

Analysis and Reflections on the Current Status of Open Access Publishing in Chinese Library and Information Science Journals (Postprint)

Authors: Wang Nan

Date: 2023-10-08T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

[Purpose / Significance] To provide recommendations for the further deepening and development of Open Access publishing in Chinese Library and Information Science journals.

[Method / Process] Through literature review and web-based investigation of the Open Access publishing status of 24 Library and Information Science journals indexed in CSSCI, this study analyzes existing problems and deficiencies across four dimensions: journal operation models, OA publishing policy statements, OA publishing content, and construction of journal value-added functions.

[Result / Conclusion] Recommendations are proposed for the future development of Open Access publishing in Chinese Library and Information Science journals: endeavoring to transform journal operation models and striving for greater discourse power in collaborative publishing with foreign publishers; improving OA publishing policy statements and standardizing OA publishing content; fully leveraging new media and technologies to expand the service functionalities of OA journals.

Full Text

Analysis and Reflection on the Open Access Publishing Status of Library and Information Science Journals in China

Wang Nan^{1,2}

¹Institute of Science and Development, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190

²School of Economics and Management, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190

Abstract: [Purpose/significance] This study proposes recommendations for the further development of open access (OA) publishing in Chinese library and information science (LIS) journals. [Method/process] Through literature review and web-based investigation of 24 LIS journals indexed in CSSCI, this paper analyzes existing problems and deficiencies in four aspects: operation models, OA publishing policy statements, OA publishing content, and construction of journal value-added functions. [Result/conclusion] Suggestions for future development include: transforming operation models to gain greater voice in collaborations with foreign publishers; improving OA publishing policy statements and standardizing OA content; and fully utilizing new media and technologies to expand OA journal service capabilities.

Keywords: library and information science; open access; open access publishing; open access journals

2. Current Status of Open Access Publishing in Chinese LIS Journals

According to DOAJ's definition, OA journals are those that allow any user to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, and link to full texts via the Internet without charging readers or their institutions [8]. Based on this definition, the author visited the websites of 24 domestic LIS journals between March 20-28, 2018. Seven journals exhibited accessibility problems, including inaccessible websites, lack of download services, or broken download links (see Table 1). The remaining 17 journals were accessible, but most operated as partial OA or delayed OA journals (see Table 2). This reflects the reality that the “author-pays” OA publishing model remains difficult to implement effectively under current conditions in China [10], making partial and delayed OA transitional approaches that still serve the purpose of providing open resources to readers.

2.1 Journal Sponsors and Editorial Composition

The sponsors of Chinese LIS OA journals are all non-profit institutions such as universities, research institutes, libraries, or library and information science associations [11]. Editorial departments typically consist of only an editor-in-chief, deputy editors, and a few staff members. In contrast, internationally renowned journals exhibit conglomeration characteristics, with multiple journals under joint management achieving intensive operations. Their editorial divisions are clearly structured with defined responsibilities, including not only basic editorial roles but also specialized positions such as copy editors, art editors, and web editors [12].

Overall, Chinese LIS journals operate on a small scale without achieving conglomerate development, resembling a “workshop-style” operation model with

limited publishing capacity. This stems largely from institutional and historical factors, as most Chinese LIS journals continue to follow the systems and management approaches from the planned economy era [13], having yet to achieve industrialization and cluster-based development.

2.2 OA Publishing Policy Statements

2.2.1 Shortage of OA Publishing Policy Statements DOAJ's journal application form explicitly requires OA publishing policy statements on journal websites [14]—a necessary component for standardized OA journal construction. Among the 17 accessible LIS OA journals, only *Library and Information* published such a statement; the rest lacked this essential element. The statement from *Library and Information* generally complies with DOAJ requirements and includes the following key elements [15]: (1) the journal's transition to OA status from January 1, 2014, implementing hybrid OA publishing; (2) publication of articles within one month in PDF format without charging article processing charges (APCs); (3) encouragement and support for author or institutional self-archiving, provided that metadata in institutional repositories properly cite the journal publication and recommend it as the preferred citation; (4) commitment to gradually improve backfile accessibility by supplementing open access to past issues; (5) articulation of the OA vision and purpose—that OA publishing serves education and research rather than commercial profit; (6) protection of authors' copyright; and (7) willingness to exchange and cooperate with all sectors on various aspects of OA journal construction to promote the deepening development of open access publishing.

