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Open Access Practices of Selected African Studies Journals

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ABSTRACT

Providing an overview of Open Access (OA) developments in African Studies and anthropology journals, this paper discusses the progress of ten, mainly British, Africanist journals in extending access using some of the criteria set out in John Willinsky's *Access Principle*. One journal, the German *Africa Spectrum*, offers full 'gold' OA. The other leading Africanist journals, including those published by the UK learned societies, all permit 'green' OA, the archiving of article pre-prints in repositories. These journals are further available via various developing country access schemes, but contain a low percentage of 'gold' papers due to a lack of resources to fund OA publication charges. This paper explores some alternative OA cooperative models that mobilise larger scale economies, but whose sustainability remains to be tested in the longer term. The paper suggests that the development and aggregation of institutional repositories may offer a faster route to green OA for journal articles in both Africa and the UK, as well as making other publication types, including research theses, available online. However, book and journal publication will likely retain their place as cornerstones of the advancement of knowledge and scholarship. Although some disciplines have seen increased publications by African authors from the continent and the diaspora, exclusion and marginalization of African authors from international research, and the dearth of African editors on the leading journals, still need to be acknowledged. The paper will thus take the Open Access focus to introduce a broader discussion about knowledge production in African studies in relation to access and equity.

Introduction and context of this study

There is now unprecedented engagement with Open Access (OA) in higher education and research: among policy makers, librarians, publishers, academics, learned societies and subject associations. Fundamental intellectual arguments have been made by OA advocates and scholars, including by Harvard's Peter Suber who has written of the 'access revolution'¹ being made possible by the internet and author copyright consent. Such purpose of OA is 'to remove barriers to all legitimate scholarly uses for scholarly literature' and to support 'academic freedom and the kinds of serious inquiry that advance knowledge'.² Strong practical arguments for OA include a rise in journal submissions and citation impact; and of OA as offering a system of research dissemination that scales with the growth of research volume.³ OA publishing can further improve access in developing countries where in some sub-Saharan African cases, university libraries may have virtually no subscription journals.

A decade or so ago, it made sense to speak of Open Access (OA) as an alternative to standard academic publishing. But this framing no longer works.⁴ Now OA is at the heart of academic publishing. Journals are OA in the sense of publishing 'gold' content free at the point of publication, sometime involving Author Processing Charges (APCs) whilst permitting 'green' OA deposits, allowing authors to archive

¹ P. Suber, 2012, *Open Access*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p. 1.

² Suber, p. 10.

³ Suber, p. 42.

⁴ Jackson and R. Anderson, 2014, 'Anthropology and Open Access', *Cultural Anthropology*, 29 (2): 236–26.

pre- or post-print versions of their papers into institutional and/or subject repositories. Barbara Fister, a key commentator on US academic library issues, estimates that some 80% of journals now permit green OA. AJOL, which aggregates content and metadata from over 500 journals published in Africa, lists c.194 of its journals, containing around 53,500 articles, as being OA.

In the UK, there have been several government consultations, and significant reports have emanated from institutions including the British Academy.⁵ Smaller interested parties have contributed opinions and data to these investigations. In the African Studies field in the UK, the African Studies Association UK (ASAUK) and International African Institute (IAI) have led on engagement with OA. The ASAUK convened a seminar on OA and African studies in 2013 with speakers from the British Academy, Senate House library, the SOAS directorate, and Africanist journal editors. The ASAUK's 2014 biennial conference included a round-table on African journals which was attended by the Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, African Journals Online (AJOL) besides several editors of journals from Africa. In 2015, a panel co-convened with representatives from ELIAS (the European Librarians in African Studies group) was held at the European Conference on African Studies (ECAS).⁶ Further sessions on the economies and circulation of knowledge production in African studies are planned for the ASAUK 2016 conference. This paper aims to add to our knowledge by evaluating the OA practices of a selection of leading Africanist journals.

The access principle

John Willinsky's landmark study *The Access Principle*⁷ usefully coined the *principle of access* to focus attention on ways of *increasing* access (rather than holding too strict a line on whether a journal article, a journal or publisher is 'open' or 'closed'). Increasing access to research-based publication, or the *principle of access*, can also be understood historically as part of efforts to improve access that have – from the printing press through public libraries – increased democratic circulation of publications – the internet being the major innovation of the current phase. Newer developments such as OA journals and repositories can be considered part of a larger movement to create an open and public space online that will carry forward the continuing life of print culture.

Willinsky argued that access is not an 'all or nothing proposition'.⁸ As online publishing for journals has become commonplace so have many of the various means Willinsky identified of increasing access:

- Copyright policies which allow authors to be able to deposit versions of their papers in repositories
- Journals making selective content freely available – editorials, commentary pieces, special sections

⁵ 'Debating Open Access', <http://www.britac.ac.uk/openaccess/debatingopenaccess.cfm>

⁶ 'Publish or Perish in African Studies: New Ways to Valorize Research', <http://www.ecas2015.fr/publish-or-perish-in-african-studies-new-ways-to-valorize-research/>

⁷ J. Willinsky, 2006, *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to research and scholarship*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

⁸ Willinsky, p. 28.

- Developing country access schemes
- Learned societies offering access to developing countries
- Author fees to subsidize open access, subsidies from scholarly societies
- Journals providing free article information - bibliographic data, abstracts etc.
- Publicly funded publication fees (via universities, research councils, foundations)
- Institutionally funded OA publishing.

