


# Claire Redhead: The argument for open access to all scholarship has never been more relevant

 [openinterview.org/2022/04/07/claire-redhead-the-argument-for-oa-to-all-scholarship-has-never-been-more-relevant/](https://openinterview.org/2022/04/07/claire-redhead-the-argument-for-oa-to-all-scholarship-has-never-been-more-relevant/)

Open Interview

April 7, 2022

***Claire Redhead*** is one of the leading international open access advocates. She is heading Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA) as its Executive Director. Prior to this, she was a Membership and Communications Manager at OASPA and worked for over two decades in academic publishing. With such a rich experience, her leadership role in the growing open access movement has been acknowledged as key to the rapid growth and expansion of open access throughout the global scholarly community.



In this interview for Open Interview with Santosh C. Hulagabali, Redhead talks exclusively on the recent trends and developments in global open access movement. She shares her humble beginning in publishing and open access fields and also her insights in further building OASPA for achieving its cause. She candidly shares her thoughts on some significant key changes, developments and indicators in open access publishing practices in the light of her experiments and professional practices at OASPA.

**You have a successful professional background in scholarly publishing. What major trends and developments do you notice in the scholarly publishing globally?**

I have spent over 20 years working in publishing and for the past 10 years have been focussed on open access (OA). When I started working for OASPA, it was a small organisation and our time was spent working to establish a reputation for open access – OASPA has strict criteria for members which were developed both to show that OA publishing had high standards and is as good quality as any other type of publishing, and also to make sure that OASPA represented only the best organisations. By really thorough vetting of publisher transparency, processes and activities, we helped to distinguish our members from predatory publishers which were starting to emerge at the time.

Fast forward a decade and OA is a widely accepted model. Many publishers are offering some kind of OA option and there are a wealth of new and innovative models being developed. Just as importantly, every institution has an interest in OA now in some way,

whether that be discussing their own internal policies and requirements for researchers, supporting researchers with information to navigate the publishing process, making sure OA mandates are observed, or even offering their own publishing or hosting services. It has added a lot of complexity to OA discussions to have so many views and perspectives, but at the same time it is really a great indicator of just how far OA publishing has come.

Some forward-thinking funders, such as the [Wellcome Trust](#), had already developed progressive OA policies, but in the last few years we have seen greater coordination among funders, such as [cOAlition S](#). This is leading to more OA content, even if it isn't necessarily making any significant change to *where* that content is published. And we are seeing much broader discussions on open science, with [UNESCO's Recommendation](#) at the end of last year being a big step forward. To have almost 200-member states coordinate and agree a starting point to adopt a common approach to open science is a real milestone, and OA is an important component of open science.

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**OASPA periodically surveys its members about their publication output. Interestingly, there is a continued increase in OA articles published by OASPA members and CC-BY in fully OA journals continues to dominate output. How significant this development to OASPA and the OA domain? What reasons do you attribute to such a positive development?**

Again, back in my early days with OASPA, there was a lot of debate about the CC-BY license – there still is! – but OASPA was committed to this being the recommended license for members. In line with the original [BOAI declaration](#), OASPA's definition of OA has always been for content to allow reuse as widely as possible. About 75% of our members are only publishing fully OA content and the majority are exclusively using CC-BY license.

We started collecting [the data you mention](#) originally to provide evidence that our members were publishing plenty of CC-BY articles and generally there were no terrible consequences to allowing that unrestricted access and reuse. What we found as well is that it was a really powerful visual statement of both the success of OA publishing and the growth of output by OASPA members year-on-year, and so we have been collecting it ever since. We make the dataset openly available and I know people also find that really useful because the figures come directly from publishers – reliable data on OA has typically been hard to come by. We have now started collecting and sharing OA book publication data from our members as well.

