



# Multilingualism in Open Access Scholarly Publishing

by Britt Amell | 29 September 2025 | English, Insights and Signals Reports



*Lisez-le **en français***

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## At a Glance / En un coup d'œil

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## Summary

This insights and signals report scans recent developments in multilingual open access publishing. Multilingual open access publishing is important to share culturally and societally relevant work with local audiences (Kulczycki et al., 2020) and to reduce the barriers for achieving a broader diversity of perspectives in scholarship (Suzina, 2021). Similarly, the [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#) cites language diversity as one of the guiding principles that open science should embrace.

This report discusses how multilingualism has been addressed in policies and scholarly communication initiatives in Canada and across the world. Items discussed in this observation include:

- An overview of policies and initiatives supporting multilingual publishing across the world

- A brief explanation of how the Canadian HSS Commons has translated its interface to support multilingualism

## Multilingualism and scholarly publishing in a global context

The lack of multilingual platforms and infrastructures to share and mobilize scholarship limits participation in digital knowledge creation and dissemination, and alienates scholars, students, and the public who are non-native English speakers (Viola, 2024). Therefore, it is important to develop research infrastructures that support the dissemination of knowledge in multiple languages, especially if there are policies in place that encourage publication in languages other than English.

Scholarly communication projects in Latin America and Africa have a long tradition of supporting multilingual publishing as part of open access initiatives. For example, **Scielo**, a digital library of Latin American open access journals established in Brazil, has an interface in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Similarly, the **Latin American Network for Open Science** (also known as LA Referencia) is a federation of repositories available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese that collects scientific articles and doctoral and master's theses from ten Latin American countries.

In Africa, the **AfricArXiv** website uses machine translation to translate parts of the site, with 17 languages available. AfricArXiv is a platform that publishes preprints by African researchers or by people whose research is relevant to the continent, and it accepts submissions in any of the more than 2,000 languages spoken in Africa (Asiedu, 2018). So far, the repository has received publications in or about **33 languages**.

Another important open access infrastructure that supports multilingual publishing is the **Open Journal Systems** (OJS) software developed by the Public Knowledge Project, which facilitates the publication of journals in multiple languages. There is also a **list of languages** in which the software is available, including information on how complete the translations are. According to a study by the Public Knowledge Project team, journals using OJS publish research in 60 languages. The study analyzed 22,561 journals and found that the most common language is English (used

in 49.7% of the journals), followed by Indonesian (23%), Spanish (11.4%), and Portuguese (9.8%). While the 10 most used languages in journals using OJS accounted for 97% of the titles, the language diversity in journals that use OJS is larger than in the journal selection of commercial databases, such as Scopus or Web of Science (Khanna et al., 2022).

In addition to the multiple versions of the OJS interface, some of the software documentation is translated by the community. For example, the guide for OJS administrators is available in **French**, the guide for upgrading from to the latest version of the software is available in **Spanish** and **Bahasa Indonesia**, and the guide for creating accessible content is available in **Portuguese**. Therefore, OJS is a piece of technology that not only enables and is used for publication in many languages, but it is also a multilingual-by-design infrastructure.

The importance of multilingual publishing has also been recognized in recent statements about scholarly communication, often coupled with support for bibliodiversity, which refers to the degree to which the scholarly communications industry can produce a broad range of publication outputs in terms of languages, publishing formats, and epistemological stances. In 2017, the **Jussieu Call for Open Science and Bibliodiversity** began by stating: “Open Access must be complemented by support for the diversity of those acting in scientific publishing – what we call bibliodiversity – putting an end to the dominance of a small number among us imposing their terms to scientific communities” (Jussieu Call Group, 2017). This call is available to read in English, German, French and Spanish, and was signed by institutions and organizations from 12 countries, including Canada.

In 2019, the **Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism in Scholarly Communication** (available in 45 languages) called for disseminating research results in multiple languages for the full benefit of society, protecting national infrastructures for publishing locally relevant research, and promoting language diversity in research assessment, evaluation, and funding systems.

Most recently in 2024, the **Toluca-Cape Town Declaration** not only affirmed that scholarly knowledge is a public good, but also that diamond open access should be driven by equity and inclusivity and foster diversity, decolonisation, and demarginalization. While language is not explicitly mentioned, it is implied in the goals for greater inclusion and diversity.