2.2.2 Shortage of APC and Copyright Agreement Information In DOAJ's journal application form, the Basic Journal Information section requires journals to specify whether they charge APCs, and if so, to provide webpage links and pricing details [14]. The majority of the 17 LIS OA journals lack such explanations, with only *Library and Information* and *Data Analysis and Knowledge Discovery* stating their APC policies, specifically indicating “no additional article processing charges” and “no submission fees.” Regarding copyright agreements, DOAJ's Content Licensing section requires journals to provide clear copyright provisions with corresponding links and specify which copyright agreement is adopted [14]. However, all surveyed journals continue to use traditional copyright agreements from conventional publishing without modifications to reflect their actual OA copyright policies.

2.3 OA Publishing Content

2.3.1 Inconsistent Content Openness The 17 LIS OA journals demonstrate varying degrees of content openness, with most suffering from incomplete backfile coverage. While backfile periods range from nearly 2 years to 10 years, some journals provide exemplary models: *Digital Library Forum* offers all articles since its establishment in 2005, *China Library Journal* provides access to all

articles since 1957, and *Library and Information Service* has backfiles dating to 1956. Comprehensive backfile coverage enables readers to access journal articles without temporal restrictions to support their research and work.

Further investigation revealed that most journals have scattered open access within their stated backfile periods. For example, *National Library Journal* claims backfile coverage from Issue 1, 2006 to the present, but only issues from Volume 2015 Issue 6 onward are actually open. Similarly, *Information Theory and Practice* states coverage from Issue 1, 2017, yet only issues from Volume 2017 Issue 5 are accessible. This scattered approach contradicts the fundamental philosophy of open access, as readers remain restricted and cannot freely use all journal articles.

Compared to traditional journals, OA journals' advantage lies in rapid online publication, enabling researchers to access articles immediately and accelerating academic exchange. However, the investigation found that some journals suffer from untimely open publishing. For instance, although *Library and Information* opens all articles within its backfile period, online publication occurs approximately one month after print publication, meaning readers must wait an additional month for online access. *China Library Journal* does not provide articles from the most recent year, requiring readers to search commercial databases such as CNKI or Wanfang. The primary reason for these delays is that most Chinese LIS OA journals transitioned from traditional print journals and continue to publish print versions for subscription by readers, libraries, and research institutions. To protect these revenue streams, some OA journals have adopted delayed open access strategies [11].

2.3.2 Publishing Standardization Identifiers Among the 17 journals, 12 lack OA identifiers altogether. Proper OA identification on articles would enhance researchers' awareness and recognition of OA journals, significantly benefiting their widespread dissemination. Analysis of the five journals with OA identifiers revealed inconsistent practices. The first case is *Data Analysis and Knowledge Discovery*, which uses a "yellow lock-shaped Open Access identifier" [16] after each article title on its table of contents page (see Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]). This identifier, originally designed by the Public Library of Science (PLOS), carries considerable credibility, but the identifier disappears when clicking through to the individual article page.

The second case involves *Library and Information Service*, *Modern Information*, and *Library Work and Study*, which display a small gold box with green "OA" text on their table of contents pages (see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]). However, these three journals also lose the identifier when entering specific article pages.

The third case is *Library Journal*, which uses a green book-shaped icon in its table of contents browsing section (see Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]), but similarly loses the identifier on article pages.

While these three identifier types effectively inform readers that articles are open access, the lack of standardization and incomplete implementation across website pages can cause confusion and hinder proper dissemination of OA journal articles.

All 17 LIS OA journals publish in PDF format, with only *Data Analysis and Knowledge Discovery* also offering HTML format. However, investigation found that although most journals list HTML access options, these are typically dead links, as seen with *Library and Information Service* and *Modern Information*. HTML format provides readers with convenient access, allowing them to preview article content online before downloading PDF documents if needed.