Since publication of *The Access Principle* ten years ago, we can point to elements of improved knowledge dissemination, including developing country access schemes initiated notably by INASP.⁹ Below, I survey the extent to which some of the influential African studies journals have adopted such measures as well as the limits and challenges of such schemes. The more detailed comparative picture is complicated – from countries or regions which have longer histories of de facto institutional OA, government-funded publishing in Scandinavia and in France, to OA in South America held by some as ‘a paragon for the rest of the world’.¹⁰ In Anglo-American publishing, where several significant Africanist journals are published, commoditization of knowledge has tended towards publishing consolidation and the danger of the corporate houses over-determining OA policies. In Africa meanwhile, generally speaking, ‘open access for Africans means having access to any research publication at all’.¹¹ This produces an intellectually untenable situation in developing countries where scholars are excluded both from accessing, and therefore contributing to, high impact journals as they are less able to relate their research (methodologically, epistemologically, theoretically) to the latest literature (which they are unable to read), and therefore to participate in knowledge exchange, so undermining the circulation of scholarly communication at large.

Willinsky did not envisage that digital online publishing would lead to universal access to academic knowledge given the persistence of a digital divide based on economic inequities. But this is precisely the challenge to those concerned with knowledge production and circulation in the poorer parts of the world. Authorities extending to the World Bank argue that unlocking access to knowledge is a crucial intervention necessary to redress such inequality. And whatever one’s political standpoint, restricted or declining access to research can be considered as either as a ‘moral’ or a ‘market’ failure.

For those of us working in disciplines such as anthropology and area (African) studies where research and publishing interests focus on historically poorer or marginal communities and seek to understand and redress such inequalities, the prerogative to mobilize greater access to publications is particularly acute. That goes for publishers and journals both within the African continent and those outside it. The anthropologist’s desire for the subjects and communities of their research to be able to read and interact with their publications, the historian’s ambition to contribute to knowledge at both local and international levels, or the journal editor’s interest in increasing readership are all at stake. Willinsky, whose work concerns wider knowledge production themes, puts it thus:

⁹ INASP programmes of library support for electronic resources, www.inasp.info

¹⁰ See e.g. <http://sparc.arl.org/blog/open-access-latin-america-paragon-rest-world>

¹¹ See Keith Hart’s blog openaccessanthropology.org

A commitment to the value and quality of research carries with it a responsibility to extend the circulation of such work as far as possible and ideally to all who are interested in it and all who might profit from it. ... the open access movement is not operating in denial of economic realities. Rather it is concerned with increasing access to more of the research literature for more people.¹²

The 'economic realities' of OA are a crucial element for those concerned African studies. But first I summarize a few of the developments in the anthropology discipline vis-à-vis OA, relevant to African studies more widely.

Open Access in anthropology

The high impact US journal *Cultural Anthropology* (of the Society for Cultural Anthropology) went fully OA from 2014. It is a project worth watching as the journal both advocates OA¹³ and serves as a kind of experiment in the anthropology discipline where many of the leading journals, including others published by the American Anthropological Association (*American Anthropologist*, *American Ethnologist* etc.), are published by Wiley Blackwell, a for-profit corporation.¹⁴

In the UK *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*¹⁵ was established as a peer reviewed OA journal that publishes original research, and also serves as a platform to advocate for OA in the discipline. Along with *Cultural Anthropology* it has published features and editorial articles on OA. The leading digital anthropologist Daniel Miller argues for example that 'commercial considerations should not vicariously stand in the stead of what purport to be academic criteria. So there seems to be an overwhelming case to support and promote open access publishing ... open access should foster a more global outlook. Anthropologists should seek to level the playing field for publishing, shifting the balance of power away from areas that have been historically dominant.' But Miller also warns that the labour of publishing cannot be dismissed as being 'cost-free'. Peer review requires coordination; copy editing comes at a price. The coding and preparation for searchability that contribute to the effectiveness of online publication have become increasingly significant cost elements.

Neither *HAU* nor *Cultural Anthropology* are 100 per cent transparent about how the journals are funded (but nor, in fairness, are many learned society or subscription/commercial journals). *Cultural Anthropology* prominently advertises for 'donations to its publishing fund' besides depending on membership income. The editors have acknowledged that 'money issues are real, who is paying the bills'.¹⁶ *HAU* advertises from time to time for voluntary editors and translators. Both *HAU* and *Cultural Anthropology* further rely (in common with many journals) on voluntary editorial work from academics and students at prestigious and sometimes well endowed academic institutions. Even so, the long-term sustainability of these journals

¹² Willinsky. p. xvi.

¹³ CA's website http://www.culanth.org/articles/open_access challenges its readers to 'prove that open-access anthropology can work!'

¹⁴ See www.aaanet.org/publications/pubs/

¹⁵ www.haujournal.org

¹⁶ Jackson and Anderson. See also recent email appeal for funds available at https://lists.capalon.com/pipermail/aaasec_sca/2015-September.txt

remains to be seen. And such models may not be easily adapted in developing countries or at institutions with scarce resources of money, time and readily-available editorial skills.

Another contribution to OA in anthropology comes from the Max Planck Digital Library.¹⁷ This shows that there has not yet been a shift of costs from subscriptions to OA fees – but rather that OA is an additional cost borne by institutions, fuelling librarian concerns that OA is increasing their costs. The goal must be to use subscription budgets to cover OA costs whilst transforming existing subscription journals to OA, or to ‘convert library acquisitions fund into a budget for publication services’. Further, Max Planck posits that the money spent on the subscriptions system (specifically in Germany, France and the UK) is sufficient to support a ‘modern, realistic and sustainable system through a large-scale transition to a congruous business model’.

