# Keynote Address for Western Journal Day

Jerry P. White
*Western University*, white@uwo.ca

Susan Wingert
*Western University*, swingert@uwo.ca

# Keynote Address for Western Journal Day

**Abstract**

Today, I want to look at three interconnected things. The first is the importance of open access and what it really means. The second is the role of Scholarship@Western in supporting our open access journals from the perspective of the International Indigenous Policy Journal (IIPJ). Lastly, we want to talk about some of the actions that we have taken to enhance our journal's readership and rankings.

**Keywords**

open access, publishing, dissemination

**Keynote Address for Western Journal Day**
**Western University**
**London, ON Canada**
**March 31, 2017**

Thank you for the invitation to speak. Today, I want to look at three interconnected things. The first is the importance of open access and what it really means. The second is the role of Scholarship@Western[1] in supporting our open access journals from the perspective of the International Indigenous Policy Journal (IIPJ). Lastly, we want to talk about some of the actions that we have taken to enhance our journal's readership and rankings.

Before we do, thanks are due to some of those who have made our journal a success—two of the working copy-editors, Meghan O'Hara and Emily Kring. We have an advisory board of 10 and an editorial board that stands at 32 senior academics, policy makers, and civil servants from Canada and around the world. Also thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), the Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium (International) (APRC(I)), and individual donors. As well, thank you to Scholarship@Western and Western Libraries for their kind support.

**What is Open Access?**

In the simplest terms, open access is about returning scholarly publishing to its original purpose: knowledge dissemination and allowing that knowledge to be built upon. It makes little sense that price barriers would prevent researchers, governments, students, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or anyone else from accessing research that they need.

By open access we mean that there is no cost to access or read publications. Ideally, we also believe there should be no cost for researchers to publish. We will come back to that point.

IIPJ is a completely open access journal. No one engaged with the Journal, from researchers to readers, confront any impediments related to a price tag.

**Why Does Open Access Make Sense? Why Is It Necessary?**

There are three basic reasons:

  a.   Anything less than open access means we are harming the research and teaching enterprise. We maintain that research unshared is of no social value. Without access, research dollars and some programs are a waste of time (for example when research is duplicated). Also,

---

[1] Scholarship@Western (n.d.) is "a multi-functional portal that collects, showcases, archives, and preserves a variety of materials created or sponsored by the University of Western Ontario community (hereinafter called Western). It aims to facilitate knowledge sharing and broaden the international recognition of Western's academic excellence by providing open access to Western's intellectual output and professional achievements. It also serves as a platform to support Western's scholarly communication needs and provides an avenue for the compliance of research funding agencies' open access policies" (para. 1).

research is a cornerstone of the best teaching programs—not every teacher, lecturer, and professor can pay the fees associated with keeping abreast of the latest work in the field.

b. Non-open access inadvertently perpetuates colonial relations because it is disproportionately the developing world that is impacted by cost barriers. This means that developing countries have a harder time building quality education institutions and better curricula.

c. Lastly, the general public, communities, businesses, and others deserve to have access to the knowledge that they, in one way or another, have invested in.

If democratic reasons, or the furthering of scientific knowledge, or the building of the developing world, or paying back taxpayers who cover the costs, or helping students get a better education, or helping professors to teach don't move us to embrace open access then self interest should. In a study of eight fields, sociology being one, the citation rate of articles in non-open access journals was only 48% of the citation rate for open access journals (Swan, 2010). So there is a direct benefit to university researchers seeking higher h-indexes.

## Charging Fees to Publish

The recent trend toward charging publishing fees is, to me, a travesty. Traditional journals in some disciplines commonly charged per page (often $100-250 each) and/or per color figure ($150-1,000 each). Open access journals typically charge a flat processing fee that can range from $8 to as much as $5,000 (Cell Reports) (Nassi-Calò, 2013).

This is nothing but a shift of the pay system from subscribers and libraries to researchers. But it raises the issue of where the hell do we get the money to do our work?

