Partnering for Innovative Business Models for Open Access Publishing

Featuring

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- **Jamie Carmichael, CCC**
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KENNEALLY: Hello. I'm Christopher Kenneally with CCC. Welcome to Partnering for Innovative Business Models for Open Access Publishing. We're very happy you can join us.

It's been an exciting year for the Public Library of Science, known by researchers around the world as PLOS. In January 2021, the groundbreaking open access publisher embarked on an innovative effort to help distribute publishing costs equitably among the institutions who support them. Community action publishing aims to eliminate author APCs and make open access PLOS journals truly open to read and open to publish.

CCC is proud to have worked alongside PLOS to deliver a flexible, sophisticated workflow that enables authors to easily publish OA, whether they are funded under a formal PLOS publishing agreement or not. CCC's RightsLink for Scientific Communications supports the CAP model by automating the management, collection, and funding of manuscripts. In partnering with PLOS on this important initiative, CCC helps provide the scale and automation required to support the needs of a growing community of stakeholders.

As one of the world's leading open access publishers, PLOS has led the way for two decades in developing business models that make even its most selective open access journals truly open to read and open to publish.

Niamh O'Connor, chief publishing officer at PLOS, leads the publishing and partnerships team. Her focus is ensuring the PLOS portfolio includes the broadest range of researcher voices globally. This includes developing new business models to enable more equitable and regionally appropriate ways to support open access and open science. Niamh O'Connor holds a PhD in chemistry from the National University of Ireland. Welcome to the program, Niamh. And congratulations on the ALPSP award.

O'CONNOR: Thanks very much, Chris. It's really great to be here today and to have the chance to talk a little bit about what we're doing at PLOS and the background to the community action publishing model and the other things we're thinking about as we consider making publishing more equitable.

KENNEALLY: Joining us are two of my CCC colleagues who follow developments in open access closely and have helped to drive important advancements in the RightsLink platform, including the CAP model for PLOS. Jamie Carmichael is senior director, information and content solutions, with Copyright Clearance Center. She is responsible for the strategic direction of CCC's flagship open access platform, RightsLink for Scientific Communications, and she heads go-to-market efforts for new products and services across the scholarly publishing ecosystem. Welcome to the program, Jamie Carmichael.

CARMICHAEL: Thank you, Chris.

KENNEALLY: And Chuck Hemenway is director of business development for Copyright Clearance Center. He has been with CCC since 2002 and is responsible for helping publishers find efficiency through automation, technology, and market-wide collaboration. Chuck's primary focus is the market-wide adoption of the RightsLink platform and exploration of new efficiencies and revenue opportunities for publishers. Chuck Hemenway, welcome to you as well.

HEMENWAY: Good to be here. Thank you.

KENNEALLY: Jamie Carmichael, I think we want to start with you. You've got a question for Niamh about priorities.

CARMICHAEL: I do. Niamh, thank you for that. Clearly, launching CAP was a significant journey. Going back to your points around innovation and that the only forward is really through, what do you recommend are the top three priorities for publishers that want to change business model?

O'CONNOR: That's a really interesting question. I think one thing is to just be really open to considering that different really means different, so you've got to be prepared to step outside maybe what you're used to seeing every day and think of things in a different way, be quite creative.

I think one of the things that we've really learned and that Sara always emphasizes for us internally is absolutely make sure to talk to and listen to librarians and consortia members

as you're actually developing models. It's really important that we work in partnership and think about how that will actually work for the people that need to be able to work with us.

And to always keep the researcher top of mind – you know, we want to be in a situation where at the end of the day, somebody is coming with work that they have worked on and really put months of their thought into, and the last thing they want is to come at the point when they are about to submit their paper and find that that's an experience with a lot of friction attached to it. So always keeping that researcher experience top of mind is really important as well.

KENNEALLY: Thank you, Niamh. You think about the importance of researchers, and I know, Chuck Hemenway, one of the things that you think a lot about matters to researchers, it matters to funders, it matters to publishers of all sorts, is about data. That's what your question is for Niamh.

HEMENWAY: Yeah. Thanks for sharing your story with us, Niamh. I was curious – did the CAP model present any additional metadata demands that weren't imagined initially, and are there any advice that you'd like to give others that are considering changes in models?

O'CONNOR: Yeah, sure. The first thing I want to say is to reiterate a comment from Sara in the beginning, which is we really have to give a huge thanks and shout-out to Raym Crow at the Chain Bridge Group for the work that he did with us in modeling some of the options as we were developing CAP.

