Open Science Talk No. 48 (2023) DIAMAS: a computer-generated transcript [1]

00:00:10 Per Pippin Aspaas
Open science talk, the podcast about open science. My name is Per Pippin Aspaas and I'm joined by Pierre Mounier, who has been to this podcast for a couple of episodes already. But we have so much to talk about and today we're going to talk about DIAMAS. What is DIAMAS?

00:00:32 Pierre Mounier
Good morning, Per. DIAMAS is a European-funded project that aims at supporting – at the level of Europe – what we call diamond publishing. So diamond publishing, basically the diamond publishing models are those models where you have Open Access publishing so the content is Open Access for the readers, but it's also a model where the authors don't have to pay to be published. So it's Open Access journals for example, that don't charge any APC to the authors. So basically this DIAMAS project that started in September this year – the duration of it will be during three years. It's funded by the European Commission and it gathers 23 organisations coming from different European countries – including the Arctic University of Norway, of course – to support collectively the diamond publishing models. How to support that? First, we are currently working at collecting information about the reality of practise, situation, models that exist in the diamond model across the European countries. So, we are doing at the moment a landscape study to better understand this landscape. And then, based on this analysis, we are going to develop materials – training materials, other kind of supporting materials, guidelines, quality standards – that help the diamond publishing service providers, or to facilitate their work and to help a better quality, for example, or to reach a better sustainability. And then, based on that, we are going to publish recommendations towards different stakeholders such as the policymakers, the governance of the institutions, the libraries and other funders, of course, and other stakeholders to support better the sustainability of this sector. So, all in all, one of the objectives of the DIAMAS project is to set up, or to create, what we call the building blocks of a future Capacity Centre that will be available for all those who adopt the diamond publishing model.

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So, Capacity Centre – let's return to that in a minute, but I just wanted to wrap my head around this word 'service provider' in terms of diamond open access publishing. That is a publisher, or what is it?

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It can be all sorts of organisations. Because, precisely, we wanted to deconstruct the term 'publisher' because within the box that you call publisher, you have a lot of services which are provided to edit and then publish – select, edit and then publish and then disseminate content. So, we think that it's better, it's more granular, to try to address the organisations or the teams that provide services and then we can have a list of different services which are proposed by the service providers to support diamond publishing. So, for example, you can have services which are dedicated to peer review management, others which are dedicated to copy editing, others which are dedicated to dissemination or to marketing, or to proofreading, or to metadata management. So, for example, the consequence of that is that we consider that in the community you have a lot of service providers

who support diamond publishing in their capacity and in their diversity. It can be publishers, but it can also be infrastructures – it can be libraries, it can be technical service providers. So, they are all publishing service providers providing a list of services that support the diamond publishing. That's how we we try to figure out the diversity in the community and to address it.

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Yeah, because there are some journals where you can see immediately – there is a professional team behind it somewhere, the layout of the web page is is really professionally made, and so on – and others that perhaps don't look and feel very professional, but when you start looking at the content, you recognise that that here there is actually real science or scholarly knowledge production going on. So, diamond open access publishing would tend, then, to be not so much done by these big publishers because I guess they can't really afford it, or am I mistaken?

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In fact, the term that we use a lot in the DIAMAS context – and it was because the European Commission, when they issued the call that we answered to make the project, did it this way – is the term 'institutional publishing'. Why institutional? It's because most of the time this model is not supported by big commercial publishers, but is mostly supported by university presses, by publishing teams inside scholarly societies, for example, or by publishing teams inside universities, research departments, research performing organisations. So, here you have a model which is mostly supported by not-for-profit and institutional organisations in different ways – and supported by libraries, of course, because you have all this domain of library based publishing, which is very important in some countries, which is almost non-existent in others, so there is a diversity of situations here. So, it's true that this model is mostly institutional and not-for-profit. It doesn't mean that there is absolutely no commercial service provider in the landscape. There are some – or, there are many, but most of the time they are small. They are not the 'big ones'. OK, so that's interesting to see that those commercial or for-profit service providers, usually they are they have developed with what we can call symbiotic relations with universities or with institutions, by providing services publishing services to the scholars or to the research departments of those research organisations. And it's completely different from a situation where you have a huge global company that develops a portfolio of publishing activities and journals, for example. So the situation is quite different. I think it would be a mistake to consider that there is no presence of for-profit or commercial activities in this domain. There are some, but the relationship between institutions – not-for-profit, public money and the commercial companies – are completely different.

00:09:06 PPA

Yeah. So it's more of a symbiotic relationship, as you say. These journals that are taken care of by the institutions or research performing organisations themselves – how can they become more visible and, like, lift their standing in in the scientific community, so to speak? Is that part of the DIAMAS project or would you say that that's other concerns that would lie outside of the project?

