



“Who owns our knowledge?”: Control, Creation, Recognition, and Access

by Britt Amell | 6 October 2025 | Community News, English, Observations, Observations and Responses

Who owns our knowledge? لمن تُنسب معارفنا ومفاتيحها؟
हमारे ज्ञान का स्वामित्व कसिका है? Кому належать наші знання?
Qui contrôle nos connaissances? 我々の知識は誰のものなのか?
¿A quien le pertenece nuestro conocimiento?



Lisez-le en français.

This observation was written by Brittany Amell, with thanks to INKE partner Lucia Céspedes (Research Advisor, Érudit) for contributing.

At a Glance / En un coup d'œil

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Summary

International Open Access Week 2025 (October 20-26) asks a critical question: “**Who owns our knowledge?**” This year’s theme challenges the scholarly community to examine not only who has access to research, but also how knowledge is created, shared, and valued. This report explores four key dimensions of the 2025 theme—control, creation, recognition, and access—while highlighting notable events and developments that illustrate how communities worldwide are working to ensure knowledge serves the common good rather than commercial interests.

“Who owns our knowledge?”: Control, Creation, Recognition, and Access

Echoing the theme for the **2024 Global Summit on Diamond Open Access**, as well as previous themes for OA Weeks such as ‘**Community over Commercialization**’ (2023 and 2024) and ‘**It Matters How We Open Knowledge: Building Structural Equity**’ (2021), the 2025 theme for OA week:

asks a pointed question about the present moment and how, in a time of disruption, communities can reassert **control** over the knowledge they produce. It also challenges us to reflect on not only who has **access** to education and research but on how knowledge is **created and shared**, where

it has come from, and whose voices are recognized and valued.

(“Theme,” OA Week 2025, emphasis added)

Control

The 2025 theme is timely. Recent collective action by editorial and academic communities seeks to reclaim control over scholarly publishing, such as the mass resignation of all 38 editors from Philosophy and Public Affairs (Wiley) in May 2024. Several of the editors went on to start *Free & Equal: A Journal of Ethics and Public Affairs*, a diamond open access journal. As the **statement** from the editorial board and committee members reads:

We take this step because we believe that scholarly journals — including our own — serve important purposes, and that these purposes are not well-served by commercial publishing.

For three decades now, academic journals have suffered from their ownership by for-profit publishers, who have exploited their monopoly position to sharply raise prices, unduly burdening subscribing libraries and shutting out other institutions and individuals from access to research.

The recent rise of the author-funded “open access” model has only reinforced academic inequality, since scholars with access to fewer resources are unable to pay the fees that make their work freely accessible; it has also incentivized commercial publishers to try to publish as many articles as possible and so to pressure rigorous journals to weaken or abandon their quality controls.

(Weinberg 2024)

Editorial boards continue to resign en masse such as those at the *Journal of Human Evolution and Mathematical Logic Quarterly*, citing concerns about commercial publishers prioritizing profit over academic standards (Flatow 2025; Kincaid 2025). As one resignation letter stated, these editors seek editorial environments “entirely free from pressure or influence of commercial and profit-oriented interests” (Kincaid 2025). According to The Retraction Watch’s **Mass Resignations List**, 14 editorial boards have resigned between 2024 and September 2025.

Creation

Knowledge creation in scholarly publishing remains constrained by systemic barriers that privilege certain voices over others.

While the UNESCO Recommendation for Open Science explicitly includes multilingualism as one of the facets of openness, as does the Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism, an “overwhelming dominance of the English language in contemporary academic discourse” continues to limit the participation of non-English speaking researchers (Kaliuzhna et al. 2025, 10).

Gender disparities also continue to persist, with some empirical studies suggesting that men researchers publish in open access journals more frequently than women, possibly due to “more cautious publication-choice investments” given career uncertainties on the part of women (Kaliuzhna et al. 2025, 17).

Geographic biases further constrain knowledge creation, as demonstrated by cases where “high-quality research by an African author on a pressing topic for the African continent was rejected by a Global North journal because reviewers and editors deemed the topic outside their scope of interest” (Kaliuzhna et al. 2025, 13; see also [Debat et al 2025](#)).

As INKE Partner Lucia Céspedes (Research Advisor, Érudit) notes, “it is imperative to mention the rising cost of APCs as one of the main barriers for full and equal participation in the collective social enterprise that is science. While the ‘author [or the author’s institution] pays’ model may have broadened the scope of readers, it has reduced the pool of authors, relegating under-resourced scholars to non-mainstream circuits of publications (which, while incredibly rich and diverse, do not enjoy the same visibility, recognition and prestige than high-impact, well-indexed journals do).

Additionally, artists and creative practitioners encounter difficulties navigating open access publishing systems, struggling with uncertainty about how their work fits within traditional academic frameworks and concerns about intellectual property protections in exhibition contexts (Kaliuzhna et al. 2025).