2.4 Journal Value-Added Functions

As OA journals mature, academic journals should extend beyond merely disseminating research information and providing communication platforms to emphasize diversified services and deep utilization of open resources, thereby demonstrating the advantageous characteristics of convenient access and open sharing. With the rapid development of mobile internet, OA journals should capitalize on this trend to build information push functions, enabling researchers to obtain needed information in a timely, comprehensive, and efficient manner [17]. Network publishing also facilitates multi-directional linking of articles, enabling convenient query and retrieval for associative reading.

2.4.1 Information Push Functions RSS subscription services and Email-Alert push services represent effective methods for providing personalized information delivery. Among the 17 LIS OA journals, only six offer RSS subscription services and eight provide Email-Alert push services, indicating that these functions require further development (see Table 3).

Additionally, various journals have established WeChat or Weibo accounts to provide instant push notifications, facilitating OA journal promotion and real-time communication. This enables researchers to access journal-related information and content anytime and anywhere. For example, the WeChat public account of *Data Analysis and Knowledge Discovery* features three columns—“Online Journal,” “Manuscripts,” and “Highlights”—allowing readers to browse current and past issues, track manuscript status, and receive timely review notifications, while the “Highlights” column publishes editorial announcements, author guidelines, and industry developments. Similarly, *Library Work and Study*’s WeChat account provides columns for “Article Browsing,” “Submission Guidelines,” and “About Us,” offering services for accessing articles and submission instructions. *Library and Information Service*’s Weibo account timely posts and reposts journal calls for papers, journal updates, and hot topics or real-time information in the LIS field.

Given the portability and ease of use of mobile devices and the development of mobile internet, people increasingly conduct daily work and life activities on

mobile platforms, researchers included. Through social tools such as WeChat and Weibo, OA journals can interact with readers more frequently, timely, and user-friendly—precisely the dissemination effect OA journals aim to achieve.

2.4.2 Digital Content Expansion Services When viewing full-text articles in HTML format on *Data Analysis and Knowledge Discovery*, clicking the prompt button next to the article title presents an interface showing Chinese and English keywords and author names with links to other databases such as Baidu Scholar, Magsci, and Pubmed. Through such automatic indexing, various components of OA journal articles achieve further reuse, facilitating readers' searches for other works by a particular author or related literature on a particular topic (see Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper]).

Furthermore, on the table of contents overview page of *Data Analysis and Knowledge Discovery*, each article title includes four options—"Figures," "References," "Related Articles," and "Multi-dimensional Evaluation"—that readers can click to view corresponding digital content sections. For instance, clicking "Figures" displays only the article's figures and tables. By automatically indexing each component of every article, readers can conveniently view only specific sections, representing a further deepening and development of OA publishing.

3. Future Prospects for Open Access Publishing in Chinese LIS Journals

Since national leaders commented on the massive outflow of Chinese authors' publication fees in 2015, how to standardize domestic OA publishing and its market development has attracted widespread attention among Chinese journals. To align with international OA publishing trends and enhance international influence, some Chinese publishers and research institutions have collaborated with international publishers such as Nature Publishing Group, Oxford University Press, and the Optical Society of America to publish OA journals. However, due to their late start, limited understanding, and lack of experience in OA publishing, Chinese publishing institutions often find themselves at a disadvantage in these collaborations. Promoting the standardized development of Chinese LIS OA journals requires efforts in operation models, improving OA publishing standards, and expanding OA journal service capabilities.

3.1 Transforming Operation Models and Securing Greater Voice in Collaborations with Foreign Publishers

Chinese LIS journals currently operate as independent "small workshops" with understaffed editorial teams responsible for both journal operations—manuscript solicitation, peer review, editing, proofreading—and OA network publishing. In contrast, leading international journals generally adopt a division-of-labor model between publishers and editorial departments, with scientists serving as editors responsible for peer review and manuscript organi-

zation while professional publishers provide full-process publishing services [19]. This “professional people doing professional work” approach yields superior results.