I think one of the things that we're seeing more and more is how important really good data are, and not just for the CAP model, but actually for all open access publishing. In a lot of cases, there's a real challenge there, because the way that our data are structured or the way that the data have been collected hasn't always been with a view to developing these kinds of models, and I think that's something that's pretty common across many publishers and also across many libraries and institutions. So I think there's a big kind of reverse engineering job to do there. That's not quite new metadata demands, but it's certainly being able to access metadata in a different way. Now is a real opportunity for us to think about what we need to be able to do into the future.

A really obvious example that comes to mind is being able to tell which funder actually paid for an APC or which funder actually covered the cost of publication. Where did that money actually come from? That's something that a lot of institutions are looking at as we transition to these models that are not just about individual researchers paying costs from research grants, but actually models that are paid through institutional budgets so that the

institution is able to access the money and understand where that cost would have been covered from in the past.

A second one that springs to mind is really around data. I think it's increasingly top of mind for a lot of institutions to be able to know whether the researchers at their institutions are depositing the data associated with their article. Of course, at PLOS for a long time, we've had a policy around open and fair data, and we're seeing some library consortia and institutions also ask us to be able to share information back just around things like which articles have data availability statements attached to them, where they might be able to access that, so that they are able to track those institutional policies about data sharing.

KENNEALLY: Our program today is about partnering for innovative business models for open access publishing. Jamie Carmichael, I know you want to explore the idea of the positive role that partners can play in working with publishers.

CARMICHAEL: I do. So with creating shared value top of mind for publishers and other infrastructure providers, what can market partners do to be helpful in such a major transition for a publisher? Any advice?

O'CONNOR: I think something we've given quite a lot of thought to at PLOS is where we as a publisher add most value. I think that's one of the reasons that we see partnering as something that's hugely important to us. We very much don't want to be in the mode of we have to build everything ourselves. And I think really, being able to partner with a partner who is expert of their part of the process and their part of the system is the thing that's really valuable for us.

Something that I've noticed over all my years of experience of partnering is it really, really matters that the partner understand the ecosystem – that they understand scholarly publishing and really understand how that works. That's something that I've always experienced in working with CCC and that I think is part of what makes that partnering hugely valuable, where as a team, we can be stronger than either of us would be independently.

KENNEALLY: Thank you for that, Niamh O'Connor. One of the aspects of these agreements, of course, is they are agreements, and agreements come to an end. So there's a constant negotiating cycle. You have to think about how to implement an agreement, but also to the next cycle and where you'll be headed next. Chuck, that's the basis for your own question.

HEMENWAY: So, Niamh, let me ask a two-part question regarding renewals and negotiations – (a) what's top of mind as you head into the first round of renewals, and (b) has there been any concern raised about the fact that this type of model doesn't classically exist in the

budget anywhere as a line item? It's not a subscription, per se. Has that raised any concerns that you've had to deal with?

O'CONNOR: Sure. So the first question is what's top of mind? One of the things that's really top of mind for us is being able to show value to our members. I think that's because within the community action, we have members within that, and that's really important. I would say that's something that's true for any of our institutional business models – that we really need to be able to show an institution, where they have decided to partner with us, that that was something that their researchers found valuable, that that's something where they are actually getting that good return on investment. Because of course, many institutions do this with a real kind of mission-driven imperative, but we also recognize that at the end of the day, all of us need to be able to show the value of the choices we're making, because budgets are always restricted.

So that's something that's really important for us and actually comes back a little bit to what you were asking about in an earlier question, because it's really important to have good data to be able to show that, to actually be able to show where authors are based that they have been at that institution, and again, to show relative to historical publications where that would have been paid from in the past and whether it's helping authors that they now are not having to pay a fee before they are able to publish and that removing that is actually giving them that wider choice.

In terms of the concern about models like this not appearing in the budget, in many ways, yes. And I think what we've been really struck by is how much goodwill there is out there and how much institutions and libraries really do want to support this transition to open. Our very first agreement, which wasn't part of CAP, but with the California Digital Library, was really a fantastic move for them to show their support for fully open access publishing and to make budget available for that. And we've seen that across all of the institutions that are partnering with us, where they are making choices to actually make institutional money available to make this work and to make this kind of publishing possible for their researchers without experiencing that author-side payment.

