A black and white sign

Description automatically generated

**Library Board Meeting Report**

16 April 2024

**Transparency of the Board**

As discussed at our previous Board meeting in October 2023, we have agreed to publish confirmed minutes from Library Board and any pre-circulated materials. Please visit our [Library Board page](https://www.openlibhums.org/site/library-governance/) to access these. You will also see we have included biographies for each Board member; do let us know any time you would like us to edit or update these.

**OLH rebrand**

In February 2024, we unveiled the new brand design and launched our new publisher website. Feedback so far has been incredibly positive. We had undertaken UX research with librarians and editors, which informed the design of the wireframes and site build, and feedback from these stakeholders included the following:

* “It was lovely to hear from you with this update. Thank you. I love the new OLH website. It's really beautiful and very easy to navigate. Many congratulations on your and your colleagues' work on this.”
* “The new website looks great, it's a huge improvement. Will you also develop an according Janeway template for the journals?”
* “It is a really beautiful website now, great job!”
* “Thank you for your lovely email and congratulations on the launch of the fabulous new website! It makes me think of an art gallery. It really stands out from other publishers. Visually, it is almost too good! I also appreciate how easy it is for a librarian to navigate now, and I don’t get lost and struggle to piece together what you do and what you want from someone in my role.”

Please do let us know if you have any feedback as Board members. We are particularly keen to hear whether the site navigation is now clearer for librarians seeking information about what the OLH offers libraries and their academic colleagues, and how our ongoing work on the Janeway platform is building academic-owned infrastructure to support the wider OA community.

**OLH journal applications**

Since Summer 2023, we have accepted the following 10 journals to join the OLH:

1. *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies* (who left Media Commons)
2. *Political Philosophy* (who left Wiley)
3. *Quaker Studies* (who left Liverpool University Press)
4. *Regeneration: Environment, Art, Culture* (who left the University of Nebraska Press)
5. *Review of the History of Economic Thought and Methodology* (who left Emerald Publishing)
6. *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* (who left Wiley)
7. *Syntactic Theory & Research* (who left Wiley)
8. *Confidential journal that cannot yet be named* (who will be leaving Wiley)
9. *Theory & Society* (who have left Springer)
10. *International Labour Review* (who are leaving Wiley)

This increases the OLH’s portfolio to 30 journals currently publishing, with a further 3 journals launching before the end of 2024.

These journals are all high-quality and will provide a significant boost in the prestige of the OLH’s publishing activities. *Political Philosophy* and the confidential journal are commonly referred to by scholars as 2 of the top 3 philosophy journals worldwide; their editorial boards read as a who’s who of academics at ivy-league and top-ranking research universities. Similarly, *Theory & Society* is a famous sociology journal, which has received widespread press coverage of its recent implosion at Wiley. *International Labour Review* is run by the International Labour Organization (ILO), a United Nations agency founded in 1921, and publishes all articles in English, French and Spanish.

We lost 3 journals at the end of 2023 – 2 of these were publishing partnerships with Liverpool University Press (*Francosphères*) and University of Wales Press (*International Journal of Welsh Writing in English*), and 1 journal decided to return to an APC model with another publisher (*Ethnologia Europaea*, moving to Berghahn).

The publishing partnerships with LUP and UWP had been initially agreed for a 5-year period in 2018. OLH funded the diamond OA publication of all articles with the publishers at an agreed per-article rate of £900 per article. By 2023, however, this per article rate was substantially higher than our own per article publishing rate of £350 at OLH using Janeway. We simply couldn’t justify spending our library funding to subsidise another publisher’s production costs when the OLH has built its own successful publishing platform, which is open source and much more cost effective. Following negotiations with both publishers we decided not to renew our partnership agreements and one of the LUP journals flipped to the OLH, whilst the UWP journal remains hosted on our Janeway platform (UWP is already a Janeway client). We continue to host all back content during the period of our publishing agreement at the OLH under our “archived journals” area.

We’ve now closed applications for the remainder of 2024 as we already have our budgeted number of journals for this year. Caroline will re-open applications in January 2025.

**Library memberships**

We’re working hard to build up our library memberships to c. 375 supporting members before the end of this financial year-end (31 July 2024). We are currently at 351 supporting members. We ran a recent membership drive as soon as the new website had been launched, sending out new library brochures (with thanks to the Board for feedback on earlier draft versions of these – see attached for the final version). We contacted a target list of c.450 libraries that are known to support similar open access initiatives and/or have free rider articles published in OLH journals. The response rate so far has been 23% and we have gained 5 library sign-ups, with an additional 12 libraries that we expect to sign up in 2024.

This outreach was supported by development work on Janeway, with a new plugin that allows us to download reports of free riders for each university so that librarians can see a list of academics at their institution publishing articles in OLH journals and working on OLH journal editorial boards.

