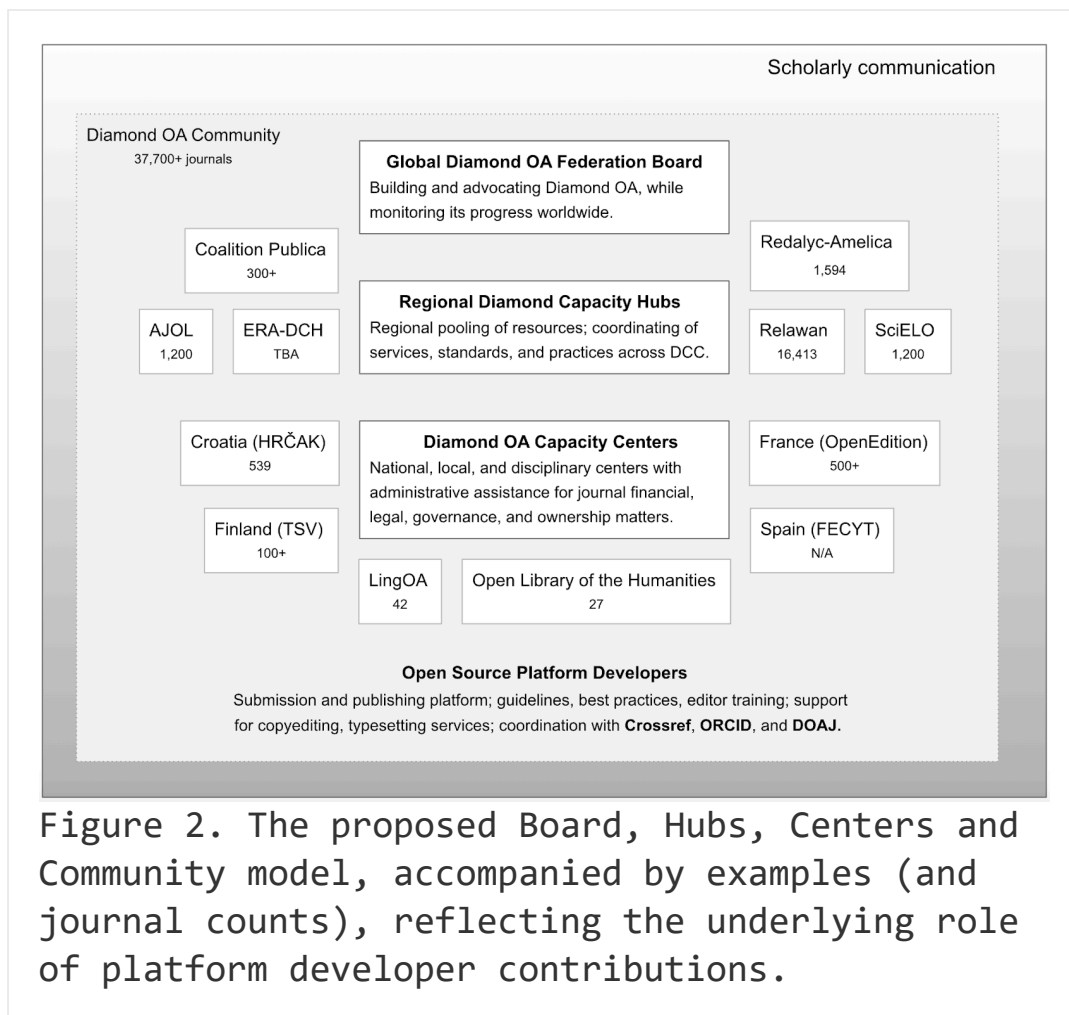


Figure 2. The proposed Board, Hubs, Centers and Community model, accompanied by examples (and journal counts), reflecting the underlying role of platform developer contributions.

Platform developers form a pervasive element across the global scale of Diamond OA, not only by providing the necessary technology for Centers and Hubs, from the local to the regional level, but by offering the same vital infrastructure and services to the vastly greater number of researchers and scholars initiating and contributing to journals through their institutions or on their own. Platform developers offer the federation a tangible and direct means of delivering Diamond OA developments, resources, and innovations to the whole community, including those who have found a home within a Capacity Hub or Center. As such, platform developers may well merit a place, along with the regional Hubs, on the GDP Board.

Discovery and Integrity

As a further and final example of how PKP's research capacity can serve the GDP's monitoring and advocacy mission, its researchers have been surfacing issues that could well benefit from the GDP Board's attention (thereby strengthening the case for creating such an organization). One of the studies cited above also identifies the profound under-representation of Diamond OA in the leading scholarly indexes. The Web of Science includes only 1.2% of the journals using OJS; EBSCO was at 3.4%; Scopus at 7.2%; DOAJ at

20.7%; and ROAD at 42.8% (which the Diamond study relied upon). This absence from such influential indexes is a concern, not because of journals missing out on Impact Factors or attracting career-conscious authors, but because such gaps in the scholarly record can threaten the quality and integrity of science as a whole. While one may want to object to the commercialization of research indexing, this gap in their coverage can still mean that researchers everywhere may be basing their work on an incomplete record of the studies relevant to their field. Such limits work, then, against the common purpose of researchers to advance the work in their field.

This lack of journal indexing among Diamond Open Access journals, it is worth pointing out, does not appear to be a research quality or integrity issue. For example, in a third study in this PKP series, less than 1.5% of the journals using OJS were found on the questionable lists of predatory journals established by Beall and maintained by Cabells. By the same token, there are no signs to date that these journals have been subject to the current blight of paper mill submissions, compromised peer reviews, and plagiarism instances that have compromised Wiley's Hindawi titles, with 8,000 retractions and counting (Retraction Watch). It is making research integrity the number one issue facing scholarly publishing today, at a time when one would have hoped that research, especially open access research, was offering a safe harbor in this Age of Misinformation.

This crisis amounts to another opportunity for a GDF Board to play a key leadership role in supporting a trustworthy global knowledge exchange that encompasses Diamond Open Access. The Board could look into ways of working with the indexing industry and platform developers to create the technical capacity needed to keep up with the growth of scholarly publishing in the Global South, so that the most frequently consulted indexes represent the whole of the scholarly record, while providing the quality checks in the process that researchers and the public can rely upon in using this literature.

All of this is to say that there is no question about the value of supporting and exploring Diamond OA for scholarly publishing. Mounier and Roorcyk are to be commended for bringing forward this capacity-building plan for further instantiating such a promising global approach to the circulation of research and scholarship in the digital era. It will take some doing to create a model reflecting hubs, centers, *and* platform providers, and much refinement to fit together all of the parts, but the promise more than merits the effort.

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