

# Community over Commercialization

by Britt Amell | 15 October 2024 | English, Insights and Signals Reports



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## At a Glance

Insights & Signals Topic Area	Open Access
Key Participants	International OA Week, OA Community (Broadly)
Timeframe	January to October 2024
Keywords or Key Themes	<a href="#">International OA Week</a> ; <a href="#">open access</a> ; <a href="#">scholarly communication</a>

## Summary

This insights and signals report focuses on engaging with this year’s theme for International Open Access Week, happening October 21<sup>st</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup>. Held every year since 2008, Open Access Week is a global celebration and promotion of free, immediate, and online access to research and scholarship. Individuals, groups, and organizations connect across disciplines, time-zones, continents, and sectors to advance understanding and advocacy regarding open scholarship.

[The Open Access Week Advisory Committee](#), in partnership with [SPARC](#), has decided to return to the theme from 2023, *Community over Commercialization*. This is the first time a theme has been re-used since OA Week began—a move the 2024 Open Access Week advisory committee describes as an “unprecedented” but necessary step, given the importance of this topic and the urgent need to turn collective conversation into “collective action” ([International Open Access Week](#)

2024).

This report discusses the theme for OA Week 2024, as well as a few notable events scheduled to run during OA Week. This report also includes an inexhaustive round-up of some developments in OA around the world. Developments mentioned include:

- Announcements from the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation](#), [Japan](#), [Canada](#), [Switzerland](#), and the [K.](#) regarding revisions to their respective open access policies / strategies
- The [Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information](#)
- Significant funding commitments for the development of open access research infrastructure from [Japan](#) and [Quebec](#)
- The [recently announced partnership](#) between PubScholar (a public academic platform built by the Chinese Academy of Sciences) and the Directory of Open Access Journals
- [10 years of support for equitable open access publishing](#) in Canada through the *Partnership for Open Access*, an initiative spearheaded by INKE partners [Canadian Research Knowledge Network](#) and [Érudit](#)
- Two reports released by [Invest in Open Infrastructure](#), one a [review of open science policy developments](#) across Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the United States, and the other, a report on [the state of open infrastructure in 2024](#)
- Another report, this one released by the Centre for Global Development (CGD) on [open access policy positions held by members of the G20](#)

## Community over Commercialization

This year's return to the theme of *Community over Commercialization* is apropos, amidst reports that for-profit scholarly publishers have seen increases in their profits for 2023—take, for instance, Elsevier's parent company, RELX, who reported a 10% increase in profits over 2023 (this roughly equates to about \$3,189,967,950.00 CDN). Elsevier accounts for 33.7% of RELX's revenues and 40.5% of its profits, writes Craig Nicholson in [this article for Research Professional News](#)).

This theme also connects to ongoing concerns around the world regarding a “rush to integrate artificial intelligence into commercial academic systems without community

consultation” ([International Open Access Week 2024](#)).

Underpinning the theme, *Community over Commercialization*, are questions about the consequences of for-profit organizations increasingly gaining control over the conditions of knowledge production and dissemination, as well as others that include the implications commercial business models might have for exacerbating inequity or undermining academic freedom ([International Open Access Week 2024](#)).

This theme and its related set of questions also align with the four high-level recommendations released by the Budapest Open Access Steering Group released on the 20<sup>th</sup> [anniversary of the Budapest Open Access Initiative](#). For reference, these recommendations are:

- Host open research on open infrastructure
- Reform research assessment practices and policies (and eliminate OA disincentives)
- Prioritize publishing and distribution channels that are inclusive and stop excluding authors on economic grounds
- Avoid concentrating new OA literature in commercial (for-profit) journals, and favour OA models that benefit all regions of the world.

([BOAI20 Steering Group 2022](#))

Several [events](#) are scheduled to happen around the world. Some examples include:

- 20 October 2024: Opening Keynote, given by Dr. Danny Kingsley (Deakin) on Community over commercialisation ([learn more here](#))
- 21 October 2024: Panel discussion on Diamond Open Access ([learn more here](#))
- 21 October 2024: Panel discussion on Community over Commercialization ([learn more here](#))
- 24 October 2024: Talk, given by Dr. David Gaertner (Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies, UBC), entitled “‘Stop Generating’: Generative AI in the Contexts of Indigenous Studies,” hosted by The University of British Columbia Vancouver and Okanagan Libraries ([learn more here](#))
- 23 October 2024: Talk given by Dr. Monica Granados, entitled “Handing you the keys to open access,” hosted by Toronto Metropolitan University Libraries ([learn more here](#))

A full list of [events can be found on the Open Access Week site](#).

