

The future of *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* and EASA's contract with Wiley

Briefing note for EASA Members' Webinar 6th November, 10.00 - 11.30 CET

The 2020 AGM passed a [motion](#) mandating the EASA Exec to explore alternative options for publishing *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* (SA/AS) 'Open Access', and proposing that EASA seeks not to extend its Wiley contract when it comes up for renewal in 2021. The motion was passed by a 60/40 margin. This paper sets out the options open to EASA for discussion by the membership and in preparation for an e-vote by all members.

The growing influence of five publishing companies (Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell, Springer, and Taylor Francis and Sage) in the digital era has profound implications for scholarly publishing. Together their journals publish more than 50% of all papers in the natural and social sciences in 2013, creating what [Lariviere et al. \(2015\)](#) describe, based on their analysis of a 40 year-trend, as a publishing oligopoly. [Posada and Chen \(2018\)](#) document the growing number of mergers and acquisitions by these companies, as they compete to control the whole scholarly infrastructure and research workflow. [Bell \(2018\)](#) documents the consolidation achieved by Clarivate Analytics, whilst [Kelty \(2018\)](#) argues that that these platforms risk warping the very content of scholarly production in their search for profits. [Mirowski \(2018\)](#) is blunt that the Open Science movement is not necessarily the answer, and might actually be contributing to what he calls 'platform capitalism'. He shows how publishers are using policy-mandated Open Access (OA) calls to transform scholarly publishing into a data economy.

Within our discipline, [Bell \(2019\)](#) offers an anthropological perspective on the Open Access movement, whilst [Chibnik \(2020\)](#) reflects on debates over OA within the AAA during his editorship of *American Anthropologist*. Many anthropologists would share the view of the EASA AGM motion's proposers that 'it is imperative that we retain control of the role we wish our journal to play in the shaping of our scholarly public sphere', and by 'flipping' SA/AS, EASA would offer an influential precedent for other journals in anthropology and cognate fields.

EASA has discussed taking *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* (SA/AS) Open Access for a number of years. In 2015 EASA participated in an initiative led by SPARC to explore the financial implications of leaving Wiley. EASA is a member of the [Libraria consortium](#), and in 2019 participated in an [event](#) at MIT exploring the financial options for going OA, without relying on the 'Author Pays' model of Author Processing Charges (APCs) as a funding source. The AGM motion confirms the desire of many members to now complete this task.

This paper explores the options open to EASA in moving SA/AS to what the motion described as 'sustainable, inclusive and universal open access' based on 'responsible partnerships between libraries, publishers, and scholars'. Wiley will need to be informed before the end of December 2020 that we wish to terminate our five-year contract with them in December 2021.

Financial Implications of ending the Wiley contract.

Many scholarly professional associations are dependent on the profits of their journals for supporting their activities, tying them into commercial publishing agreements. In the sciences, some associations have financed a shift to OA through charging APCs. This is not an option for the social sciences and humanities where grants for publishing grants are rarely available. EASA has the good fortune of owning its journal, and EASA is not dependent on Wiley income. EASA's membership revenue is primarily used to support the society's other activities, such as EASA's networks. From 2016 to 2019, the average income from EASA's 40% share of Wiley's profits on SA/AS was around £15K a year. This is approximately 25% of EASA's average annual income, a significant but not insurmountable income stream.

The financial implications for EASA will depend on our OA publishing partner. Any agreement with a new publisher would need to cover the associated production, staffing and editorial costs, as well as generate a surplus for EASA, if the change is to be cost-neutral for the association. If this is not possible, EASA could consider asking members to pay an additional membership surcharge to cover some of the costs of taking the journal Open Access.

Reputational and Quality Implications

Leaving Wiley may well have reputational implications. By not being promoted by a major publisher as part of a journal ‘bundle’ across all its platforms and workflows, the journal may be less cited, and this may well affect its Scopus rankings. However, the so-called “open-access citation advantage” has been demonstrated by [Piwowar et al \(2018\)](#) and by [Lewis \(2018\)](#) and may mitigate this impact. [Lariviere et al \(2015\)](#) suggest that there is no evidence of a change in citations from shifting to a smaller publisher.

