Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia Vol. 19, No. 1: 1-7
DOI: 10.17477/jcea.2020.19.1.001

Editorial Note: Open Access and the Acceptance of the JCEA to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

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The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic once again demonstrated how crucial it is to have unlimited access to scientific information. At the same time, the economic disparities that the pandemic revealed and aggravated made us realize that many of us cannot afford access to expert knowledge. While the international community is speculating about possible outcomes of the crisis, one can be said for sure, the pandemic accelerated many inevitable changes that would otherwise happen at a slower pace including increasing digitalization of the society and the expanding role of open data in the life of the academic community.

Discussion on Open Access

The purpose of this editorial note is to acknowledge the acceptance of the JCEA to the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Before describing the benefits of this fact for our readership, authors and editorial board we would like to start with a brief discussion on open access (OA). Peter Suber (2012), one of the leading voices in the OA movement, defines OA literature as "barrier-free" literature that is "digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions". This definition implies that many people in and outside of academia can use digital content and this usage can be limited only by their imagination and the advancements of technological progress. Suber (2012) argues that OA benefits everyone, including "researchers as readers" who build their work on the research that has been done before them and always need

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access to numerous and diverse sources. OA benefits "researchers as authors" by increasing visibility of their work that can be cited, questioned, applied and used to create new knowledge. OA can benefit nonresearchers, including research and development-intensive businesses, both governmental and nongovernmental bodies, and volunteer sector by enhancing policies, stimulating regional and global economies and accelerating innovation (Tennant et al., 2016).

According to Suber (2012), there are two major types of OA: *gold OA* is the publication of papers in OA journals and *green OA* which allows authors to self-archive pre-print or post-print versions of their papers, that were initially published in subscription journals, on authors` webpages or in institutional repositories. Rodrigues et al. (2016) also distinguish *hybrid OA* that refers to journals with paid subscribed access that allow authors to make their article open access for extra fee; and *promotional OA* that refers to journals with paid subscribed access that allow free access to certain papers or entire issues for a limited period of time. Barriers to the knowledge that OA eliminates include price barriers resulting in *gratis OA*, and permission barriers, or *libre OA* (Suber, 2012).

From the dawn of scientific publishing in 1664, when the first scientific journals called *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society of London and the *Journal des Sçavans* were launched (Fyfe, 2015; Larivière et al., 2015), the major purpose of academic publishing has been the promotion of free knowledge dissemination. As an "institution of organized criticism" (Schiltz, 2018) science is only possible if scientific results are widely and openly discussed and scrutinized by others. However, Himmelstein et al. (2018) argue that academic publishing is in crisis due to the fact that currently three-quarters of academic literature is hidden behind the paywalls imposed by toll-access journals. Price barriers for academic research were created by publishers although authors are not being paid for their job and are often funded by their institutions or other funding agencies that use public money. This implies that the results of their research should become a public good. Furthermore, peer-reviewers that ensure academic rigor, novelty and consistency of authors` work are not being paid either being funded by the institutions they are affiliated with (Suber, 2012). Despite the fact that all key players in the review process are doing their job for free, most of them, along with institutions sponsoring them and taxpayers in general are being withheld from access to the considerate amount of scientific research results. The urgent need for gratis OA led to the "Cost of Knowledge" campaign started by Cambridge mathematician Timothy Gowers in 2012. The campaign urged researchers to protest against Elsevier's business model by refraining to submit to and referee its journals.

Another evidence of the academic publishing crisis is the paper discussing "pirate OA as electronic civil disobedience" against paywalls erected by publishing houses (James, 2020). By being published in 2020 it proves that despite the technological advances being possible in the 21st

century, the universal academic OA is still work in progress. Pirate OA is illegal access to scientific literature concealed behind paywalls of toll-access publishers (James, 2020). According to Fyfe et al., (2017) the major pirate OA platform, Sci-Hub, provides free access to more than 50 million scientific journal articles at the click of a mouse thus covering 85.1% of toll-access journals (Himmelstein et al., 2018).

Paywalls erected by toll-access publishing houses are considered to be one of the major obstacles that hamper scientific progress and increase access gap since the price of journal subscriptions has been growing at a faster rate than inflation and is now affordable to a limited number of the world wealthiest universities (Himmelstein et al., 2018). Therefore, many pirate OA users are from low and middle-income countries with poor institutional access to academic literature. These countries include Iran, Tunisia, Greece, and Russia (Greshake, 2017). However, after analyzing a dataset of Sci-Hub access logs, Bohannon (2016) concludes that the most intense use of Sci-Hub is registered in the countries with the best journal access - the US and Western European countries. "Who's downloading pirated papers? Everyone" concludes Bohannon (2016), pointing at the fact that Sci-Hub allows better user experience saving time for researchers who are accessing papers for data-mining purposes.