## An Inexhaustive Round-up of Open Access Updates for 2024

Although 2023 may have been declared the [Year of Open Access by NASA](#) (along with a coalition of more than 85 US-based universities and 10 federal agencies), 2024 has been a busy year for open access. This section provides an inexhaustive round-up of updates, developments, and other news related to open access around the world and in Canada, organized by month.

**January** kicks off with the publication of an article in *Scientometrics* by Huang, Neylon, and Montgomery ([Open Access Research Outputs Receive More Diverse Citations](#)) that shows open access publications, particularly those that are made available outside of the publisher (e.g., via an institutional repository), are cited by more people around the world.

In **February**, Japan announced changes to its open access policy. As of April 2025, researchers who receive state funding will be required to make their research freely available via institutional repositories ([McKenna 2024](#)).

In **March**, the [Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced](#) their adoption of an open access policy that included a commitment to providing assistance for the development of open infrastructure, the requirement that grant recipients post preprints, and the discontinuation of support for article processing charges.

Also in **March**, [the Republic of Korea \(South Korea\) joined Horizon Europe](#), the EU's key funding program, which means that South Korean researchers who receive funding from the program will be required to publish research in OA ([McKenna 2023](#)). South Korea currently does not have a formal national OA policy ([Demeshko and Drake 2024](#)).

In **April**, the [Barcelona Declaration on Open Research Information was published](#) after an extensive collaboration process involving more than 25 experts. The Declaration set out four commitments:

- Make openness the default for the research information we use and produce

- Work with services and systems that support and enable open research information
- Support the sustainability of infrastructures for open research information
- Support collective action to accelerate the transition to openness of research information

More than 40 organizations add their names to the [list of signatories](#) before the end of April ([SPARC 2024](#)). The list continues to grow, however, outside of [Érudit](#) and [PKP](#), there is a notable absence of Canadian universities and other research organizations.

In May, Switzerland [released its revised National Open Access Strategy](#). Updates to the strategy include upholding commitments to ensuring that publishing in diamond OA is accessible for authors. Elsewhere, the United Kingdom announced updates to its open access policy, which now includes a requirement that monographs, book chapters, and edited collections in addition to peer-reviewed research articles ([UK Research and Innovation 2021](#); [UK Research and Innovation 2023](#)). Here in Canada, the Fonds de recherche du Québec announced the creation of [the Réseau québécois de recherche et de mutualisation pour les revues scientifiques](#), along with a significant funding commitment (\$10 million CDN over five years). A core aim of the Réseau will be to “‘support French-language scientific publication in the Quebec academic system’ by offering, among other things, ‘sustained support to help Quebec scientific journals’” establish a diamond open access publishing model (Bilodeau 2024).

In June, Japan announced the release of 63 million USD in funding earmarked for the development of the infrastructures needed to support its open access strategy ([Chawla 2024](#); [Open Access Network 2024](#)). A partnership between PubScholar (a public academic platform built by the Chinese Academy of Sciences) and the Directory of Open Access Journals was also announced in June (read the [English version here](#)). Elsewhere, Invest in Open Infrastructure released its [review of open science policy developments](#) across Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the United States. The survey builds on a report released earlier in the year on [the state of open infrastructure in 2024](#). Both reports offer overviews of recently implemented and upcoming open science policies or strategies across the continent of Africa (Sellanga et al. 2024, 5).



In July, UNESCO announced and introduced the Global Diamond Open Access Alliance (a recording of the announcement has been made available [here](#)).

In August, the three national research funding agencies in Canada **released a report summarizing the results of its open access policy review survey**. A total of 1431 individuals responded to the survey. Key insights included a notable support among participants for OA models that are low to no cost (such as diamond or green OA). Barriers to publishing open access included article processing charges, as well as limited infrastructure and incentives for scholarly journals to publish open access manuscripts.

In September, UNESCO, **NRF**, SPARC, **Redalyc** and **AmeliCA** **announced** a call for submissions to the *Second Edition of the Open Access Essay Competition*. The first edition of the competition, which was held in Latin America in 2020, received 68 manuscripts from undergraduate and graduate students located in 13 different countries. The topic for this year's competition is *Community over Commercialisation for Diamond Open Access*. Support will be provided for winners to attend the **Second Global Summit on Diamond Open Access in Cape Town**. Winning essays will be published in 2025.

