

# Open Science Talk No. 55 (2024) The European Landscape of Institutional Publishing : 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. Today I am joined by Sona Arasteh and Jan Erik Frantsvåg and we're here to talk about the project DIAMAS and, in particular, a study that was published quite recently – an Institutional Publishing Landscape Study by the project DIAMAS. So Jan Erik works at UiT the Arctic University of Norway and has been Work Package leader of one of the work packages of DIAMAS. And Sona Arasteh, who are you?

00:00:56 Sona Arasteh

Thank you very much for having us. As you just said, my name is Sona Arasteh. I'm a project Open Science Officer for the DIAMAS Project on behalf of OPERAS and a Communication Officer for the Project CRAFT-OA for the Max Weber Foundation in Germany.

00:01:15 PPA

Excellent. And you, Jan Erik Frantsvåg, you have been in this Open Access business for many, many years and you were also behind something called the OA Diamond Journals Study, which was published two and a half years ago by now. Could you briefly explain the difference between the OA Diamond Journals Study and this Institutional Publishing Landscape Study? How do they differ, or how do they relate?

00:01:46 Jan Erik Frantsvåg

Well, they are related of course. I think the that study was one of the “stepping stones” that led to the DIAMAS project. But the original study was on Diamond OA globally. You know, DIAMAS' task is looking at institutional publishing in the European Research Area. Institutional publishing in Europe is, we know, mainly Open Access and Open Access at institutions is mainly Diamond, so that means there is a clear link between the study on Diamond Journals globally and what we're doing on Institutional Publishing in Europe. But they're not the same: it's not the same geographical area and this study looks at more than Diamond OA – it looks at other forms of OA, and it looks at Toll Access publishing. We see that there is a lot of Toll Access still going on, and paper-based, among institutional publishers in Europe.

00:02:50 PPA

Yes. So if I understand it correctly, the Diamond Journals Study, it looked at the journals as individual entities, whereas this Publishing Landscape Study looks at where these various journals sit: they sit at institutional publishing services and some of them sit there together with, as you say, Toll Access – subscription-based – or even paper-based formats.

00:03:17 JEF

That's a good point. The original study looked at individual journals. We are looking at the institutions publishing them, or supporting them as service providers. So that means to look at a higher level and also more limited to geographical scope.

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00:03:37 PPA

Great. Sona, you mentioned CRAFT-OA and DIAMAS, both of these are related to this Diamond Open Access – we should define it, of course – initially, we should have done it even a minute ago. Diamond Open Access means that there is no fee for the reader to read the content and no fee for the author to get the content or an article, for instance, published at a journal. So CRAFT-OA and DIAMAS are related – and a third link is something called PALOMERA. So these three projects, could you briefly explain what they are about?

00:04:17 SA

OK, so let's start alphabetically. CRAFT-OA is a project that focuses more on the technical side of supporting Diamond OA publishers. So basically developing plug-ins, multilingual solutions, OJS solutions – and something that called Diamond Discovery Hub, which will basically – or intends to – enhance the indexation of Diamond Open Access journals. Whereas DIAMAS is focusing more on the policy side and recommendation side of things and actually establishing a picture of what is the current state of Diamond OA in the European Research Area. And together, especially these two projects, target to deliver building blocks for a future Capacity Centre Capacity, or a capacity hub for Diamond Open Access that will work as an infrastructural support for Diamond Open Access throughout the European Research Area. That being said, with PALOMERA, what PALOMERA is doing, it is basically focusing on policies for Open Access books because, as you probably know, Open Access books are politically less prominent than Open Access journals. So what they do is they try to investigate why that is and how they can overcome that gap in awareness, if you want to say it like that.

00:05:53 PPA

Back to you, Jan Erik. You have now presented the results from one of the work packages of this DIAMAS project. Why not publish everything at the end of the project?