Since pirate OA is a grey area that is being questioned by many researchers for copyright violations, OA repositories as the DOAJ are one of the licit examples of user-friendly databases that not only allow gratis OA but through the selection process ensure the least restrictive type of libre OA. The DOAJ was launched in 2003 at Lund University, Sweden, with 300 open access journals. Today, the independent database contains 15,037 gold OA journals from 133 countries covering all areas of science, technology, medicine, social sciences and humanities as of July 2020. Unlike other curated abstract and citation databases (Scopus, Web of Science, etc.) that are subscription-based and use selective approach to document indexing that includes metrical scorecard and/or scientific peer review, the DOAJ is a community-curated list of open access journals that allows free use of its metadata and aims at eliminating all access barriers to quality research including registration barriers, time limitations (i.e. embargo periods) or publication charges.

Transition to Open Access and Plan S

Science Europe formulated principles for the transition to Open Access in 2013, however, wider overall progress toward OA to scientific publications has been slow. In 2016, the EU Ministers of science and innovation, assembled in the Competitiveness Council, proposed that all European scientific publications should be accessible by 2020. As a result, Plan S was launched in September 2018 aiming to accelerate a transition to full and immediate OA. In addition, cOAlition S funders

(a group of national research funders, European and international organisations and charitable foundations) have agreed to implement the 10 principles of Plan S[2] in a coordinated way, together with the European Commission and the European Research Council (ERC). The initiative started with eleven funders and now consists of 24 European and international funders. COAlition S funders require that access to research publications, supported by research grants that they allocate, be fully and immediately open and cannot be monetised in any way. There is a correlation between a greater rate of Plan S funding and a greater likelihood of publication in a DOAJ-listed journal. Plan S compliance implies that papers must be published in DOAJ-listed journals. Consequently, existing journals would either have to change their content to become fully OA or Plan S papers would be redirected to journals that are DOAJ-listed (Quaderi et al., 2019). In the recent tender document[3] published by cOAlition S for the development of a Journal Checker Tool (JCT), it is specified that the DOAJ should be utilized as a source of data for the gold OA journal compliance route (DOAJ, 2020[4]).

The Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia has been accepted into the DOAJ in February 2020 which means that all our journal's metadata has been uploaded to the DOAJ. This will increase the visibility of our content since the DOAJ has more than 900 000 page views and 300 000 visitors a month from all over the world. Many major aggregators, research databases (Scopus, EBSCO, etc.), university library portals and publishers collect DOAJ free metadata and incorporate it into their products which might help to increase JCEA`s impact. Furthermore, the DOAJ is OAI and OpenURL compliant and all articles uploaded to the DOAJ are automatically harvestable and linkable, which has a potential to expand our journal`s distribution and usage.

The DOAJ is frequently referred to as a source of quality of open access journals in scholarly publishing circles. As a result, for the JCEA, acceptance into the DOAJ could mean the inclusion into wider information networks between researchers around the world, the so-called “new invisible college” (Wagner, 2008; Park, 2020). More specifically, with the effect of Plan S from 2021, researchers funded by the cOAlition S funders will need to refer to the DOAJ-listed journals for their publication options and the JCEA has now become one of them. Thus, being listed in the DOAJ opens up possibilities for JCEA authors to reach a wider audience and make new connections between regional borders while allowing knowledge accumulated about the East Asian region to broaden its societal impact and to be used in unexpected and creative ways.

[2] https://www.coalition-s.org/addendum-to-the-coalition-s-guidance-on-the-implementation-of-plan-s/principles-and-implementation/
[3] https://www.coalition-s.org/wp-content/uploads/ITT_vf_07022020.pdf
[4] https://blog.doaj.org/tag/plan-s/

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Appendix

Number of Journals listed in DOAJ from Asian Country (as of 29th, May, 2020)

Country	Total
Armenia	3
Azerbaijan	2
Bahrain	1
Bangladesh	20
China	121
Cyprus	2
Georgia	2
India	290
Indonesia	1,654
Iran, Islamic Republic of	550
Iraq	52
Israel	2
Japan	36
Jordan	4
Kazakhstan	4
Korea, Republic of	128
Kuwait	1
Kyrgyzstan	3
Lebanon	1
Malaysia	71
Mongolia	4
Nepal	20
Oman	7
Pakistan	59
Palestine, State of	1
Philippines	11
Qatar	4
Russian Federation	404
Saudi Arabia	15
Singapore	17
Sri Lanka	16
Taiwan, Province of China	32
Thailand	31
Turkey	413
Turkmenistan	1

United Arab Emirates	10
Viet Nam	2
Yemen	6
Total	**4000**

Country list taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Asian_countries_by_area