Since 2014, several Chinese institutions have launched collaborative OA journals with international publishers: the Shanghai Institutes for Biological Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Nature Publishing Group co-founded *Cell Discovery* in April 2014; Oxford University Press partnered with the Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Chinese Society of Zoology to publish *Current Zoology* in February 2016; Springer Nature signed agreements with Nanjing University and Nanjing Tech University in March 2016 to co-publish OA journals *Flexible Electronics* and *Quantum Materials* [21]; in June 2016, Springer Nature announced an agreement with the International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST) and Beijing Technology and Business University to co-publish *Science of Food* [22]; in September 2016, American SAGE Publishing and Communication University of China launched the English OA journal *Global Media and China* [23]; and in September 2017, the School of Information Management and the Center for Studies of Information Resources at Wuhan University formally established the English OA journal *Data and Information Management* with the international academic publishing group De Gruyter [24], aiming to create a professional, high-quality, and international OA journal. Through these collaborations, journal influence has gradually increased while effectively disseminating Chinese research achievements worldwide.

Thus, multiple disciplines have actively experimented with the “editorial department + publisher” model. Chinese LIS journals should similarly transform their operation models by collaborating with major international publishers, leveraging advanced publishing concepts and processes to strengthen journal construction while gradually securing greater voice in publishing models and content, ultimately achieving refined and internationalized OA publishing.

3.2 Improving OA Publishing Policy Statements and Standardizing OA Content

After initial development, Chinese LIS OA journals should gradually standardize their publishing practices. Standardized OA publishing represents not only an internal requirement for journal construction but also a prerequisite for sustainable development. Specifically, journals should: first, reference DOAJ standards to supplement detailed OA publishing policy statements on their homepages, covering OA publishing models, article formats, APC policies, self-archiving permissions, copyright licenses, and OA vision and purpose. Second, they should further open OA journal content by supplementing and completing backfiles, transitioning from delayed OA to full OA in a timely manner. Third, they should standardize OA identification by marking OA articles across all relevant pages. While no unified international OA identifier currently exists, journals could reference the identification methods used by authoritative publishers such as PLoS and Springer Open, or develop unified OA article identifiers through

domestic LIS associations. Finally, they should enrich OA article publishing formats by offering not only PDF but also HTML versions to facilitate reading, searching, and linking.

3.3 Utilizing New Media and Technologies to Expand OA Journal Service Functions

Unlike traditional print publishing, OA journals' reliance on network publishing enables them to provide numerous online services. Future OA publishing in Chinese LIS journals should be further deepened and expanded by using automatic indexing technology to enable reuse of digital content components, such as semantic revelation, retrieval, and linking of abstract data, as well as publication and utilization of article supplementary materials (data, figures, etc.). RichHTML technology can enrich research result presentations and provide expanded digital content services.

New media represents deep processing of journal content, enhancing readability through multimedia integration of text, images, and audio, adding value to journals, meeting personalized reading needs, improving user experience, enhancing interactivity, and ensuring effective dissemination [25]. With the rapid development of new media, Chinese LIS OA journals should fully utilize platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, QR codes, podcasts, and blogs to expand service functions, establish good relationships with readers, and achieve the dissemination effects that OA journals desire.

4. Conclusion

As a new publishing model that effectively promotes academic exchange, open access publishing features rapid publication, wide dissemination, easy retrieval, and free access, greatly benefiting scientific research across all disciplines. Chinese LIS journals have actively promoted OA publishing with initial success, though the results remain non-ideal and insufficiently standardized. Beyond deficiencies in operation models, OA publishing policy statements, OA content standardization, and journal value-added functions, numerous other issues in LIS OA publishing—such as sustainable business models and effective quality control mechanisms—require exploration, research, and gradual resolution through practice. Meanwhile, the LIS community should strengthen communication and cooperation with government departments, publishers, and research funding agencies, follow international OA trends, track OA publishing developments in other disciplines, learn from best practices, and actively explore the establishment of a comprehensive open access publishing mechanism for LIS journals to enhance their open utilization capacity and sustainable development, thereby further promoting the development and construction of the library and information science discipline.