Using its own data on library spending and APCs,¹⁸ Max Planck argues that current subscription expenditure should comfortably cover APCs (at an average of EUR 1,258 in Germany, up to EUR 2,500 in the UK) ‘without any financial risks’.¹⁹ Offsetting models (whereby publishers offset subscription charges against APCs) provide the beginnings of a shift from subscription payments to OA service payments.

The ‘Libraria’²⁰ project was established in 2015 with the Public Knowledge Project and funding from Wenner-Gren, the MacArthur Foundation and the Public Knowledge Project²¹ ‘to explore the feasibility and sustainability of a “cooperative” framework for open access scholarly publishing’, and to ‘model a robust, large scale cooperative alternative to commercial publishing’ – a research and scoping exercise which is being backed by a MacArthur Foundation grant of just under \$500,000. The grant is devoted to (a) gathering financial data from journal and libraries to establish current investment levels in professional quality publishing; (b) consulting with stakeholders – research libraries, scholarly journals, scholarly societies, presses, funding agencies and other about perceived gains and risks of a co-op approach of OA funding, governance and structure; and (c) to develop and assess open source co-op publishing infrastructure for running pilot studies to evaluable impact on scholarly and public quality of this approach to OA publishing.

The principle of such an initiative is that journals and libraries join forces so that subscriptions are replaced by cooperative fees charged to member librarians in a sector where grant money does not cover APCs at the required scale. The aim of Libraria is to put together a bundle of anthropology, archaeology, ethnography and

¹⁷ Schimmer, R., Geschuhn, K. K., Vogler, A., 2015, ‘Disrupting the subscription journals’ business model for the necessary large-scale transformation to open access’, Max Planck Digital Library Open Access Policy White Paper.

¹⁸ Max Planck pays invoices on 50–60% of papers produced by the institution’ authors who publish c.10,000 papers per year. Transition costs to make all papers OA are estimated EUR 12 million and could be covered from their existing subscription budget.

¹⁹ In Germany the APC spend is EUR 140 million, subscription spend is EUR 200 million. In the UK APC spend is EUR 144 million, subscriptions, EUR 160–192 million. In France, APC spend is EUR 92 million, subscriptions, EUR 120 million.

²⁰ <http://libraria.cc/>

²¹ Other partners include the aforementioned HAU and the Society for Cultural Anthropology.

material culture journals that will appeal as an alternative acquisition portfolio for libraries. Libraries would fund the cooperative directly and funds then allocated to journals ‘accordingly to each member’s needs’. According to the project administrator ‘Some members would need funds to cover part of the operational costs of running learned societies; others would need funds to cross-subsidize the publishing of monographs; others would just need to cover their journal’s publishing costs.’²²

But real questions need to be asked of such a schemes – what about the libraries that ‘freeloaded’ off the subscribing libraries via the OA model? What about the long-term sustainability of library funding? What about subject compatibility on which current consortia distribution models partly depend? Or the undeniably competitive culture within the leading academic institutions and between journals? Nonetheless such initiatives are the most developed efforts yet to generate more open models and deserve support in the exploratory phases. It is a *sine qua non* for the established journals that before envisaging moving to such a model there would need to be a collective confidence in its sustainability in the long-term. As the case study of leading African studies journals below shows, it is clear that only the exceptionally well funded institutional journals are able to go OA alone. The rest would depend on such cooperative models. Suber has argued that ‘Large-scale redirection is more efficient than small-scale redirection’.²³

High impact African studies journals

Below I review a selection of African studies journals in view of their progress towards providing greater access, whether gold and/or green OA. I track the steps taken towards improving access, particularly in developing countries. I discuss the financial models of the journals, in particular those of two UK learned society journals *Africa* and *African Affairs* and review author publication fees for OA charged by the group of journals and the quantity of gold OA content published. Finally I consider broader questions of access, knowledge production and scholarly communication, including African authors’ access to publishing in and editing these journals.

At the European Conference on African Studies 6 (2015), Jos Damen, Head of the Library and ICT Department at the African Studies Centre, Leiden, identified a group of major African studies journals (as measured by Impact Factor), which provides the basis of my selection:²⁴

- *African Affairs* – house journal of the Royal African Society, London, published since 1901
- *Africa* – house journal of the IAI, London, published since 1928
- *Africa Spectrum* – house journal of the German Institute of African Affairs, published since 1966. Collaborates closely with the African Studies Association in Germany and cooperates with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation ‘with the aim of further internationalizing the journal’
- *Journal of African History*, published by Cambridge University Press since 1960

²² Email communication, September 2015.

²³ Suber, p. 147.

²⁴ See <https://tondietz.wordpress.com/2015/09/14/guest-blog-publish-or-perish-in-african-studies-new-ways-to-valorize-research/>

- *Journal of Southern African Studies*, published since 1974/75, with Routledge/Taylor & Francis
- *Review of African Political Economy*, published since 1974, with Routledge, Taylor & Francis
- *Journal of Modern African Studies* by Cambridge University Press since 1963
- *African Studies* review (formerly *African Studies bulletin*), the house journal of the (US) African Studies Association, published since 1958
- *IDS Bulletin of International Development Studies*, the journal of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, published since 1968
- *Social Dynamics*, the journal of the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, published since 1975

I take these journals as a convenient sample whilst acknowledging that they stem from a more variegated field, including highly-regarded disciplinary journals in which authors identifying with African studies regularly publish.²⁵ As many of these smaller or disciplinary journals use similar publishing models, similar conclusions may apply.