In October, INKE Partners **Canadian Research Knowledge Network** (CRKN) and **Érudit** celebrate **10 years of support for equitable open access publishing** through its Partnership for Open Access (POA). Part of the diamond open access movement, the Partnership supports more than 240 non-commercial scholarly journals in Canada through the financial contributions jointly provided by an impressive number of university libraries both within Canada (54 to be exact) and around the world (39 across France and Belgium). Each year, it is estimated that the POA enables the publication of more than 2000 immediate open access articles (**Érudit**, n.d.). Claire Duncan, a Manager of Strategy and Engagement at CRKN, shared the following comment with us: "The 10 years of this partnership are a true expression of the innovative possibilities of prioritizing community-led open access. Through the POA, we are advancing access to crucial research content and championing bibliodiversity and sustainability in the Canadian research ecosystem. This community initiative engages libraries, journals, and infrastructure providers in a collaboration to realize an equitable, non-commercial, and robust Canadian OA publishing system. Our partnership supports community-owned journals with sustainable funding and ultimately helps them move towards a diamond open

access model where content is available open access and authors can publish open access without any fees.”

October also saw the [release of a report by the Centre for Global Development \(CGD\)](#) on the open access policy positions held by members of the G20. The analysis conducted by the CGD shows that most members have some form of open access policy or strategy in place ([access a summary of the main findings here](#)). Several countries including France, India, Mexico, and Turkey require immediate open access publishing, and other members (such as Canada, the EU, and Japan) are in the process of revising open access policies in favour of immediate OA. According to the CGD, included among G20 members who do not have formal national open access policies in place are South Africa, Russia, South Korea, Indonesia, Brazil, and the African Union ([Demeshko and Drake 2024](#)).

Lastly, October also saw the release of the [STM OA Dashboard for 2024](#). According to the Dashboard, 38% of all journal articles, reviews, and conference papers were published globally via gold open access – nearly triple the percentage of articles, reviews, and conference papers published globally via gold OA in 2013 (11%). Unfortunately, as STM notes in its methodology, an important limitation in its methodology is that it only counts bronze, gold, green, and subscription-only forms of access to publications. Platinum or diamond open access publications are included in the gold access category.

In December, the second [Global Summit on Diamond Open Access](#) will be hosted by the University of Cape Town. Conclusions from the first Global Summit on Diamond Open Access, [held in Toluca, Mexico](#), can be found [here](#). Several INKE partners attended the first Global Summit, including Érudit and PKP (read their [jointly written reflection on the experience here](#)). Érudit and PKP, both partners in the Canadian infrastructure project [Coalition Publica](#), were acknowledged last year at the Global Summit as playing important roles in nurturing and sustaining conversations regarding open access / open science.

*Looking ahead to 2025*, the 194 Member States of UNESCO will be expected to [submit](#) national reports on the [implementation of the 2021 UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#) by the end of February 2025. Reports will be used to determine the status of implementation efforts, as well as regional and global trends in open science. In addition, information policies and strategies related



to open science / open access will be gathered using the reports and incorporated into the [UNESCO Global Observatory of STI Policy Instruments](#). We also anticipate the release of a revised open access policy from the three national research funding agencies in Canada.

## Key Questions and Considerations

While 2024 has seen numerous successes in OA, many challenges remain. For instance, although a study of 420 million citations showed that open access publications were cited by more people around the world, notable North-South disparities also continue to prevail ([Huang, Neylon, and Montgomery 2024](#)). In an [explainer piece written for the Impact of Social Sciences Blog](#), Huang, Neylon, and Montgomery (2024) point out that researchers located in Northern Europe who published OA saw the largest increases in citation numbers, as well as the largest increase in the number of times their work was cited by researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa—but the same was not true in reverse.

As [Else \(2024\)](#) notes, access to open infrastructure plays a key role in the ability for researchers located in lower-income countries to make their work freely available. Often, the goal of this infrastructure is to return control over publication and dissemination to the community, says Kathleen Fitzpatrick in a keynote entitled “[Open Infrastructures for the Future of Knowledge Production](#)” delivered to attendees of the Implementing New Knowledge Environments gathering in Montreal [this past June](#), which focused on creative approaches to open social scholarship in Canada. However, these infrastructures frequently depend upon other infrastructures that are corporately owned and controlled (such as Amazon Web Services), which calls into question the longer-term sustainability of these infrastructures and systems (Fitzpatrick 2024). Indeed, these deeper questions about the broader scholarly publishing ecosystem, including how research impact is measured and defined, arguably will continue to be at the forefront of the fight for open access as we move into 2025 and beyond. Or, if they are not, they ought to be, because, as Susan Murray (African Journals OnLine) points out, “[without changing some of the more entrenched aspects of local research systems, the full benefits of open access for researchers in low-income countries might not be realised](#)” (Else, 2024).

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