

## Open Science Talk No. 47 (2022) A short Introduction to DOAJ: a computer-generated transcript <sup>1</sup>

00:00:09 Per Pippin Aspaas

Open Science Talk, the podcast about open science. My name is Per Pippin Aspaas and in today's episode I'm joined by Dominic Mitchell of the DOAJ, or Directory of Open Access Journals. Welcome to the podcast, Dominic.

00:00:30 Dominic Mitchell

Thank you. It's great to be here.

00:00:33 PPA

We are now making this recording during the Munin Conference in Tromsø. So the first question: have you been to Tromsø before?

00:00:42 DM

I have. I've been twice before, actually, both times for the conference and I think it's such a great event that's been going on for several years now. It brings together a very different group of people from the, sort of, Open Access Publishing / Open Science communities and I think it's such a great experience to meet those people – I don't normally get to meet them, even though I'm based in Stockholm myself. So I've always enjoyed it. I've always thought it's a good size, you know, it's not too big, it's not too small and I think that's a really great community.

00:01:21 PPA

Thank you for that. You already mentioned that you live in Stockholm and we also said that you work for the DOAJ. For how long have you been working for DOAJ?

00:01:31 DM

So yeah, I've been working for DOAJ for 10 years and I was introduced to Lars Bjørnshauge, the founder of DOAJ, by Caroline Sutton, who is a mutual acquaintance, and Caroline introduced me to Lars and we started working together since then and DOAJ has grown over the last 10 years and we've really, sort of, been trying to increase the profile and the structure and the capacity of DOAJ. It's been a really exciting adventure.

00:02:09 PPA

Yeah. You speak about capacity, because I noticed that you have, literally, thousands of journals in there. So how do you compile these journals and how do you verify that these journals are Open Access? As the directory or Open Access journals is supposed to be a directory of strictly Open Access journals, I guess.

00:02:29 DM

That's right, it's only peer reviewed gold or diamond Open Access journals and I think that the current count is 18,600 journals and we receive sometimes up to a 1000 applications a month from journals that want to be indexed, and we have a team of volunteers and we have a team – a full-time team –

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a computer-generated transcript of the podcast episode Open Science Talk No. 47 (2022): <https://doi.org/10.7557/19.6887>. The automated transcript has been proofread by Niklas Peinemann and Per Pippin Aspaas and is included here for the sake of Universal Design and improved discoverability by full-text search engines.

who work with us and we process through those applications. We have dialogues with the applicants who are often publishers or editors of the journals. We receive applications from all different sizes of publishing organizations – from the very large commercial publisher down to a very small individually-led journal that's run by one person doing it for the love of their subject matter – and we process those applications. Everyone gets the same treatment. We're very proud of the fact that the turn around time about five or six years ago was really bad, but we've brought that down to less than three months now. It's all down to this wonderful team of editorial staff that we have who are working for us – and our fantastic volunteers.

00:03:47 PPA

You mentioned, from the very small journal publishers that run literally just one journal to the big publishers that have gold Open Access or even diamond Open Access journals in their portfolio. There's also some talk about predatory journals. I guess you wouldn't want them in there, would you? How can you go about 18,000 journals and verify that some or other shouldn't be there.

00:04:14 DM

So, we have a we have a set of basic criteria that are published on our websites and those criteria have been chosen to act as a filter, so that everybody, every journal has to pass a certain mark for them to be able to show us that they are a well-intentioned proper publishing outfits and those criteria are easy to meet and often what we find is – with the predatory or as we call them, questionable journals, they don't bother to meet a lot of those criteria. Some of them don't even have one of the very basic criteria, which is for us having an ISSN number – they don't do that. So they can't get into the DOAJ because, they don't meet those basic criteria. We also have a quality team and they specialize in investigating applications from journals that seem questionable when they apply and they do an amazing amount of work studying those applications from journals that we're just not sure about. But I'm so confident that we have reduced the number of predatory journals in DOAJ. It was a problem at one time – In 2015, we made all of the journals reapply when we extended our criteria and we lost a lot of predatory journals. Unfortunately, we lost some, you know, sort of proper journals as well. But over time, they've started to reapply and come back to us. So, you know, the amount of time that we put into keeping the quality of the journals in DOAJ is really, really something.