Nonetheless, a few caveats should be made. This selection does not include non-English language journals, particularly the major French-language journals. Nor does the list include any journal whose main focus is language itself.²⁶ It only includes one journal being principally edited from the African continent (*Social Dynamics*, in South Africa), one journal from the US, and one from mainland Europe (Germany). The other seven are British in origin, the context with which I am most familiar. The continued dominance of the British Africanist journals is also a consequence of colonial and postcolonial publishing histories.

The sample should not be understood as any kind of defence of colonial publishing or of the narrow Impact Factor citation metric itself which is best understood as a proxy for the immediacy of research impact, of materials published in ISI-ranked journals (and does not for example include citations in books). However these journals do offer some kind of reflection of the state of African studies dominating citations of recently published work. Studies consistently confirm that academic authors continue to select journals based on a set of fairly entrenched criteria including journal reputation, relevance, quality of peer review, readership, reach and Impact Factor. ‘Open Access’ is not generally identified with such criteria although it may in time become more relevant as policies mandates become more prominent.

We can also usefully consider submission levels and spread as some measure of journal impact and influence. *African Affairs* and *Africa* both record high levels of submissions, currently around 200 per year. Submissions come from all over the world, but particularly from the UK, Europe, North American and African continents. *Africa Spectrum*, the only entirely gold OA journal in the selection reports increased submissions since becoming OA. The ratio in this sample of 1:10 gold OA journals to 9 subscription journals (10%) is reported by Suber as being typical in many subject fields; and should therefore be considered as unexceptional in African studies. In the

²⁵ E.g. in anthropology – the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *American Anthropologist*, *American Ethnologist*, *Ethnography*; in development studies – *Development and Change*, *Third World Quarterly*; in politics and international relations – *Review of International Studies*; in religion, *Journal of Religion in Africa*.

²⁶ E.g. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *Swahili Forum*, *Nordic Journal of African Studies*.

case of *Africa Spectrum*, no author fees apply, rather the journal is institutionally funded by the German Institute of Global and Area Studies.²⁷ The managing editor of *Africa Spectrum*, Henning Melber, has publicly discussed the successes of the decisions of the German Institute of African Affairs to switch to a funded OA model and to publish exclusively in English.²⁸ He regards the switch to OA as being instrumental to improving the reputation, dissemination, scrutiny and impact of this journal. *Africa Spectrum*'s guidelines state that it 'provides immediate Open Access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge'. The success of this journal and its improved IF in recent years attest to the truth of this statement. OA has enhanced submissions, citations, quality and relevance of the journal's engagements in key scholarly debates.

Financial models

For the other Africanist journals, transition to a comparable gold OA model would require their supporting learned societies or university departments to provide comparable long-term investment. It seems unlikely in the medium terms that the sponsoring societies and departments can afford, or perhaps even would be advised, to go OA alone. It may be possible to secure large-scale institutional or donor funding for a programme of journals (such as GIGA's which includes *Africa Spectrum*), or CODESRIA's journals, but it is difficult for individual journals to make a particular case. Few scholars are loyal to single titles, rather depending on several journals published on various platforms for their work. Appeals for donations to 'publication funds', as *Cultural Anthropology* solicits for example, may constitute a risky strategy. After all, journals supported by major US learned societies (in the case of *Cultural Anthropology*, the journal of the Society of Cultural Anthropology, a section of the American Anthropological Association) would not usually be considered priorities for charitable donations (see more on US foundation support for OA publishing below). The France-based information scholar J. Schöpfel also points to the 'economic inefficiency of gold grassroots publishing'.²⁹ The need for scale economies is particularly important if journals should be expected to run on lower overheads, as is commonly assumed will be the case with gold OA.

The International African Institute (IAI) currently operates with incoming and outgoing resources of around GBP100,000, p.a. Around 80 per cent of this income comes from publication of the journals *Africa* and *Africa Bibliography* and from associated editorial fees from its university press partner (Cambridge University Press).³⁰ The organization is constituted as a UK charity and therefore all surpluses are reinvested in the core activity of producing and disseminating knowledge on Africa. The larger Royal African Society (RAS), also a UK charity, currently earns around half of its annual income (representing more than double the income of

²⁷ GIGA also publishes area studies journals on China, Southeast Asia and Latin America. Other supporting institutions are Hamburg University Press, the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, and the Leibniz Association.

²⁸ The journal was previously published in German.

²⁹ J. Schöpfel, 2015, 'Open access – the rise and fall of a community-driven model of scientific communication', *Learned Publishing* 28(4): 321–25.

³⁰ The journal is owned and managed by the IAI but licensed to the publisher on a contractual basis.

Africa)³¹ from *African Affairs* subscriptions and membership income (a key benefit of which is the journal). *Africa* and *African Affairs* are both supported by the learned societies that own them, whilst contributing significant income to the learned societies themselves.

The learned society publishing model is very established in the UK across the disciplines. Scholarly societies depend on publishing as a substantive activity and source of operating revenues. A recent article on the financial sustainability of UK learned societies³² corroborates that the Africanist societies are broadly typical of UK learned societies in the social sciences which generate their greatest surpluses from publishing. The British Sociological Association and the Royal Anthropological Institute, for example, in common with the Royal African Society and the IAI generate c.30 per cent of their surplus as a proportion of total revenues from publishing. These surpluses are typically used to fund wider developmental activities. In the case of the IAI, to subsidize other publications, notably three book series. In the case of the RAS, journal income helps to support a larger programme of cultural and public events include African book and film festivals. The IAI organizes and sponsors conference panels, provides funding for African delegates, and arranges writing and themed workshops, including several in Africa. Similar workshops are run by the British journals included in my sample, *Journal of Southern African Studies* and the *Review of African Political Economy* to support the work of younger scholars.