Thus, true openness involves not just the removal of paywalls; it also requires actively welcoming and supporting a full range of knowledges, creators, and outputs.

Indeed, community-owned, community-led, and non-commercial approaches to knowledge sharing called for by [the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#)

and **Toluca-Cape Town Declaration** offer a path forward, toward a future where individuals and communities own and benefit from their own knowledge (also: **Amell 2025**).

Recognition / Reconnaissance

Academic reward systems, “often imported from the Global North,” still favour publishing in high-impact, primarily Anglophone and Anglocentric journals, thus disincentivizing researchers who might otherwise engage with regional or community-focused open access publishing initiatives (Debat et al. 2025, 4). As Nokuthula Mchunu (deputy director for African Open Science Platform) notes:

For us in the Global South and in Africa, we want to have more control over the contribution that we make to the global body of knowledge. The current commercial publishing platforms control access and who contributes to the research ecosystem. This is also connected to how research is assessed. Imagine if we wake up tomorrow and universities say they will not assess research based on commercial publications metrics, then everybody contributes and the shape of that contribution will completely change. This is the change that we hope will drive research towards social impact.

(**International Open Access Week 2024**)

Challenging traditional recognition systems based on impact factors and citation metrics in favour of more inclusive approaches to research assessment remains important for other reasons as well. One example is the Latin American Forum for Research Assessment (FOLEC-CLACSO), which is focusing on developing “socio-territorial” metrics that assess scientific contributions based on community engagement, regional policy impact, and cultural relevance rather than traditional journal-based citation counts (**Debat et al. 2025**; see, also, a case study of FOLEC by the Declaration on Research Assessment group **at this link here**).

These emerging models align with global reform movements and offer alternatives that reward publications in diamond open-access journals and multilingual outputs (Debat et al. 2025).

Access

As “open access” is a significant term that carries many meanings and connotations

for scholars from different institutional, disciplinary and national backgrounds, our understanding and our practices of openness must integrate those differences through a genuine cross-cultural dialogue (Céspedes and Maggio 2024). Regions like Latin America, Africa, and Asia continue to lead community-centered approaches that prioritize multilingual, locally relevant scholarship. Initiatives such as SciELO, Redalyc, and African Journals Online demonstrate how diamond open access models—free to read and free to publish—can serve regional knowledge needs while maintaining global visibility (Debat et al. 2025). These efforts offer what Debat et al. (2025) describe as “a vision of publishing that is equitable, multilingual, and open” (1).

Closer to home in Canada, an examination by Simon van Bellen & Lucía Céspedes (2025) of Coalition Publica’s inventory of historic and active scholarly journals that make up Canada’s national research dissemination landscape (available openly via Borealis, [linked here](#)) has revealed that 61% of currently active journals (943 in total) are diamond open access. Impressively, 84% of Canadian journals established after 2015 are diamond open access.

In addition, the [Implementing New Knowledge Environments \(INKE\)](#) Partnership has been hard at work developing the [Canadian Humanities and Social Sciences \(HSS\) Commons](#) prototype as an example of what a not-for-profit hub for open scholarship in Canada and beyond could look like. The HSS Commons team 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. As Colin-Arce and Amell (2025) [note in their post for the OSPO](#):

At the HSS Commons, multilingualism is [viewed] 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.

The team hopes to add Polish and simplified Chinese over the course of 2025 and 2026.

International Open Access Week 2025: Get Involved

Open Access Week activities take place globally from October 20-26, but organizations are encouraged to host discussions and take action whenever it is most suitable. Communities can adapt the theme to their local context, focusing on specific conversations that are most meaningful to their constituencies.

Several **events** are scheduled to happen around the world, including many online. Some examples include:

- 20 October 2025: “Who owns our knowledge? Rethinking Publishing in a Scholar-Led World.” A virtual keynote, given by Dr. Juan Pablo Alperin (SFU). **Learn more by following this link:** <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/oaweek/2025/all/1/>.
- 21 October 2025: “Open for All: Advancing Inclusive and Sustainable Open Access Practices.” Virtual webinar organized by TCC Africa. **Learn more by clicking on this link:** https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fpeFwFXu8ykt-WWotCICU_KQHaLLMRg67C2Q4ebUB-M/edit?tab=t.0 .
- 23 October 2025: “We Are Enough: Practical Open Access for Everyone.” A panel discussion with Dr. Samuel Moore, Sarah Lamdan, and Peter Suber. **Learn more by clicking on this link:** https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Open%20Access%20Week%202025%20at%20the%20Penn%20State%20University%20Libraries/1_9xqb5c9t

A full list of **events can be found on the Open Access Week site.**

Graphics for this year’s theme, and more information about International Open Access Week 2025 can be found at www.openaccessweek.org.

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