New library members include the following:

* Mount Royal University, Canada
* University of Richmond, US
* Grinnell College, US
* George Mason University, US
* University of Sussex, UK (upgraded to higher-tier membership)
* University of Saskatchewan, Canada
* Université Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis, France
* Giessen University Library, Germany
* Université de Montréal, Canada
* Arkansas State University, US
* Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany
* Colby College, US
* University of South Florida, US
* University of Arkansas, US
* University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

We would welcome the Board’s input on any additional leads, particularly regarding library consortia. Correspondence with Australian librarians has put us in touch with CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians), which negotiates subscription and R+P agreements on behalf of all ANZ university libraries. We already have consortial deals in place for the US (managed by LYRASIS), the UK (managed by Jisc), Greece (managed by HEAL-Link, the Hellenic Academic Libraries Link), Finland (managed by the finELib consortium of Finnish libraries), and Norway (managed by Sikt, the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research). Please do let us know if there are any other national consortia we could be contacting to negotiate agreements.

**JISC & LYRASIS agreement renewals**

Our 3-year JISC license agreement on behalf of UK universities has recently been renewed for 2024-2027. From 01 May 2024, we have agreed a price increase of 3% from the previous offer (which was set at 1%), with a yearly below-inflationary 3% increase. We’ve made substantial investments in the OLH over the past 12 months, including hiring additional staff to improve our open-source platform and meet website accessibility standards, building our journals portfolio to 33 journals, and building the new website to clarify the work we do. The JISC team agreed that the OLH continues to offer excellent value for money.

**Accessibility project**

Since the Board last met in September 2023, we have hired Dr Steph Driver as our new Publishing Technology Developer. Steph joins the Janeway development team and is our Accessibility Lead. Steph began her role in October 2023 with an Accessibility Audit of the OLH’s in-house publishing platform, Janeway (please visit the [GitHub page](https://github.com/BirkbeckCTP/hourglass/issues?q=is%3Aopen+is%3Aissue+milestone%3A%22A11y+Audit+-+New+OLH+Website%22) for further information on this audit and the [milestones progress](https://github.com/BirkbeckCTP/hourglass/milestones) so far).

In March 2024, Steph launched the OLH’s [Accessibility Project](https://www.openlibhums.org/news/694/), which has 3 main objectives:

1. Janeway functionality will support WCAG 2.2 AA compliance by the end of 2024. Work will begin on this immediately and changes will start showing in version 1.6 of Janeway (to be released in April 2024) and in version 1.7 (to be released in June 2024).
2. Accessibility work will be user-led. This is not just about online content, we are revising all our communications and procedures.
3. Looking into 2025 and beyond, having made it possible to meet the WCAG standards, our focus will turn to improving user content: i.e. helping editors and authors make their content more accessible through dedicated support and training.

**Improving metadata and discovery of OLH journal content**

Since the Board last met, we have also hired Siobhan Haimé as our Publishing Technologies Librarian. This new role has been designed to integrate our editorial and technical teams by offering user support and training for all editors on the Janeway platform. On the technical side, a significant part of the role will involve improving the metadata, discoverability, and indexing of OLH journals. Siobhan’s first task since joining the team in October 2023 has been to undertake an audit of the OLH’s indexing services and co-ordinate improvements.

As per the Library Board minutes from our previous meeting in October 2023 (paragraph 4.1), the Board requested more clarity re. which indexers carry OLH journal content. Although still ongoing, the indexing audit has revealed the following issues that we will work to address:

* **MLA Bibliography** – not all OLH journals are eligible for inclusion and some journals that are eligible are not yet ready to apply. Technical and editorial liaison is ongoing to progress these applications to join the MLA Bibliography.
* **ISSN Portal** – the OLH tech team have received some errors from ISSN re. incorrect metadata (these largely concern inconsistencies in journal titles between indexing systems, e.g. use of full titles or acronyms, use of full colons or commas). Due to staff capacity these were not previously resolved and can now be addressed.
* **Portico** – Portico have reported a small number of errors from OLH journal deposits. The tech team are investigating the issue and will undertake a bug fix to resolve this, which has been caught early on.
* **DOAJ** – OLH journal information is in the process of being updated, given the large number of new journals OLH is now publishing.
* **Web of Science & SCOPUS** – 3 OLH journals have requested these services. Applications have either been rejected or stalled and require attention.
* **Clarivate** – we would like to join the new content provider platform that Clarivate is launching. Siobhan has finally found a contact at Clarivate and will pursue this.
* **ProQuest** – Siobhan is trying to find a suitable contact to help resolve this application. This is a lower priority for OLH journals.