Such opportunities for investment in journals and developmental programmes make outsourced publishing to university or commercial presses the preferred route of many UK learned society and other journals. This is further due to economic realities. The pressure of market consolidation makes it difficult for society-run or independent journals to compete on a level playing field. This is a common scenario across other UK learned societies in humanities and social science disciplines. The Royal Historical Society, the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Political Studies Association, for example, all depend on publishing income from university or commercial presses. In the US meantime, *African Studies Review*, the house journal of the US African Studies Association has recently moved, with the support of its academic membership, from publishing its journal in-house to publishing with Cambridge University Press with the aim of improving the profile, impact and revenue earned by the journal for the association. This follows the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh's decision to move its journal *Critical African Studies* from an in-house publishing initiative to the commercial publisher Taylor & Francis. At the same time, learned societies recognize and often promote the fact that free-of-charge access to journal content supports their mission to disseminate knowledge and promote their subject as widely as possible – and publish as much free content as they can afford. Thus they try to achieve a delicate balance reflecting their relative lack of power within market-driven publishing models.

The UK society-owned African studies journals, along with the younger group of British journals generally founded from the 1960s, are sustainable on current business

³¹ Adjusting for membership income, the turnover figures of the two journals are more comparable, although *African Affairs* enjoys a significant additional disciplinary readership as a highly ranked journal in Politics.

³² R. Johnson and F. Fosci, 2015, 'On shifting sands: on assessing the financial sustainability of UK learned societies', *Learned Publishing* 28: 274–81.

models, and able to invest in the field. Learned societies, subject associations, supporting academics and journal editors are cautious about protecting these highly valued academic resources and their wider programmes. It should be noted in case of doubt that as journals more broadly engaged in the humanities and social sciences, these are hardly profitable on the scale of some journals in STEM. The Africanist journals rely in practice on unpaid peer review, and reduced costs of editorial work by employing teaching buyout schemes.³³ Increasing institutional pressures and workloads on academics are tending to require societies and journals to actually provide greater levels of remuneration to their editors. Therefore secure income streams via established university press partners (Cambridge University Press in the case of the IAI; Oxford University Press in the case of the RAS) remain attractive to the journal boards. Potential cooperative models would provide less certain (and presumably lower) income from ‘library partners’. It should also be noted that in the UK the availability of foundation or private university funding for OA projects does not exist at the same level as in North America. Nor do UK journals get the kind of supply-side government funding such as the German *Africa Spectrum* receives. This is the situation with several subscription journals published out of SOAS, University of London, for example. Whilst the School owns and invests in its journals supporting their editors, *Journal of African Cultural Studies* is published with Routledge/Taylor & Francis, and *China Quarterly*, *Bulletin of SOAS* and *Journal of African Law* are contracted with Cambridge University Press. Whilst OA models are inherently desirable within the School, it is far from clear how the journals could become OA in a culture where the message is of increasingly needing to bring funds from outside, the journals remain depend on subscription income and funds for author payment models are not available at the required scale. That said, terrains are shifting and we need to remain informed about sustainable alternatives that afford greater access.

Paid OA in African studies

Considering the Author Processing Charges (APCs) levied to facilitate gold OA in our sample journals, APCs for the Africanist journals published with Cambridge University Press (*Africa*, *Journal of African History*, *African Studies Review*) are £1,695/\$2,700.³⁴ The *African Affairs* (OUP) APC is £1,750/\$2,800. This rises to \$3,000 for Wiley’s *IDS Bulletin*. These APCs are neither calculated proportionately to replace subscription income, nor to offer realistically affordable market rates aimed to increase uptake of OA publication. They are effectively a response to government and research funder mandates that require an OA option for authors. Consequently, levels of gold OA publishing in the Africanist journals remain low.

Published Gold OA articles in the journals sampled, 2013-15

<i>Africa Spectrum</i>	All / 3 issues per year
<i>African Affairs</i>	3 (1 each from Tufts, Toronto, Warwick (UK)) / 4 issues per year
<i>Journal of African History</i>	0 / 3 issues per year
<i>Journal of Modern African Studies</i>	0 / 4 issues per year
IDS Bulletin of International Development studies	0 , but includes quite a lot of ‘free’ articles for limited time periods / 6 issues per year
<i>Africa</i>	6 (5 of these are in Medical Anthropology)

³³ By covering the teaching costs of a more junior academic to buy out the time of a senior professor.

³⁴ APC figures quoted are of 2015.

	funded by Wellcome via UK institutions, all are from authors in UK institutions – LSHTM / Cambridge / Birmingham) / 4 issues per year
<i>Journal of Southern African Studies</i> (JSAS)	3 (2 from LSE, 1 from Yale) / 6 issues per year
<i>Review of African Political Economy</i>	0 / 4 issues per year
<i>African Studies Review</i>	0 / 3 issues per year
<i>Social Dynamics</i>	0 / 3 issues per year

The total number of articles published by any particular journal will vary, but at a glance the rate of gold OA publishing in these journals (excepting *Africa Spectrum*) does not currently exceed 2 per cent. Peter Suber reports 2 per cent as being the average rate of uptake of gold OA in hybrid journals.³⁵ By that measure, again there is nothing exceptional about OA in African studies journals. *Africa*, *African Affairs* and *JSAS* have been able to attract some funding for gold OA from the higher ranking UK and North American universities. *Africa* has received funds also from the Wellcome Foundation owing to its inclusion of medical anthropology articles (effectively paid for from science funding). But there would appear to be little OA funding available to researchers in history, politics or development studies. No funding has come to these journals from African studies scholars in continental European institutions (typically about a quarter of articles published in *Africa* are from authors based in continental Europe). Perhaps predictably, none has come from scholars in African institutions (again, about a quarter of articles published in *Africa* come from scholars in African institutions).