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**The survey results also indicate that there is a gradual growth of CC-BY licensed articles in hybrid journals too. What does this signify or indicate?**

A few years ago, I started asking for data on all OA content, not just fully OA journals, and I noticed that hybrid publications were increasing so it has been interesting to include those figures as well. Hybrid OA is not growing as fast as fully OA for our members, and it

is not really OASPA's primary area of interest (you can't be an OASPA member if you only publish OA in hybrid journals) but it is still interesting to see the change in licenses over time. It is generally more expensive to publish in a hybrid journal and many see it as a transitional phase of OA, but the reason we are seeing growth is because of authors who want to publish in their regular venues and those journals are not yet fully OA. Some funders won't cover APCs (Article Processing Charges) in hybrid journals, but at the moment those funders only account for a very small proportion of articles – it is not enough to tip the balance yet.

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**In view of the present status, what would be the future trends of other CC licences and CC licences as a whole?**

There is still a lot of caution from publishers that are new to come on board with OA, which is understandable – they may have been more hesitant about it in general or have had more difficulty transitioning over. With the arts, humanities and social sciences – there are difficulties with including third party content and also genuine concerns about other publishers repackaging OA content for sale. I think it is important that OASPA keeps assessing the landscape, listening to concerns and experiences with licensing, and reviewing our criteria – something which we did extensively last year. Although there are some examples of this kind of misuse and it absolutely should be taken seriously, cases do seem to be few and far between and, again, our published data shows that there is a large volume of OA content published across all disciplines and geographies with no associated problems for the authors or publishers. It is important that there is support available for publishers though when problems do arise.

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**In the academics and research, will the copyright regime gradually lose its relevance (if not fully but to some extent) when there will be an increased awareness and use of open licenses?**

One of the best things about the CC licenses is the clarity and certainty they bring to use and reuse of scholarship. They are well understood and internationally recognised. I hope OASPA can help to provide the evidence and reassurance that it is safe to publish openly licensed content and that we'll see the use of these licenses, as well as publishers allowing authors to retain copyright of their work, continue to grow. We find during our application process that it can still be an area that is difficult to navigate for small publishers in terms of what license to choose and how to apply that to published material, but we provide support for them and are working on ways to make that guidance more widely available for small and under-resourced publishers.

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**With your professional engagement for over two decades in academic publishing, building up editorial and management experience, how do you view the changing business models in OA journals?**

The diversity of models and approaches to OA publishing is really important – it is important to OASPA and it is important for scholarly communication more generally. Making OA a reality is challenging and we need a broad spectrum of options to allow us to keep on forging that path. We need models to suit all disciplines and outputs, and we need models that support participation in open scholarship in all regions of the world – we are not there yet and so it is critical that experimentation and innovation continues, even if it can feel like it makes things more confusing at times.

The COVID-19 pandemic has focussed attention on the real need for OA to content, to rapid dissemination of trusted research and to collaboration and sharing across disciplines and between nations. We have seen a rising interest in preprints and experimentation in applying review to that process.

In recent years, as OA has become more prevalent, there has also been an increased awareness of the existing inequities that these new models are in danger of reinforcing. Publishing has a cost and moving away from subscriptions moves that cost elsewhere – those that couldn't access the literature face not being able to contribute to the literature. There is an increasing interest in so called 'diamond open access' – models for immediate OA with no fees to publish – and also there is a growing vocalisation of the need to move away from APCs or 'read and publish' deals, articulated in the [BOAI 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary statement](#), for example.

Publishing does have a cost as I said, particularly if you want it done well, but it is important to keep those costs reasonable and distributed in an equitable way. There is a real challenge in the sustainability of new OA publishing models that are trying to avoid publication fees because they are not yet widely and strategically supported financially, the same is true for the OA infrastructures and services that the community rely on. Models such as 'Subscribe to Open' are in the same situation.

All of these efforts I have mentioned require those that pay to make a commitment that goes beyond their own needs and extends support for the benefit of others in the scholarly community. I can fully appreciate that in such economically hard times as we are experiencing now globally, when budgets are severely restricted, those kinds of gestures for the public good become more and more difficult to justify and to sustain. But more libraries are starting to actively support different approaches to OA publishing via collective funding models, for example, and there are some particularly interesting things happening with OA books, so I hope that in the long term, the values and original motivations of open scholarship will prevail.