Acknowledgments: The author thanks Professor Huang Jinxia for her guidance and valuable suggestions during the writing of this paper.

- References:** [1] Xiao Dongmei. Why is the open access movement flourishing?[J]. Library and Information Service, 2006, 50(5):128-131.
- [2] Li Lin, Chu Jingli. Research on open access publishing models[J]. Library Tribune, 2005, 25(6): 88-93.
- [3] Wei Xiaofeng. Analysis of open access levels of domestic library and information science journals based on timeliness[J]. Modern Information, 2013, 33(8): 117-122.
- [4] Chen Xiujuan, Peng Yuanyuan, Chen Xuefei, et al. Analysis of international open access journal development trends in 2016[J]. Digital Library Forum, 2017(9): 9-15.
- [5] Fake papers submitted to open access journals as “bait” with half being “hooked”[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <http://news.sciencenet.cn/htmlnews/2013/10/283490.shtml>.
- [6] Chinese authors paid approximately 450 million RMB in SCI OA journal publication fees in 2015[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <http://blog.sciencenet.cn/blog-38899-1004194.html>.
- [7] Directory of Open Access Journals[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <https://doaj.org/>.
- [8] Huang Ruhua, Wu Jingjing. Suggestions for promoting open access of library and information science journals in China[J]. Library Tribune, 2008, 28(4): 1-5.
- [9] Li Wu, Yang Yidong. Development status and impact analysis of open access journal publishing[J]. Library and Information Service, 2006, 50(2): 25-30.
- [10] Chen Jin. Research on the development of library and information journals based on open access[J]. Library Construction, 2011(7):79-82.
- [11] Yang Lina, Fang Yuling. Research on the transformation of core journals in domestic library and information science to open access[J]. Library, 2015(3):40-44.
- [12] Yang Jingjing. Research on foreign scientific journal operation models[C]//Proceedings of the 7th China Young Editors’ Academic Seminar on Scientific Journals and Forum on Operation and Development of Chinese Scientific Journals. Beijing: China Editology Society of Science and Technology Periodicals, 2007: 4.
- [13] Chen Yueting. On the internationalization development of Chinese library and information science journals from the perspective of SSCI[J]. Journal of Academic Libraries, 2005, 23(6): 76-81.
- [14] Journal Application Form[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <https://doaj.org/application/new>.
- [15] Statement on Open Access Publishing Policy of *Library and Information*[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <http://www.tsyqb.com/CN/news/news21.shtml>.
- [16] Open Access[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_access.
- [17] He Suqing, Liu Shuchun. Exploration and utilization of special functional services for network publishing of scientific journals[J]. Chinese Journal of Scientific and Technical Periodicals, 2011, 22(4): 609-612.
- [18] You Suning. Moving forward with candles in the internet era[J]. Acta Editologica, 2015, 27(6): 511-514.
- [19] Mao Zhengang, Liu Suqin, Zhang Litian. Current status of international OA publishing platforms and suggestions for reforming “Internet + academic

- journal” publishing models[J]. *Acta Editologica*, 2017, 29(3): 299-303.
- [20] Oxford University Press publishes *Acta Zoologica*[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <http://news.sciencenet.cn/htmlnews/2016/3/340877.shtm>.
- [21] Nature Group jointly launches two open access journals with two Nanjing universities[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <http://news.sciencenet.cn/sbhtmlnews/2016/3/309800.shtm>.
- [22] Beijing Technology and Business University collaborates with Nature Research and IUFOST to publish journal *npj Science of Food*[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <http://www.gx211.com/news/201674/n5672380064.html>.
- [23] Launch ceremony of English journal *Global Media and China* held in Beijing[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <http://media.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0918/c14677-28722314.html>.
- [24] English open access journal *Data and Information Management* launched[EB/OL]. [2018-03-17]. <http://news.whu.edu.cn/info/1002/49636.htm>.
- [25] Tao Hua, Zhu Qiang, Song Minhong, et al. Current status and development strategies of new media communication for scientific journals[J]. *Acta Editologica*, 2014, 26(6): 589-592.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv — Machine translation. Verify with original.