00:06:09 JEF

Well, the report, the long version of the report, is meant primarily as an internal working document establishing facts and figures and knowledge for the ensuing work packages to build upon. Work Package #2 has produced this, we don't present solutions and we don't – the intention was not to point very much at problems, but to describe the status as a starting point for further work. The full-length report is an official delivery to the EU, and we found that this probably contained knowledge that others would like to take part in. But as reviewer#2 pointed out, the full length report probably wouldn't be a best seller. It was too filled with with data – numbers, facts and figures. So we decided that to make this knowledge that it contains more readily available, we wanted to create a shorter version highlighting the most important findings in the report. And then of course, we made the full length report available also, so that the interested reader can consult that – not necessarily reading all the 240 pages, but reading the interesting chapters.

00:07:42 PPA

Yeah. Thank you for bringing that up, because the full-length, you could say, “preliminary report” in the form of an Institutional Publishing Landscape Study is already there on Zenodo, but it sits alongside a Synopsis of Results from the DIAMAS Survey. And that brings us back to you, Sona: together with Oliver Blake from the LIBER organisation, you were entitled this task of compiling this synopsis and how did you go about? What was important to highlight from the long report that Jan Erik just mentioned?

00:08:17 SA

I think, in the beginning, before I begin to explain in more detail, the thing that is the most present finding of all within this Landscape Report, I think is the fact that what the Diamond OA Study found a few years ago, that the landscape of institutional publishing is scattered, it's basically something that this report just reaffirmed. So institutional publishing is highly diverse, which to some extent is very good because it is, well, diverse. But it also means that in order to support this kind of landscape and this type of publishing, you have to tackle various issues. So, basically, what my colleague Oliver and I did when we looked at the Landscape Report – and none of us wrote or was involved in the heavy writing of the 240-page document so, basically, we were looking at it with fresh eyes – and we tried to figure out what kind of chapters would be the most interesting to people working in publishing, that they need to figure out which kind of structural issues – we can point out, even in this highly diverse landscape, and we found quite a bit of that, right. So we found out that, for example, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Bibliodiversity is not what we can call a standard right now. We can say that there are disciplinary differences in what Open Access output looks like throughout the European Research Area – we see national tendencies, and I think one of the most important findings that we try to highlight in this synopsis is, basically, that support for Diamond Open Access publishing works best when it is embedded in an institutional context – so, basically, if it aligns with national policies, if it aligns with already existing structures within Open Access communities, so this is something that was reaffirmed through this Landscape Report, even though the Landscape Report in itself was trying to paint a picture and not answer questions. So, basically, what it does is: it indicates in which areas to ask which questions. So the bad news is there's a lot of work coming towards us, the good news is: now we know where to start.

00:10:55 PPA

Yeah. You mentioned differences between different countries. You are affiliated in Germany, I think, and now there is a call for a German Capacity Centre for Diamond Open Access. How can that help Institutional Publishing prosper in the future? Do you have any thoughts on that?

00:11:23 SA

Basically, what we're trying to establish is infrastructure on the support that serves the many levels of Diamond Open Access publishing by establishing an International Diamond Federation, whose scope is global; capacity hubs that are regional – so for example, the European Capacity Hub, DIAMAS, will contribute to, would be the regional Capacity Hub for Europe, which would then coordinate specific Diamond OA activities for certain disciplines or countries and serve as some kind of node where this kind of knowledge is based, right? And then there are Capacity Centres, which would basically be something like – for example, Open Edition – which are disciplinary or national centres that serve as some kind of Diamond OA Access Point in national languages, which are kind of “first aid”, or the first contact point if you want to do anything Diamond Open Access in this discipline or area. And the call you mentioned from the German Research Foundation basically taps into that. So the idea is: we want some kind of first line aid for the people who maybe want to flip their journal Diamond, for example, or who need specific services that are Diamond OA related and we want them to know who they can turn to you, and this is what this infrastructure is for. So responsibility for that should be federated, obviously – and all of this, all of this infrastructure is basically built on, and built for, the Diamond Open Access communities, who are at the heart of all these projects. Without them, there would be no such thing at all.