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So, it's part of it and partly outside of it. What we found when we made a previous study before this project, which is named the Open Access Diamond Journals Study, where we studied with ten organisations the Diamond publishing model across Europe and a little bit also on other continents. What we found was that, as you say, the visibility and the indexation of the diamond journals in the most important or the most used Scientific Information Index is very low and it's not good enough. So, when we asked the journal editors about what is their main challenge – where they need most help – they they told us that there were two topics. The first one was indexation and visibility, and the

second one was funding, of course – structural funding, access to structural funding – maybe we get back to that later on. So yes, the DIAMAS project will try to address this visibility problem by, for example, one of the obstacles for those journals to be enough visible in the global scientific index is that they are isolated. So, you have a lot of small journals everywhere across thousands of institutions – they are isolated on their platform, and so on. So, there is a lack of, let's say, global representation of the importance of this domain to be better taken into consideration by the Scientific Information Index. But that's not the only obstacle. There are other obstacles, such as the technical ones, of course – the ability of those journals to deliver good-quality metadata and to plug themselves onto the scientific information systems, to be able to push their metadata in the system and make them visible. This technical part is not addressed by the DIAMAS project. There is a sister project that will start in January next year and the name of it is CraftOA. This is a project that is coordinated by the University of Göttingen that will address the more technical aspect of how to support diamond publishing and the diamond journals. And, in the CraftOA project there is a specific work package dedicated to addressing the technical challenges in terms of indexation and visibility of the diamond journals in the global information system. But there is a third obstacle, if I may, which is linked to the question of multilingualism. Because, several studies – and, for example, the Helsinki Initiative say that – several studies showed, evidenced, that there is an imbalance of representation between the publications in English and the publications in other languages. The fact is that a lot of diamond journals are published not only in English, but in a variety of other languages. And, for those journals there is a barrier put in front of them by the global Scientific Information System and commercial providers – because they favour, they support better, the publications in English because they consider that it can reach a global market, so it's more interesting for them. And when you have a publication in French, in Italian, in Norwegian, then you are discarded because you are not interesting for them. So, here there is also a challenge to address, and I think this challenge will be addressed jointly by the two projects – DIAMAS on the non-technical, let's say political aspect, and CraftOA on providing a better representation of other languages than English in the technical Scientific Information Systems.

00:14:13 PPA

That's very interesting. At the same time, I hear from journal editors that they need some tiny, tiny income – it doesn't need to be much, maybe maybe 3 or €4,000 per year. With that kind of income they can actually, perhaps, have money to get together once a year to sit down as an editorial committee – and, you know, these social aspects can be one thing, another thing could be to hire a technical editor, perhaps somebody who's doing a PhD, and they get this as part of their their work, for instance, or in addition to their research. And this small money is what you can get from a commercial publisher, but it's hard to get from a diamond open access infrastructure, generally speaking.

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Yeah. So it's true that a lot of diamond journals, they need, let's call it small money. So, a small amount of money, but recurring ones. So, what they told us in this study that I mentioned previously – the Open Access Diamond Journals Study – they are exhausted, most of them, by having to go for money through projects, new projects all the time, and to get this money through grant applications because the need is recurring each year, it's the same need. So, if you need to convene your board in a physical meeting, it's each year – it's not once, right?

00:15:55 PPA

Right.

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So, you need this small amount of money each year – and you don't have to take care about it, to focus on other duties. So, here we have a gap. Clearly, because the funding structure that is available doesn't cover this kind of need at the moment, and particularly the research funding organisations don't. They are not well equipped to address this kind of need. So, that's one thing that we are going to address in the DIAMAS project. Particularly because we have a work package which is entirely dedicated to the question of sustainability for the diamond journals. So, it's not easy, it requires, I would say co-invention between the community of diamond journals, the institutions, and the funders. Because the funders, in most cases, even though they would like to provide this kind of funding – through internal regulation or even by law, they are not able to do that, because they are not structured to provide this kind of funding. They are much more – they were created, in fact, to fund research through projects, and that's it. So, they have to invent and to adapt – to invent other ways of supporting research through scholarly communication and those diamond journals. But that's not the only way, because a lot of the journals that we have surveyed in this previous study told us that yes, this small amount of money can be important. But the most important thing is their ability to get access to services. So, having access to service means having access to personnel – it can be in-kind contribution coming from the universities, or the institutions that provide personnel to support the journal, but it's also having access to infrastructures that provide the services for free to those journals. So, in many domains, there is a need to have access to this kind of service. So, you know, the the difficult thing but the interesting part is that the sustainability of the diamond journals should rely not on one thing, but on a combination of different kinds of support: access to services provided by infrastructures, probably in-kind personnel shared by the institutions to support the diamond journals, and, you're right, small amount of cash money, but in recurring funding so that they don't have to, you know, create new projects each time just to have this money to support their operation. And that's the difficulty because it's not a silver bullet solution, the sustainability of those channels. You don't have the silver bullet. You have to elaborate a framework that combine those different kinds of support together, to make it sustainable.

00:19:14 PPA

I hope, Pierre, that in five years time I can invite you back to tell us about the successes and how this diamond open access project has really changed the landscape for the better. So, with that, I thank you so much for coming to the podcast, and I wish you a bon voyage back to France.

00:19:35 PM

Merci beaucoup, Per.

00:19:41 PPA

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