So it does continue to be a challenge, and it's something that when we are in conversation particularly with funders and with perhaps institutional leaders and people who are making those choices about how to fund research and how to fund publishing that we really want to make sure that these kind of models are possible and that we don't get too stuck in a status quo model that stops us moving to something that actually offers better value, more inclusion, and really works better for being able to speed up that discovery process.

KENNEALLY: CAP is one model among many. Jamie Carmichael, I think you've been watching a development here where there's competition among a variety of models. That's what you want to ask Niamh about.

CARMICHAEL: Yeah, I think it comes down to publishers really looking to experiment and commit to a sustainable transition. You mentioned that sustainability is a key concern for publishers. If you were to take out your crystal ball, do you see a variety of business models continuing to flourish, or will one maybe dominate the landscape in the future?

O'CONNOR: I think that's a really interesting question, and I think with my crystal ball, I'd be really surprised if everything transitioned to one model, certainly any time soon. I think one of the things that we're really clear about at PLOS is that community action publishing is something we've developed really specifically for selective journals. I'm not sure that's something that will expand easily to journals that are perhaps less selective or work in a slightly different way. And one of the reasons that we're experimenting with different models is to really allow those different needs for different communities, for different researchers, for different libraries and consortia to be available and to be able to run those different experiments so that we can work out what variety of models might work well to support journals of different types.

I think one of the things that I would really like to see is for us to continue to see that not every researcher needs the same thing when they come to share their research. Not everyone needs the same thing when they come to discover research that others have done. So we have to be able to have something that's flexible and that really works to meet those different needs. I think there is a really interesting period of experimentation coming, or at least I really hope there is.

KENNEALLY: Niamh O'Connor, I want to ask the last question in this session, which is about the researchers, because I know you really emphasize the importance of researchers in everything you do at PLOS. That's the focus of this work and why, indeed, you developed the community action publishing model.

I guess I want to ask you about something related to that, which has been a growing concern across publishing, and that is around the equities, the imbalances that have arisen in a variety of ways for open access publishing, particularly among researchers in marginalized communities and geographies. How do you feel CAP and other work that you're doing addresses that challenge of inequities?

O'CONNOR: I think that's something that's really central to the way that we are thinking about the transition to open science, influenced by thoughts of other people and people's

publications. I think it's really important that we are being very intentional about wanting to take an anticolonial approach to this transition to open science.

So one of the things that we are doing – separate from our business models, but towards the same goal – is to really expand our presence so that the members of PLOS staff who are working with research communities understand the context and culture and the experience that those researchers have and are much closer to them and that we're not just coming at this all from being somewhere else and not truly understanding what that experience is.

Like I mentioned, I think our partnership with TCC Africa is a really good example of that. Joy Owango is such an impressive person, and being able to partner and really work with her and her colleagues to be able to create that network and understand the needs of researchers working in both Nairobi, but then kind of through other locations in Africa – I think that's something that's really important to us.

On the business model side, I think this is really where we see the value of working and moving beyond the APC. Our community action publishing program is very much focused on our selective journals, but we also have a flat fee model that works for the journals that we have that do have APCs, which allows institutions to really know how much they're paying and to be able to keep better control of their budget. And our new global equity model which we have for some of our new journals, which takes into account not only how likely institutions or researchers at institutions are to publish in particular journals, but also the World Bank lending class of that country, so it's tiered according to regional economic conditions – our intention there is to allow people to be able to participate, to be part of covering costs for their researchers, but to be able to do that at a level that's actually sustainable and affordable for them as well as being sustainable for PLOS. So I think that is something that we are really working hard on and trying to make sure that we make that transition in a way that enables open science practice for researchers in a way that is appropriate to their situation.

KENNEALLY: Well, a really informative and enlightening discussion. I want to thank the participants for joining me today. Niamh O'Connor, chief publishing officer with PLOS, thank you so much, and congratulations again on winning the ALPSP Innovation Award.

O'CONNOR: Thanks very much, Chris.

KENNEALLY: I also want to thank my CCC colleagues. Jamie Carmichael, senior director of information and content solutions at CCC, thank you.

CARMICHAEL: Thank you, Chris.

KENNEALLY: And Chuck Hemenway, director of business development, thank you as well.

HEMENWAY: Thank you. And congrats, Niamh.

O'CONNOR: Thank you.

KENNEALLY: And I'm Chris Kenneally with CCC.

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