00:13:20 PPA

Excellent. Let me try and be very local. Jan Erik and myself, we work together part-time supporting something called – or we dedicate our work hours – to something called Septentrio Academic

Publishing, which is a Diamond Open Access publisher in Norway situated here at UiT. We have about a dozen journals that are peer reviewed, and all of them are Diamond, and we also have about a dozen series that are more in the range of grey literature – reports and so on – or they are not so active that they can be called a proper, peer reviewed, regular journal, but they are still sitting there with us at Septentrio. How would you describe this Septentrio service, Jan Erik, in the Nordic part of Europe? Is it a very small publisher, or is it a medium sized, or how would you call it?

**00:14:19 JEF**

Well, I used to joke when I started looking at this some 13–14 years ago that “we are among the world's largest OA publishers, we have more than one journal!” I mean, the single-journal publisher is still the majority of institutional publishers and we are, I think, an adequately mid-sized OA publisher – an institutional publisher – both in the Nordic countries and globally. And we are mid range competent. You know, there are a lot of things we would have wanted to do have we had more money – I mean, more people like us – and also at the financing side, to be able to buy services from service providers etc. to develop our journals in the technical sense. The content is good enough, but, like most our respondents, we see there are a lot of things we would have liked to do better and more of.

**00:15:28 PPA**

You mention technical, let's say “upgrades” of how the content is presented – I mean, both the homepages of the journals and perhaps also the layout of the PDF's and other formats besides PDF, like HTML and so on. But what about the the services that Sona just mentioned, the kind of advice to editors and so on? Is that something that an institutional publisher generally does? I know that we do it here at UiT, but is that something that you generally see, or is the Landscape Study report not tapping into that at all, so we don't know?

**00:16:11 JEF**

I think the Landscape Study Report doesn't much tap into that, but if I can speak not from the report, but from observations both before this work and during this work, is that this is very different. I think there is a number of such services that we have in Norway and I think that what I see from the data about the journals is that these services have been good at advising and tried to streamline the journals into becoming sufficiently adequate, professional journals when it comes to the publishing side. I see other services on a greater scale who obviously haven't done that same kind of trying to streamline and reform the journals to fit into an Open Access publishing world and see a lot of journals out there that can be characterised as “paper published on the Internet”, which means that there there is a lot missing. They are there, but they have not come far enough into integrating Open Access publishing practises, which means that they have a distribution that is not as good as it could have been.

**00:17:36 PPA**

Yeah, in the Open Data world, which is also part of Open Science these days, we talk about the FAIR principles – Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reproducible – or is it Reusable, rather. So this kind of aspects are familiar also in a Diamond Open Access sense, I guess. Sona: do you have something to add when it comes to these technical standards – that should be part of CRAFT-OA, right? – where do you see the biggest challenges in the kind of services that institutional publishers provide to the journals?

**00:18:17 SA**

Generally speaking, probably in things like interoperability and indexation of Diamond Open Access journals, because – this is something where CRAFT-OA and DIAMAS is actually intertwined to some

extent, because what we found out thanks to the Landscape Study is that one of the main challenges is actual technical proficiency. So, maybe the issue is probably, partly, actually technical, but the other part of it is the proficiency and the awareness, or the technical knowledge of employees of the Diamond Open Access journals. So I think you can't really distinguish completely between those two when talking about that, because we have to tackle them together.

00:19:07 PPA

I've seen other projects hinting that a barrier is the notion that there is often low quality at the institutional publishing houses. Is there anything to that? And can the landscape study, sort of, counter such prejudices, Jan Erik?

