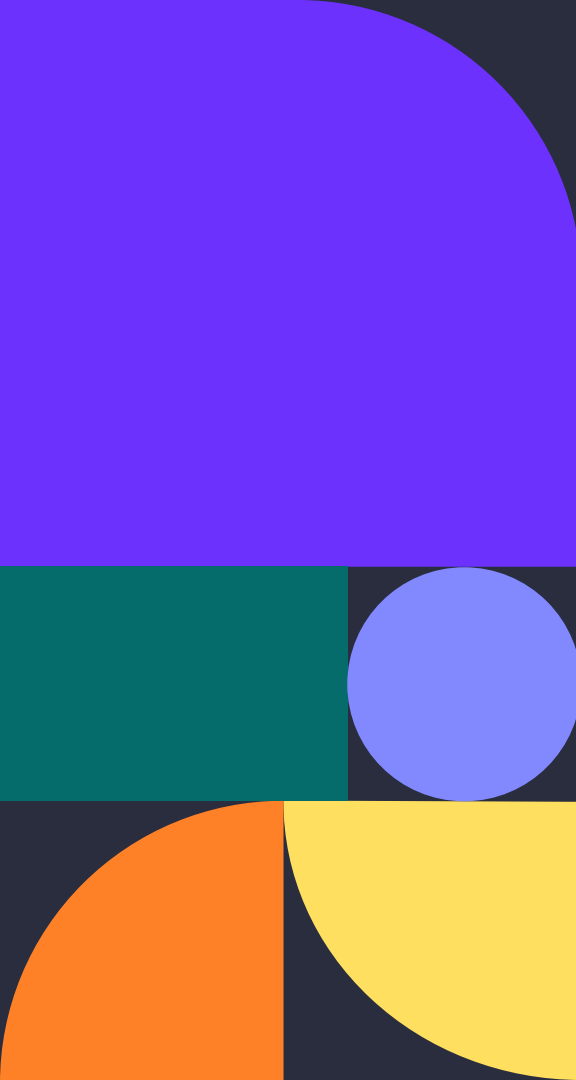




Understanding the Labor Behind Library-Published Scholarly Journals in the U.S.

Karen Bjork, Virginia Commonwealth University

Annie Johnson, University of Delaware

Johanna Meetz, The Ohio State University

Introduction/Framing the Problem

University libraries are increasingly central to open access (OA) journal publishing in the U.S. However, labor remains largely invisible:

- Who is doing the work?
- How much time does it require?
- Is it compensated, and how?

Prior Research

Research by Jessica Lange and Sarah Severson

- Who performs editorial labor
- Time required
- Compensation structures

Gap

- Excludes journals published or hosted by U.S. academic libraries

*We received permission to mirror Lange and Severson's methodological approach

Why This Matters

Without a clear understanding of labor:

- Risk of overextension of staff
- Hidden inequities in who contributes unpaid work

Data can support:

- Service model design
- Staffing justification
- Advocacy for funding and recognition

What labor is your program relying on—and is it sustainable?

Research Population

- Survey targeted **editors** of open access scholarly journals published by United States-based member organizations of the Library Publishing Coalition
- We excluded journals that had not published an issues in 2 years as well as all student journals
- Our research resulted in a list of over 350 journals published by 49 library publishers in the United States

Methods

- Our survey questions largely mirrored Lange & Severson, with some adjustments
- Focus areas:
 - Editorial roles and responsibilities
 - Time investment
 - Compensation structures
 - Institutional support

Early Findings: Labor

- Number of people who regularly contribute labor to the journal
 - 37%: 2-4 people
 - 33%: 4-6 people
 - 8%: 8-10 people
- Most common position: Editor-in-Chief, then Managing Editor

Early Findings: Labor Distribution

- Editor-in-Chief completes most tasks associated with publishing
 - communication between authors and reviewers, typesetting, promoting the journal, reviewing submissions before sending to peer-review, updating the website, etc.
- Exception: Copyediting

Early Findings: Compensation

- 53% percent of respondents are not compensated monetarily for their work on their journals
 - Editors-in-Chief report the highest compensation, ranging from \$5,000 per year to about \$13,000 per year
- Copyeditors:
 - Hourly \$25-45/hour
 - Set amount per manuscript (\$25-\$300)
 - Set amount per issue (\$900-\$5000)
- When student work is used for copyediting, generally paid less (\$30-\$50/article)

Early Findings: Quotes

"My journal is practically fully run by two editor-in-chiefs who do almost all the labor and get no compensation. It is a form of service that I personally find very rewarding, but not many people would be able to take on this job, so I worry about the sustainability of the model. But we are committed to keeping the journal fully open access (no fees), and this seems like the only way."

Early Findings: Quotes

"The amount of credit the editorial board and I get from our institutions for contributing to scholarly access is a fraction of the effort we put into publishing the journal."

Thank you!

bjorkk@vcu.edu

meetz.1@osu.edu

akjohnso@udel.edu