00:06:05 PPA

Yeah and you seem to be active also beyond DOAJ. I mean, you've been involved in making a document called Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing, together with other partners. And I and just noted that the 4th edition is out this autumn, 2022. Could you tell us a little bit more about that kind of work, that you were involved with?

00:06:30 DM

We thought that, you know, DOAJ has enjoys quite a reputable position within scholarly communications generally. It's important to know that the principles aren't just about Open Access, but they're about sort of, you know, scholarly publishing best practice and together with OASPA and WAME and COPE we wanted to lay out some principles that would help guide journals, sort of, establish themselves as proper publishing outfits. The 4th edition was probably the largest revision that we've done, because we were very conscious that it falls short in previous versions and that we wanted to make sure that it also had some value moving at least, sort of, five years into the future. So you know, we tried to gaze into our crystal balls and adapt the principles, so that they would still be applicable again. I think, you know, it's lovely when we see them quoted. It's lovely when we see

them used. They are just guidelines, they're not rules. But I know that COPE, for example, bases a lot of their membership criteria on those principles and it's really good to see those being used.

**00:07:46 PPA**

Yeah, just checking my papers now because I have a print-out of the principles. They are a really good read for anyone who has been even remotely involved in editing journals. These are really, yeah, thoughtful and sensible guidelines, I must say. Just to bring our listeners on board: COPE is the Committee on Publishing Ethics. It's an international entity, right?

**00:08:14 DM**

That's right, yes.

**00:08:15 PPA**

And the other mentioned was OASPA, the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association and finally this: the World Association of Medical Editors. Why specifically medical journals?

**00:08:31 DM**

I think that, you know, we see that there's a lot of publishing standards, best practices and advances that have been made in the scientific, technical, medical journal world and having the World Association of Medical Editors on board – which focuses on the individuals, the editors who are running and controlling these journals and controlling the editorial output – it's a very different focus. The other three organizations DOAJ, COPE and OASPA, they're focused on the journals as entities. WAME is able to bring to the table very specific experience about what it's like for these individuals who are trying to, you know, make sure that their journals adhere to these principles, but also specifically medical journals, where there's been a lot more – you know, they've already had lots of discussions around special issues, they've been working with data sets and things like that for a long time. WAME just brings a really good alternative view to setting out those principles for us.

**00:09:38 PPA**

Another thought I had before this podcast interview was: how are you actually financed in DOAJ? I mean, you are several people working there.

**00:09:46 DM**

We're extremely lucky in that we survive on donations. One of the big pieces of work that Lars did, and now his successor Joanna Ball does, is that they go around and they encourage libraries, universities, funders, publishers to support us. So we survive purely on donations that are given by those different organizations and 85% of our funding comes from universities and research centres and academic libraries and 15% comes from publishers. So without that money DOAJ wouldn't be able to do anything.

**00:10:37 PPA**

Thank you so much. Is there anything else you would like to inform our listeners about the DOAJ towards the end of this podcast?

**00:10:47 DM**

Well, next year we're celebrating 20 years. We're going to have some events to mark that occasion. It's appropriate that we will be remembering some of the work that Lars has done over the years, but that also we'll be looking forward to what the next 20 years of DOAJ will bring – and we hope the DOAJ will continue to grow and, sort of, be the amazing resource that people rely on.

00:11:18 PPA

Dominic Mitchell, thank you so much for coming to the podcast.

00:11:23 DM

Thank you.

00:11:27 PPA

Open Science Talk is produced by the University Library at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Thanks for listening.