00:19:26 JEF

I'm not certain that the Landscape Report actually says too much about that. It says that many IPs feel that they need more competence and they need better funding in order to, for instance, buy services etc. And this points to that institutional publishing at large cannot, today, necessarily compete with good commercial publishers. There are bad commercial publishers also out there, let's not forget about that. But yes, there there is a way to go. I think this project and the following projects might help. And it's important to say that if there is a quality problem with Open Access, it's not with the content, it's with the technical aspects and the distribution. For instance, we see that most IPs report that they don't feel they're indexed well enough. And indexation is an important part of visibility – and this, again, is a service to the authors. It's not a service to the journals, it's a service to the authors and to the readers.

00:20:41 PPA

Yeah, indexing. You mean that it's findable in various search search sites, right?

00:20:46 JEF

Various search engines – and it's important that content is placed where the readers search for it.

00:20:55 PPA

If we go a little bit further in this synopsis, there are several chapters and one of them is about Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging. And here it's about things like gender, language – I mean, different publishing languages – and and so on. Language is – obviously English. We speak together now in English, for instance, although it's not our mother tongue, it's the way that academia works these days, but some people are concerned about the the decline of national languages. Do you see something with Diamond Open Access, can that help preventing the overall development towards English? If you need more in national languages, is then Diamond helping in some way, Sona?

00:21:52 SA

Well, I would say it can be helping in so far as Diamond Open Access, of course first and foremost means no fees. But secondly, what we are trying to do is also to connect it to some kind of quality standard, right? And what we all have to do, is probably reevaluate how we establish quality of academic content. And if quality of academic content means that, in terms of these added dimensions, it hits certain areas of that, or best of all, all of them. Then maybe this kind of label Diamond OA can also work towards a future of publishing where this is not considered something “extra” on top of quality content, but rather a marker of quality of the content of a journal. So in an ideal world – or, basically, the ideal that we're aiming at – this is not something on top, but an integral quality of a journal that makes up a huge part of quality.

00:23:13 JEF

If I may comment: in Norway, we have a financing – or we had a financing system that promoted international cooperation, which generally means English. On the other hand, we have a financing system for Diamond Open Access journals in Humanities and Social Sciences, where using the national language is a prerequisite for having support. So I think policies and how they are enacted is very important and tied also to financing, in Norway.

00:23:51 PPA

Yeah. You mentioned a special fund in Norway for Humanities and Social Sciences journals, where there is a language requirement – at least 50% of articles need them to be in in Scandinavian language, preferably in Norwegian, of course. But do you see Diamond Open Access as something that is particularly widespread in Humanities and Social Sciences, or is it spread all over the disciplines, Jan Erik?

00:24:26 JEF

Well, our numbers – and also from the Open Access Journals Diamond Study, it shows that it's a surprisingly many Open Access and Diamond Open Access journals outside the Humanities and Social Science: in the Natural Sciences, in Medicine and Health Sciences and Agriculture – everywhere. We were actually surprised in that other study to find so many journals outside the Humanities and Social Sciences, that were a Diamond OA. And, for instance, I think the biggest, or one of the biggest Diamond OA journals in Norway is the official Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association, which is most definitely Medical Science. So, I mean, I think it's an error to think that Diamond is Humanities and Social Sciences. We see many of them there, but there are a lot of them in other fields, too.

00:25:28 PPA

Now we are coming to the end of the podcast and I would like to ask if there is anything you would like to add. Maybe you first, Sona, is there something that we haven't mentioned?

00:25:41 SA

I think we did a very good job of covering a lot of what is covered in the Synopsis as well. I would like to urge everyone to take a look at it and if any questions arise, please follow them in your own research, or let us know. But yeah, thank you so much for having us.

00:26:02 JEF

And I would also like to thank you for this opportunity to talk more about what has been filling our lives for the last year or so – at least mine and quite many others'. And I would like to thank Sona and Oliver for writing this Synopsis. I will – unless you are really wanting to go deep into it, read this Synopsis and see what's interesting there and then go further to the Landscape Report for more in-depth knowledge on specific areas – and on specific countries, if you want.

00:26:39 PPA

With that, I thank you so much for coming to the podcast. Open Science Talk is produced by the University Library of UiT the Arctic University of Norway. Thanks for listening.