EASA’s members will want the journal to continue to sustain the high quality of its copy-editing and type-setting, including support for authors whose English is not their first language, in an OA publishing environment. This will be a key priority for the journal.

Options open to EASA and *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale*

The OA landscape is shifting very rapidly. There are a number of scholar-led and sustainable OA alternatives to the major commercial ‘author-pays’ publishing model. The strongest emerging models are led by library-led consortia or close partnerships between publishers and library subscribers.

Option 1: Subscribe-to-open This is an alternative subscription model pioneered by *Annual Reviews* that is now also being [piloted](#) by Berghahn Journals in collaboration with [Libraria](#) and [Knowledge Unlatched](#). It relies on a collective action model whereby library subscribers move together to support a journal going OA. Berghahn has ‘flipped’ into open access its entire portfolio of anthropology journals (13 titles including Social Analysis, Religion and Society, Environment and Society, Focaal and the Cambridge Journal of Anthropology). [Crow et al \(2019\)](#) provide a balanced review of the Subscribe-to-Open model, drawing on the *Annual Reviews* example, and the potential it offers. Pluto Press has also recently [adopted](#) this model.

EASA’s Treasurer has held preliminary discussions with Vivian Berghahn about the finances of publishing *SA/AS* with Berghahn. Whilst revenue predictions are difficult, a provisional business model suggests that a move to Berghahn could generate a revenue stream for EASA comparable to that provided by Wiley, once initial start-up costs were covered.

The proposed financial model included a reduction in the institutional subscription costs, and the involvement of EBSCO to ensure non-subscribing libraries have full text database access. EASA members could also work to encourage their university libraries to subscribe. Significant savings (of up to £5K a year) could be made from ending the option for members to have print copies of the journal. Berghahn place a strong emphasis on ensuring the high quality of copy-editing and type-setting of their journals, and the model includes these costs.

Given that Berghahn already has a ‘bundle’ of 13 anthropology journals, there is a strong argument in favour of Option 1 as this would strengthen Berghahn’s existing ‘offer’.

Option 2: Library-led partnership: the [Open Library of the Humanities](#) (OLH) is funded by an international consortium of libraries and publishes 26 open access journals in the humanities. Library consortia offering bundles of journals are well suited to a scholarly society such as EASA, as members can encourage their university libraries to subscribe to the whole of an OA portfolio, rather than an individual journal. SIEF, EASA's sister organization, publishes [Ethnologia Europaea](#) (Journal of European Ethnology) with OLH.

Option 3: An Open-Access University Press A final possible option is for EASA to be published by a University Press committed to Open Access, such as [Bern Open Press](#) which publishes [Tsantsa](#), the journal of the Swiss Anthropology Society.

Option 4: Membership surcharges: starting in 2020, and following a majority vote by CASCA's membership (Canada's Anthropology Association), the society has taken its journal [Anthropologica](#) open access. The University of Toronto Press will be publishing the journal with CASCA partially subsidising publication via membership surcharges. EASA could potentially combine Option 1 or 2 with Option 3 (additional membership surcharges) to support extra editorial costs if seen as necessary.

There is one further option: the self-publishing model adopted by Cultural Anthropology. [CulAnth](#) is a thriving website and its journal has been Open Access since 2014. It is funded partly through Society of Cultural Anthropology membership subscriptions as well as institutional subsidies from the university hosting the journal. They employ a fulltime production and editorial manager at a cost of around \$60,000 annually. EASA is not currently considering this option of self-publishing, given these costs and associated risks.

Next Steps:

The aim of the EASA webinar on the future of *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* is to discuss and agree on one (or more) of the above options. This would then be taken to a confirmatory e-vote by all the membership, before informing Wiley. Actions for 2021 would include detailed negotiations over a new contract, and transition planning.