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**In today's OA movement/domain, what best things and key challenges do you list out? How to sustain the best things and mitigate the key challenges?**

The best developments for me at OASPA, leading this organisation on its [mission](#) to make OA the predominant model of publication, is this ever-increasing awareness and discussion of OA. There is far greater support than there was, and a far greater diversity of approaches which are all leading to more open content every year. Open

infrastructures are also crucially important and are starting to get the attention they deserve, more transparency is being called for which will only be a good thing, and there is a huge amount of experimentation and innovation taking place. All of this is really wonderful progress.

What we have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic is publishers making more content openly available, faster sharing of results in particular via preprints, and also adaptability of the peer review process. I spoke about this last year at the [2nd United Nations Global Conference on Open Science](#) and there is a brief written summary from me [here](#) (pages 58-59). It is shown that these things *are* possible, and change can happen very quickly, but financing it sustainably is difficult and really ties into many of the things I have already covered in my comments in this interview. As the [United Nations](#) has laid out with the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), there are an array of challenges which humanity is dealing with. Countries need to work together more than ever before and that needs to be supported by access to reliable research and data in all topics and disciplines – the argument for OA to all scholarship has never been more relevant.

The challenges in achieving this are significant. Aside from the financial complexity we are grappling with, there are an enormous amount of research outputs and if we are to maximise the benefit of them then we need those outputs to be discoverable and to be as useful as possible. I am sure your readers are familiar with the [FAIR principles for data](#) – Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable – and really those principles should be applied wherever possible, supported by good metadata. We need to guide researchers and institutions through the landscape of different models and we need to make sure that as we progress on our journey to open we address the inequities in global scholarship so that we continue to co-create something better and fairer than what we have spent our time and energy transitioning away from.

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**OASPA collaborates with the Committee on Publication Ethics, DOAJ and the World Association of Medical Editors to define the principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing. Is academic/research world more seriously required to adhere to the ethical principles and standards now-a-days than ever before?**

We first collaborated to produce those [Principles](#) in 2013 and our organisations are just in the process of a third review and update. We all interact with a lot of small publishing operations and felt that between us, we have a wealth of experience to share on what we see as best practices to follow and things small publishers can easily attend to. You do not have to be a big publisher to be producing excellent content! It continues to be a well-used resource.

I think there is certainly an increased pressure for publishing to be more transparent – at OASPA our [membership criteria](#) are essentially all about transparency. We are not prescriptive about models or pricing, but we do expect our members to be clear about

what they do, if they charge and what they charge for, and how their processes work. Researchers, institutions and funders are right to demand more clarity on what services they are paying for and where their money is going.

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### **Plan S is high on the agenda in the deliberations of academic research and scholarly publishing. Your take on this?**

Plan S rippled out well beyond the funded research it actually covers – it definitely got people’s attention! Importantly, it has been a catalyst for some publishers to get serious about OA. I am not sure all of the outcomes so far are ideal for the long term in my view, but it is what it is. One thing that can’t be denied is that it has really catapulted the discussions about OA forward and as a result, it has been an interesting few years watching that space develop.

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### **Your impressions about OA developments in India?**

I spend as much time as I can learning about OA globally and how things work in different regions and I am always impressed by the thoughtful engagement on OA in India, as well as the articulation of the challenges faced.

Aside from my own interest, OASPA runs a series of webinars which are free to join, and we host an annual conference which will be held online – we would be happy to welcome anyone from the OA community in India to participate in our ongoing discussions about developments in OA and open scholarship and share perspectives, or indeed to hear from OA publishers in India who are interested in joining our community.

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**Note**· *All the answers/ opinions expressed in this document are of the interviewee.*

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**Cite:** Hulagabali, Santosh C. (2022 April , 7). Claire Redhead: Claire Redhead: The argument for open access to all scholarship has never been more relevant. [Blog post]. Retrieved from: <https://openinterview.org/2022/04/07/claire-redhead-the-argument-for-oa-to-all-scholarship-has-never-been-more-relevant/>



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