For the British Africanist and many of the related disciplinary journals, gold OA depends on individual or institutional ability to pay an APC of c.£1,700/\$2,800 for a single paper. Author processing fees for OA are therefore not a likely sustainable model in African studies as funding is not available in the UK that scales with current research and publication levels. A 2015 Research Councils UK study on implementation of its OA policy emphasizes the disproportionate level of OA fees going to STEM journals, with almost 40 per cent of funding being transmitted to two publishers, Wiley and Elsevier.³⁶ Moreover, to reiterate: APCs are not set as proportionate to the current subscriptions income levels of the journals. If gold OA take-up were to increase through greater research funds becoming available, forcing journals to reduce their subscription prices, the likelihood is that the publishers would raise the APC rates, once again making them unaffordable. For many humanities and social sciences scholars in the developing world paid OA, even at current levels, remains a highly unlikely prospect. And the ethical question remains for all scholars: whether payments to commercial publishers are the most effective use of scarce research funds? (and when a ‘green’ OA route is available – see below). Suber has written ‘Fee-based OA journals tend to work best in fields where most research is funded, and no-fee journals tend to work best in fields and countries where comparatively little research is funded’.³⁷ We can conclude, therefore, that gold OA

³⁵ Journals that include both paid Open Access and subscription-access articles.

³⁶ <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/documents/Openaccessreport.pdf>, see in particular Table 4 on p. 13.

³⁷ Suber, p. 142.

funded by author publication fees is unlikely to become the dominant model in African studies for the foreseeable future.

Developing country access schemes

Access to education, knowledge and technology are recognized as key vectors in closing the gap with more developed countries and are the drivers of developing country access schemes. These currently offer wide-scale, access to journals in developing countries. A snapshot of these journals' access arrangements shows the following:

<i>African Affairs</i> £19/\$36 personal rates in Africa. Also part of OUP's developing country initiative where journals are institutionally available through INASP scheme, EIFL, Research4Life.
<i>Africa</i> journal available through all INASP developing country consortia schemes employed by CUP – EifL, SANLIC, MALICO – which consortia access in Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, gratis electronic and print subs by agreement with IAI, which is quite an extensive project although recent analysis shows that the journal has little circulation in Nigeria, a major focus of research article coverage in the journal and therefore a major problem in terms of research communication with scholars in this country.
<i>Journal of African History</i> – no specific info on journal website but presumably available through CUP schemes noted above.
<i>Journal of Southern African Studies</i> special rates for ASAUUK (£40), no special details.
<i>Review of African Political Economy</i> – no special details no website.
<i>Journal of Modern African Studies</i> – no specific info on journal website but presumably available through CUP schemes.
<i>African Studies</i> review no specific info on journal website but presumably available through CUP schemes noted above; available to members of the (US) ASA.
IDS Bulletin of International Development studies – ‘available to qualifying institutions for free though HINARI, AGORA and OARE schemes’.
<i>Social Dynamics</i> – no special info.

Although limited, such schemes do represent significant improvement since Willinsky's *Access Principle* was published. But as Jonathan Harle's more recent work has shown,³⁸ access in developing countries depends on more than the technical electronic availability of electronic journals. Harle's important point is worth quoting at length:

the problem of availability – that is the provision of affordable or free journals and other resources in online form – has been widely and successfully addressed over several years. Taking top-20 ISI ranked journals as a proxy measure, the four universities [in Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania] considered have a journal availability approaching that of major European universities. ... The access problem needs to be understood through a deeper analysis of the complex and interwoven factors which determine the ease with which academics and students can “get into” and make good use of electronic resources, and their reasons for doing so. ... Relatively low levels of research activity, at least of a scholarly nature rather than consultancy work, go some

³⁸ Harle, J. 2010, 'Growing knowledge: Access to research in east and southern African universities', available at <https://www.acu.ac.uk/focus-areas/arcadia-growing-knowledge>

way towards explaining the relatively low levels of journal use. ... Cultures of research have been eroded or have been slow to develop in some faculties, with low departmental activity not simply the result of resource constraints, but also due to the low priority given to research and postgraduate supervision. This translates directly into low demand for journals and a reduced need to access and explore them. ... Researchers' abilities to make effective use of e-resources are often underdeveloped – including their skills both to search and explore databases, and to successfully access and download full-text articles from these. While a tendency to rely on Google is to be expected, very basic search strategies mean that not only is high-quality content often not found, but also subscription resources which the university has secured access to, and often paid for, can remain unnoticed. ... The management and presentation of resources through library websites is particularly critical. ... The status and recognition of librarians within the university system needs to be raised, if they are to do their jobs effectively. It was evident during the course of this study that much success depends on institutional processes, structures and systems, and on the personal drive and dedication of individuals within these.