We propose that the State and institutions that are engaged in funding and/or knowledge dissemination split the advantage with us—that research councils build competitive funding for quality open access journals into knowledge dissemination activities. And libraries, as they can reduce costs associated with high cost subscription and print journals, also make funding available for open access journals. And this is actually a segue.

## Scholarship@Western

Platforms like Scholarship@Western are precisely the kind of support that has helped my Journal become as successful as it is. Make no mistake—this is a tangible, in-kind support that makes it possible to do what we do. Scholarship@Western is already in the forefront. They are splitting the difference with us by shifting resources to help open access journals.

Let me talk for just five more minutes on the attributes of this online journal publication system, which is hosted by the Berkley Electronic Press (bepress) in California.

The Scholarship@Western platform has saved us an enormous amount of time and money compared with developing and maintaining our own platform. In particular, we have found:

a.  It is very user friendly for both authors and editors.

b.  It maintains a paper trail through the publication process, which would also be time consuming to do manually.

c.  It synchronizes access among different stakeholders (e.g., editors, copy editors, peer reviewers, authors) so there are not multiple files floating around in different hands where they might be lost or mixed up. In this way, it helps with quality control.

d.  It streamlines communication by putting those tools into the system.

e.  It is optimized for search engines, crawlers, rankings, etc.

f.  It has tools for tracking dissemination built in (e.g., Altmetrics, download counts).

g.  It adds credibility to online journals by giving them a professional platform.

h.  We get access to expert technical support and, since it is shared, it is more cost effective than hiring our own.

i.  And, finally, it enables us to track various statistics for funding and promotion.

But while having a wonderful technology platform is critical, there are things that journal teams have to do. Let me list a few that have resulted in what we feel is a real success for IIPJ[2]:

a.  You need to work hard to ensure those organizations that measure impact are measuring your journal.

b.  You need to establish a network of advisors and associate editors that buy into the journal and help build it. This is difficult but the rewards are enormous, particularly the reputational ones. We have 40 people from Canada, the US, Russia, Turkey, India, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Central and South America, Australia, and New Zealand.

c.  You need to actively build a reviewer database. Ours has over 400 at this point. These are reviewers that we hunted down by specialty. Note that you keep reviewers who perform, while you cut those who leave you hanging.

d.  You need to know where you are going. I believe it was Lewis Carroll who said, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." That will not work. We have an annual strategic plan and a tactical plan we review every six months to update the strategy on how to achieve it.

e.  You need to start knowing you are no one. You have no status. No reputation. You have to earn it. That comes with quality reviews and quick turnaround: We set 21 days as the

---

[2] In 2016, IIPJ had approximately 73,000 full text downloads and its lifetime count is 230,000. It is ranked #1 in the world by Google Scholar (H-5 Index) among journals with an Indigenous focus.

timeframe for reviewers to complete their reports so we can get back to authors within two months from the time of submission and typically publish within three to six months of final acceptance on resubmission. Achieving that takes work and capital.

I would be happy to discuss the issues that we feel work together to create success. I am pleased to say we reached 70,000 verified full text downloads this past year. We are ranked #1 by Google Scholar in their H-5 Index for journals with Indigenous or Aboriginal content. I would say we are proud of our collective achievement but a better descriptor is "pretty tired."

So in closing, I believe we are working at the forefront of a needed sea-change in knowledge dissemination. It will be tough, but it was only 15 years ago when I was told that I would never amount to anything if I published in online journals. As Nobel Laurate Bob Dylan says, "Times they are a changing."

Thank you.

Jerry P. White, Editor-in-Chief

Susan Wingert, Managing Editor

## References

Nassi-Calò, L. (2013). How much does it cost to publish in open access? *SciELO in Perspective*. Retrieved from http://blog.scielo.org/en/2013/09/18/how-much-does-it-cost-to-publish-in-open-access/

Scholarship@Western. (n.d.). *About Scholarship@Western and its policy*. Retrieved from http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/about.html

Swan, A. (2010). *The open access citation advantage: Studies and results to date*. Retrieved from https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/268516/