These global commitments offer an important backdrop against which we can foreground Canada's own bilingual research landscape. As a bilingual country, Canada has required multilingual research infrastructures that support English and French. For example, **Érudit** is a Canadian platform that supports English and French open access journals in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. In addition, the **Canadian Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Commons** has recently translated its interface to meet goals of providing a multilingual infrastructure that supports the dissemination of linguistically diverse open access research outputs. These efforts will be detailed in the following section.

## Supporting multilingual open access publishing on the HSS Common

As an initiative to develop a multilingual research infrastructure to support open scholarship, the Implementing New Knowledge Environments (INKE) Partnership is developing **the Canadian Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Commons**, a not-for-profit hub for open scholarship in Canada and beyond. It combines elements of social networking sites, collaborative tools, and institutional repositories so users can build profiles, share existing publications, create new publications with DOIs and Creative Commons licenses, start collaborative Groups and Projects to share files and communicate, and more.

The HSS Commons has worked with collaborators in Canada and abroad to translate its English interface to French, Spanish, Bangla, and Portuguese to make the site more accessible and useful for anyone who communicates and carries out research primarily in non-English languages. This work aligns with the emphasis the HSS Commons places on connection and open social scholarship. While scholarly communication initiatives and policies in Canada and internationally have recognized the value of multilingualism in research, the infrastructure used to access, search, and disseminate digital scholarship has mostly remained monolingual and designed for English-speakers, except for cases like those mentioned in the previous section.

At the HSS Commons, multilingualism is both an opportunity for working directly with linguistically diverse academic societies and research groups, and an imperative to facilitate, publish, and promote research in multiple languages.

## Key Questions and Considerations

While the importance of multilingual publishing is increasingly recognized in policy and in practice, it still faces some important challenges. First, authors are wary of reaching limited audiences if they do not publish in English, and they may perceive English-language journals as more relevant or prestigious (Arbuckle et al., 2024). While it is possible to use manual or machine translation to increase the language diversity of scholarly publications, it can be costly, labor intensive and slow (Arbuckle et al., 2024), and machine translation tools are mostly used to translate and publish texts into English rather than for finding or reading texts in other languages (Bowker et al., 2023).

Second, the estimates of multilingualism in open access publishing and scholarly publishing in general vary depending on the database. For example, 35% of journals indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) publish in two languages or more (del Rio Riande & Lujano Vilchis, 2024). Among articles indexed in the Dimensions database in 2023, 14.49% were published in languages other than English (Pradier et al., 2025). In OpenAlex, around 27% of articles were in languages other than English (Beigel, 2024). Among Latin American databases, 70.7% of articles indexed in Scielo were in Spanish or Portuguese, while 71.8% of articles indexed in LA Referencia were in Spanish or Portuguese (Beigel, 2024).

Third, an issue among languages that historically have been ignored by modern science, especially in Africa, is that many words commonly used in science have never been written in these languages (Wild, 2021). **Masakhane**, a grassroots African Natural Language Processing community has a project called **Decolonise Science** that is addressing this issue by building a multilingual parallel corpus of African research by translating preprints published in AfricArxiv into six local languages.

These examples show that multilingual open access publishing requires additional labor and resources than monolingual publishing in English. Even languages with a high number of speakers, such as French, face challenges for supporting multilingual

scholarly publishing. For example, Érudit's recommendations from the Quebec Symposium for Scholarly Journals highlighted issues such as the decline in the number of manuscripts submitted in French, the overvaluation of English-language publication in research assessment, and the difficulty of recruiting reviewers for articles written in French (Beth et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to be aware of the challenges of multilingual open access publishing to design policies and infrastructures that best support it.

## Response from the INKE Partnership

Lucia Céspedes (Research Counselor, Érudit):

This piece highlights an important point: that the development of the Canadian HSS Commons hub has been informed by current debates around multilingualism not only in traditional scholarly publications, but also in innovative knowledge-sharing open initiatives. The examples of infrastructures provided show that there is a growing consensus about the importance of multilingual science among academic communities worldwide. This consensus leads to the recognition that such communities should be empowered and sufficiently “infrastructured” in order to be able to flourish alongside the mainstream English-dominated circuits. Therefore, the acknowledgment of initiatives with decades of experience and trajectory as well as those emerging, new ones is timely and welcome.

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