Future access initiatives therefore need to go beyond functional definitions of OA among policy makers of making academic research freely available online to address other barriers to access.

Repositories and green OA publishing

The growth of institutional and subject repositories is a big topic. A few summary comments are offered here in connection with their place in African studies. As Schöpfel³⁹ points out, repositories and green OA largely represent institutional access interests. For example, institutional repositories are better tools for academic evaluation than bibliographic databases. Institutional and subject repositories are recognized as providing a fast and relatively inexpensive route to green OA for existing publications (pre-prints of journal articles) as well as access to theses and dissertations.

All the Africanist journals included in this study support green OA, allowing authors to publish pre-publication versions of their papers in institutional, subject or commercial repositories. All the journals in this sample are certified as 'green' OA journals by SHERPA–RoMEO and other bibliographic indexing services.⁴⁰ Such green OA policies allow authors to deposit pre-reviewed papers in any repositories, and peer-reviewed accepted article versions in institutional and non-commercial subject repositories. The published Version of Record cannot however be copied to any site outside the formal journal publication without formal permission. Many presses prohibit work being made available on commercial sites such as on academia.edu. There is however variation in publisher policies, which may be a source of confusion and difficulty for repository managers – the University of California Press journals program, for example, asks authors to deposit the published version as best reflecting the quality work done by the press.

³⁹ Schöpfel, op. cit.

⁴⁰ SHERPA, see www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeoinfo.html; European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences, a project of the European Science Foundation, see <http://erihplus.nsd.no>.

The small volume of gold publication in the high-impact British African studies journals correlates with the common Research Council and institutional mandate that does not insist that scholars publish in a gold OA journal but rather that scholars make their work available via a repository, from which metadata and full text can be harvested. Institutional repositories have mushroomed both in the UK and Africa, notably in South Africa where almost all universities have some kind of institutional repository⁴¹ and are likely in the medium to long term to provide the fastest route to OA in the humanities and social sciences. Another African example is the repository established at University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar which has digitised materials from the university's foundation.⁴² Leiden African Studies Centre has endeavoured since 2005 to aggregate repositories holding items of interest to African studies via its 'Connecting Africa' tool.⁴³

There is however a greater need for aggregation and coordination of repositories in our fields. According to Suber, '[t]he most useful OA repositories comply with the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (PMH), which makes separate repositories play well together. In the jargon, OAI compliance makes repositories *interoperable*, allowing the worldwide network of individual repositories to behave like a single grand virtual repository that can be searched all at once'.⁴⁴ Much remains to be done both at the level of African universities and in the Northern countries to develop and support repositories, aggregate the various existing repositories and provide useful subject repositories and search tools.⁴⁵

On the extent to which subscriptions journals may be negatively affected by the scaling up of green OA and repositories, Suber and others argues that surveys of librarians show that it is hyperinflationary subscription charges remain the key issue: 'toll-access journals have more to fear from their own price increases than from rising levels of green OA.'⁴⁶ There are additional benefits of repositories beyond providing green OA to published papers. Notably, in the social sciences and African studies, theses and dissertations constituting important research resources that may not be published in other formats are a particularly important output that can be made available via repositories. Most UK universities now have requirements on PhD students to deposit theses and dissertations.

However, the impact of such repositories on research and publication cultures in African studies, in common with other humanities and social science disciplines, where articles tend to serve as pre-prints or introductions to forthcoming monographs, remains to be seen. Whilst repositories need to be recognized as nascent publishing initiatives and as important digital archives for research, a more comprehensive understanding of the landscape of repositories in Africa and African studies would be

⁴¹ See http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/academic-and-research-libraries/publications/reggie_raju.pdf, and list of SA repositories at <http://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/repositories.html>

⁴² Bibliothèque Numérique Université Cheikh Anta DIOP, <http://196.1.97.20/greenstone/cgi-bin/library.cgi?site=localhost&a=p&p=about&c=theses&l=fr&w=utf-8>

⁴³ <http://www.connecting-africa.net/index.htm>

⁴⁴ Suber, p. 56.

⁴⁵ The International African Institute is undertaking a pilot project. See <http://www.internationalafricaninstitute.org/repositories.html>

⁴⁶ Suber, p. 158.

valuable.⁴⁷ Repositories may simply become a route for researchers to fulfil institutional requirements whilst facilitating access and assessment, with the business of peer review, editorial work, and book and journal publication essentially retaining their traditional place in knowledge production and scholarship.

Authorship and editorship

Problems of scholarly communication and access in African studies cannot be exclusively addressed through OA. As Schöpfel suggests,⁴⁸ most academics are principally concerned with scholarly communication at large (rather than OA per se), i.e. with the access needed to materials for research and teaching. Participation of African scholars in publishing and editing research remains a longstanding key issue of scholarly communication. The full inclusion of African scholars from the continent and in the diaspora in writing for and editing the high impact journals considered here has not yet been achieved.