In addition to the above services, the tech team are also exploring the following services and would welcome the Board’s input here:

* **OCLC** – Siobhan met with one of OCLC’s sales directors at UKSG. Andy Byers and Mauro Sanchez, our Director of Publishing Technologies and Senior Publishing Technologies Developer, have previously had positive meetings with the organisation. We are investigating how OLH content can interface with them through our API. OCLC are widely used by the library community and are mission-aligned with the OLH as a not-for-profit organisation providing tech solutions for the library community.
* **Open Alex** – discovery for OA books, articles & datasets. We think this open database will become increasingly important and would like to see how OLH journal content can be included through our API.
* **OA Switchboard** – the OLH is not currently a partner or customer of the OA Switchboard, and we will explore this.
* **Scholarly IQ** – this offers usage data for publishers and other customers and could help us improve reporting for OLH journal content. We’re exploring joining this service in the next financial year.

**Communication with the OLH’s library membership network**

As per the [published minutes](https://www.openlibhums.org/site/library-governance/) of the previous Board meeting (paragraph 3.2), the Board asked what information is being provided to members to inspire ongoing support. Caroline and Paula are working on an improved communications strategy, with support from Siobhan as Publishing Technologies Librarian and Dr Katherine Parker-Hay as our Publishing Development Officer. This will include:

* Quarterly newsletters, which are already emailed out to all library members;
* Targeted comms campaigns in line with important dates, e.g. May for UK libraries looking to renew their OLH membership for the year (which resets each May), and summer for US libraries looking to renew their Lyrasis membership for the year (N.B. Board members from other countries, please do let us know the best times of year to contact librarians in your country or region);
* Ad hoc communications to update members on any important developments (such as large journal flips);
* the publication of an Annual Report in September of each year (as the UK financial year ends in August, this publication date will enable us to communicate relevant financial data). This will be a glossy 12-15 page brochure including narrative content about the OLH’s progress, strategic objectives and priorities moving forwards, and a breakdown of how library funding is being spent.

On a related note, regarding the Board’s agreement at the previous meeting that Janeway should continue to focus on facilitating community (paragraph 5.5), we are preparing the revival of our second area of OLH community governance: the Janeway Board. This will be set up over the coming months and we look forward to sharing updates on how that board decides to constitute and organise itself with the Library Board. In addition to this, the tech team are working hard to improve communication with their own community of OLH journals and the wider OA community that uses Janeway. They recently began a podcast series called “The Engineering Deck,” which can be accessed [here](https://engineeringdeck.podbean.com/).

**OLH advocacy update**

We are working to involve the entire OLH team in ongoing professional development and outreach and engagement activities with relevant open access organisations and projects. Below is a list of current staff involvement:

* **DIAMAS** – since 2023, the OLH has been collaborating with DIAMAS (Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication) funded by the European Union. We have reported on community ownership and governance models for academic journals, editorial quality, and research integrity to help DIAMAS draft a new framework to ensure quality standards in institutional publishing.
* **Coalition S** – We are a member of cOAlition S, the international consortium to transition to full open access and Co-Founder Prof. Martin Eve is a Plan S Ambassador. The OLH is a signatory of the "Action Plan for Diamond Open Access" launched by Science Europe, cOAlition S, OPERAS, and the French National Research Agency (ANR) in 2022.
* **Library Publishing Coalition –** The OLH is a Strategic Affiliate of the Library Publishing Coalition, an independent community-led membership association of academic and research libraries and library consortia engaged in scholarly publishing.
* **OASPA –** the OLH is a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA). Dr Caroline Edwards is on the Board of Directors for OASPA and is also on the conference organising committee for 2024; Andy Byers helped draft the technical specifications for Open Access Journals Toolkit, a community resource organised by OASPA and DOAJ. Paula Clemente Vega is a member of the Fully OA Group created out of the OASPA Interest Group of Fully OA journal publishers; Dr Rose Harris-Birtill has sat on the OASPA Diamond Open Access Working Group.
* **OIPA** – the OLH is a member of the Open Institutional Publishing Association, and several staff members (including Caroline and Andy) are in informal contact with OIPA.
* **Crossref** – Dr Rose Harris-Birtill sits on the Crossref Membership and Fees committee. Prof. Martin Eve, although not actively involved at the OLH on a day-to-day basis anymore, also provides a strong link between the OLH and Crossref in his role as Head of Research and Development at the organisation.
* **ERIH PLUS** – Rose is also the current named UK National Expert for the European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences.
* **Copim Library Outreach** – Paula currently sits on the Copim Library Outreach working group, supporting the expansion of community-owned open infrastructure for academic publishing.

We welcome the Board’s input re. any organisations or projects the OLH team are not currently engaging with that would help build stronger alliances to support sustainable diamond OA.