

Open Access to Knowledge, a Universal Right: The Implications of the Governance of Open Access Ecosystems

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As part of the celebration of the International Day of Universal Access to Information (IDUAI) in Mexico, Bhanu Neupane from UNESCO met with Johan Rooryck, the representative of the funders of the Plan S; Erin McKiernan, the representative of DORA from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; Alain Basil, the representative from CLACSO; Gabriela Velásquez of UNESCO-Mexico; Iryna Kuchma from the Electronic Information for Libraries; Jean-Claude Guédon from University of Montreal; Leslie Chan from University of Toronto; Remedios Melero from the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas de España; Gabriel Vélez from the Universidad de Antioquia; and Guillermo Banzato and Cecilia Roseblum from Universidad de La Plata. This meeting was sponsored by UNESCO and was coordinated by Eduardo Aguado López and Adriana Becerril from Redalyc (Network of Scientific Journals of Latin America and the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal) and the editor of *Universitas Psychologica*, who is also a representative of AmeliCA.

This encounter was conclusive when referring to strategic governance as a means to fulfill the universal right to access knowledge and promotes a public science for Latin America with responsible metrics. To comply with open access systems, it was agreed that it is necessary to account for at least three central points:

In the first place, given the UNESCO's assertion that access to information is a universal right that guarantees human rights, it is understood that open access is an inevitable consequence of this statement. Therefore, those responsible for the governance of science in all countries should direct their policies in this direction. That is, all countries should be oriented to comply with this universal right (UNESCO, 2011).

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In the second place, it is necessary to explain, discuss, make transparent and transform the economic models that prevent the implementation of this human right. Moreover, since there is sufficient evidence that shows how open access is one of the conditions to reduce the inequality that produce exclusion and poverty (Dabla-Norris, Kochhar, Ricka, Suphaphiphat, & Tsounta, 2015; López-López, 2018; Seo et al., 2017).

Another aspect tightly linked to this problem is that it is unacceptable that the public cannot access to this knowledge with public funds, or even worse, that we have to pay to access knowledge and also to publish it. These so-called hybrid models are ethically, politically and economically unsustainable and unacceptable, as they produce rises in the research costs without justification and expand the gaps of social and economic inequalities. The effects of these models are even more harmful in countries with knowledge ecosystems with few resources and weak infrastructures since they deepen the asymmetries and institutional weaknesses vis-à-vis countries that have rich, consolidated systems and a long history of knowledge production (López-López, 2019b). On this sense, the negotiation models successfully implemented and tested through country consortia (rather than fragmented institutions), as it is the case of the Colombian model led by ASCUN, which is a precedent that could prepare us to face the so called transformational agreements promoted by the Plan S.

On the third place, the mechanisms for legitimizing the value to publications are technically based on poorly designed metrics such as the Impact Factor, the CiteScore, the SJR and the quartiles derived from them. There, in addition to being not so transparent, have clear and flagrant errors. For example, a quartile 1 journal with few citations compared with other journals that receive hundreds of citations that are quartile 4.

These indicators, in addition to being easily manipulated, often encourage corrupt practices in academic communities. However, perhaps the most perverse and detrimental

consequence has been that this measurement system controls the technocratic governance such as ministries and funding or research promotion entities in Latin American countries, such as Colciencias in Colombia, CONICYT in Chile, and CONACYT in México, among others (Guedeon, 2008). Unfortunately, public and private universities end up assuming these indicators without critical judgement and without measuring the devastating consequences for scientific production, such as, for example, that the allocation of incentives for research and researchers is tied to these metrics.

As López-López (2019a) and Flórez-Carranza (2018) had sufficiently supported, it is important to point out that those responsible for the governance of these institutions commit an immeasurable epistemological mistake by reducing the quality and impact of research to quantitative metrics that cannot give account of it, and can only represent some of those uses. Not to mention the little transparency with which they are produced.

Faced with these challenges, the international community has assumed the DORA declaration principles, which promotes the development of responsible and qualitative metrics focused on the article, as well as on its social, academic and technological appropriations. It is clear that the international dynamic (the European funding agencies and the European universities have already adopted it) is migrating to these new metrics and initiatives such the S Coalition that, in its principles, requires the affiliation if its members to this initiative. Surely, Latin America and the world will have no choice other than to migrate to new mixed and more qualitative metrics of the research results impacts, centered on the value of the article and research data. We are witnessing the death of journals quartiles as an assessment and resource allocation criteria for research.

This accelerated transition will be complex to adopt since the interests of the ecosystem actors are multiple and diverse (López-López, 2019b). The big editorial companies' magnates will have to rework their business models to change the core of their profits and,

surely, generate regulations that make them sustainable without resorting to usury; while the entities' governances technocracies responsible for science and technology, which are not always willing to adopt the costs of changing these processes, will be directly committed to the demand of doing it so. On the other hand, the interests and changes in practices of researchers, editors and librarians, who must assume changes in the evaluation processes with more demanding scrutiny and metrics, are also at stake. Finally, there are the interests of impacting societies, since they are the ultimate goal of the production of knowledge, which is to contribute to improving the quality of life of our communities and to ensuring respect for the universal right of access to information.

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