Thinking therefore about ‘access’ as a broader principle than as typologies of OA, I conclude this survey with an overview of some current rates of inclusion of authors and editors of African ethnicity in the sample of African studies journals discussed in this paper. The inclusion of work by African scholars in the high-ranked journals, and in particular of African scholars serving as editors – commissioners, decision-makers, gatekeepers – of what gets published in the journals still remains a challenge. A review of work published 2013-15 presents the following snapshot of African authors being published: in *Africa Spectrum* (28 authors/co-authors), in *Africa* (18 authors/co-authors); *JSAS* includes a large proportion of authors from South Africa; there is a high-proportion of inclusion of African authors in *Journal of Modern African Studies* perhaps reflecting a tradition of co-authorship in development studies. These four journals all project a strong ethos of promoting African authorship, of commitment to encouraging and assisting junior African scholars to publish in the journals, of helping with access to key literature and of running writing workshops aimed at the same. The *Journal of African History* is currently the only journal in the group to have a significant track-record of employing African editors.⁴⁹ All the Africanist journals surveyed here need to address Africanization of their editorship. Promoting African editorship – including colleagues as editors on journals from both within the continent and the diaspora – would confer greater legitimacy on editorial review and decision-making and provide more African scholars with the material and status benefits that accrue to journal editors, such as stipends and grants for conference travel, besides enhancing African scholars’ reputations and profiles.

Questions of editorship (effective control over journals), and related matters of institutional support for journal editing, including the provision of editorial skills, remain important access issues. Recruiting academics from African institutions to the established journals’ editorial boards may also help drive access policies that improve the availability of resources within the African continent. Such matters are frequently raised by academics and subject associations at writing workshops and programmes aimed at increasing the number of published articles by African scholars. We should

⁴⁷ Another point the IAI project is investigating.

⁴⁸ Schöpfel, op. cit.

⁴⁹ Cheikh Babou and Keith Breckenridge currently serve as editors; Emmanuel Akyeampong was a recent prominent editor. *Africa* has recently added Wale Adebani as a co-editor.

not let awareness of these persistent structural barriers, of critical importance to leading African scholars and intellectuals and their colleagues internationally, be overshadowed by OA debates but rather use the present OA focus to enable a broader discussion about access and equity in relation to knowledge production.

Conclusions

Current limits on OA publishing in the leading African studies journals (and social sciences and humanities subjects more widely) include the relatively low amount of gold content. In the UK, where seven of the ten journals surveyed here originate, further funding for gold OA seems unlikely, at least in the medium term when public finances in higher education are being severely constrained and the trend is towards increased privatization of the sector. In the UK, income from university presses, commercial publishers and other journal aggregators therefore remains a secure and reliable source for many journals. In this respect there is little exceptional about African studies within the wider social sciences and humanities fields.

It is also fairly clear that only in exceptional cases (such as with the German-funded *Africa Spectrum*) can journals transition to OA on their own. Other individual Africanist journals cannot necessarily rely on such public investment, or indeed on the US philanthropic model of foundation funding for OA.⁵⁰ Studies such as that done by the Max Planck library, and planned OA cooperative models, such as the Libraria project, may offer a more promising route to avoiding the multiple publishing systems of gold OA, subscription journals and repositories, as a way of organizing larger-scale sustainable OA. The economies of such experiments remain to be tested, particularly for the high impact, major journals that are expensive to produce and currently generate significant subscription income. Long-term sustainability would be a key issue for most journals.

The green route is available to all authors publishing in the leading Africanist journals and may offer a more sustainable form of OA long term, but its success will ultimately depend on the functionality and long-term funding of repositories by libraries and institutions. In the UK, given that it is hard for smaller publishers (including individual journals and learned societies) to fundamentally shift the market, some influential subject associations and funders are arguing for improvements to and investment in the green model and repositories as means of expanding access. For the UK Africanist journals, and African journals licensed to university press and commercial publishers, green OA is seen as compatible with the subscription model. Things seem therefore to have been settled for now as a mixed model of subscription journals with plus green OA/deposits of articles in repositories, and occasional gold content.

In most African countries, library funding where for subscriptions, OA publication charges, cooperative models, or repositories, is a major issue. It is unlikely that cooperative OA models would transfer to Africa without supporting library resources.

⁵⁰ Notable projects testing sustainable models of OA include 'Pay it forward', funded by Mellon; the Open Library of Humanities Library Partnership Subsidy System, an academic-led, gold OA publisher with no author-facing charges funded by the Andrew Mellon foundation, which covers its costs by payments from an international library consortium; the Indiana University Digital Library Program, Michigan Library's MPublishing programme, OAPEN (European OA book project) and Knowledge Unlatched, a global library consortium.

The work of AJOL has demonstrated the fundamental resource scarcity of African journals whatever the publishing models – whether subscriptions or OA.⁵¹ A Latin American-style model of government funding for OA may offer the greatest hope but would be dependent on expanded state funding and policies to support local publication and libraries.

Many African studies journals are already available freely or at reduced rates electronically as part of consortia arrangements in African and other low-income countries. Such access programmes will remain important and their impact should improve as internet coverage is expanded.⁵² However, availability does not correlate with access in a straightforward way. Such schemes, along with the OA initiatives taken by the journals sampled here do not address deeper access and knowledge production problems prevalent in historically disadvantaged communities.

Key words: African studies, journals, Open Access

⁵¹ ‘Current State of Scholarly Journal Publishing in Africa’, <http://www.nasaonline.org/attachments/article/217/Murray%20-%20AJOL%20study%20on%20Schol%20Pub%20in%20Africa%20-%20NASAC%20Jan%202015.pdf>
See also <http://africanwords.com/2014/10/02/publishing-in-africa-and-african-studies-review-asauk-2014-part-2/>

⁵² The digital divide continues to aggravate access claims. Recent approximate statistics, as reported by AfricaFocus Bulletin (21 September 2015), suggest about 16.2 per cent of Africa’s population use the internet, as compared with 45.2 per cent of the population of the rest of the world; but there is positive change in that in the more ‘advanced’ African markets it is projected that around half of mobile phone users will soon have access to a smartphone.