

**Library Board Meeting**

2 October 2023

**Context to reviving the Library Board**

When the Open Library of Humanities (OLH) launched as a scholar-led project in 2013 it was governed by a committee structure. Committees met online and were tasked with discussing particular directions for the emerging organisation – which led to the design and launch of the OLH as a diamond open access publisher in September 2015. The LibTech Committee brought together librarians, software activists, and other scholarly communications professionals to consider how best to establish a sustainable organisation supported by library funding.

As the OLH celebrates its 10th anniversary since the original project was first founded, we find ourselves at an exciting moment of transition. We have recently begun a five-year plan for growth in 2023-2028 supported by our host institution, Birkbeck, University of London. This has involved staff investment (taking our team up to 10 full-time OLH staff), a substantial rebranding exercise, and plans for improving our in-house open-source publishing platform Janeway, as well as expanding its user base.

From the inception of the OLH, libraries and librarians have been vital. Forging closer links between librarians and academics has allowed us to prove that a diamond open access publisher can thrive along not-for-profit principles. We would like our library partners to be actively involved in the strategic direction of the OLH during this phase of expansion. We’re delighted to be reviving our former committee structure into a new governance structure – comprising the Library Board, the Publishing Technology Board, and the OLH Steering Committee.

**First steps**

The Library Board should be given the time and space to discuss its own operational processes. It will be chaired by Dr Caroline Edwards as OLH Executive Director with support from Paula Clemente Vega as OLH Marketing Officer, but it should feel free to determine how it best represents the library community that funds OLH’s publishing activities. The following are some suggested topics for discussion in establishing how the Board might run:

* Will meetings be biannual or annual?
* Will discussion or action items take place between meetings?
* How will Board members gather feedback from the OLH LPS library community they represent?
* What processes should be established for the OLH team to respond to feedback and implement recommended changes?
* How will the Board report its activities to the wider OLH LPS library community?
* Are any special projects or working groups required to work on particular library-related issues?

**Recent OLH developments that affect library partners**

The OLH has been working hard behind the scenes over the past 12 months to improve all areas of our publishing activities. The following are some areas of achievement, work in progress, and areas that we have identified as requiring improvement that we think are relevant to our LPS library partners.

**OLH rebrand**

We have been overdue a rebrand for some time to sharpen our image, improve our visual communication, and overhaul a website that had become baggy and confusing for users over the years. After 8 months of work on this project, which involved user experience research with key stakeholders, we now have all of the graphic design digital assets and have almost completed the rebuilding of a brand-new site (which sits on top of Janeway). Our [beta site is live here](https://olhbeta.janeway.systems/). Please note that it is under active development so some information may be missing or incorrect! We are completing the website development, page styling, and copy-writing this month and hope to be able to soft launch the new site in November 2023, with a full rebrand announcement in January 2024.

**COPE membership**

We are preparing an application to join the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). In order to meet COPE’s eligibility criteria, the OLH Editorial Team has been working closely with journal editors on a thorough review of publisher- and journal-level policies. This has taken c. 9 months, and we anticipate being ready to submit our application in Spring 2024.

**Improving our archival preservation**

In response to CrossRef’s recent [Labs Preservation Report](https://the-vault.fly.dev/) (Summer 2023), which tested the preservation practices of 7 million articles, the OLH has reviewed its current archival and preservation practices. Currently, all OLH journals are archived with Portico and CLOCKSS (controlled Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe), as well as securely backed-up offsite on 3 servers in 3 different countries, for added security. This gives us a silver rating according to CrossRef. We’re keen to earn a gold rating, which requires having a third externally managed archival service, and are currently in discussion with the Internet Archive about achieving this.

**Improving our metadata & discoverability**

All OLH journals are indexed by the following services:

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)

CrossRef

OCLC

Datacite

ISSN Portal

British Library legal deposit

Sherpa Romeo

JISC Knowledge Base+

Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers, including ERIH PLUS

ChronosHub

EBSCO Knowledge Services

ScienceOpen

OpenAIRE

As of 2023, we are in the process of joining the following services:

Scopus

Clarivate services, including Web of Science, ExLibris and ProQuest.

Journals’ metadata are also harvested by the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) and Google Scholar.

We would be grateful to hear from the OLH library community whether there are any significant archival, indexing, or discoverability and interoperability services that we should join to improve our service for OLH journals.

**Higher-tier LPS membership**

We launched our higher-tier LPS membership scheme in 2021, giving UK universities the chance to voluntarily support us at the higher membership rates of Bronze, Silver, and Gold (£5,000 / £7,500 / £10,000). The scheme expanded to other countries and currently includes 18 LPS members at the higher tiers.

 We’ve decided to launch a new Platinum tier for our “super supporters,” set at £15,000 p/year. Our first Platinum supporter, the Dutch Research Council (NWO) has recently confirmed its support at this level, and we will use the press release in October 2023 to launch the Platinum tier. We have also added a price calculator to the LPS signup page on our new website based on geographical location as well as FTE size, in response to feedback from library users.

**Expanding our portfolio of OLH journals**

As part of our drive to encourage more LPS signups and grow our library community, we’ve been working hard on expanding our portfolio of OLH journals. We have several new “flips” from subscription journals that have not yet been publicised – including *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* (formerly a Wiley-Blackwell flagship journal, est. in 1966), *Review of the History of Economic Thought and Methodology* (formerly published by Emerald Insight, est. in 1983), and *Regeneration* (formerly published as *Resilience* by the University of Nebraska Press and sold to Taylor & Francis, est. in 2013). We have also accepted *[in]Transition*, the critically acclaimed video essay journal of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS), formerly hosted by Media Commons.

 This takes the number of OLH journals (as of Spring 2024) up to 31. Our plans for expanding the portfolio at a sustainable rate (in terms of editorial support and LPS funding) are based on accepting 3 journal migrations per year and we have a lot of interest for our 2024 round of applications.

**Protecting the community governance of OLH journals**

One of our ongoing editorial tasks (which overlaps with the COPE application mentioned above) is to enshrine community ownership and governance of all OLH journals. When journals join us, we are clear that the OLH does not “own” any of their content. We see our role as liberating journals from commercial publishers!

 We’ve been working closely with the editors of all OLH journals to articulate the journals’ ownership within their scholarly communities and ensure this information is visible on all journal websites. Many have never considered questions of governance before, and we have provided guidance on how to establish sustainable governing bodies – particularly important for journals not formally affiliated with scholarly associations.

**Advocacy, collaboration, and professional membership**

We’re working hard to professionalise the OLH. This has involved our rebranding project, building a new website, improving our own internal organisational structures, securing investment to hire new OLH staff and crafting attractive career paths for staff that reward their passion, commitment, and expertise, producing a sustainable budget for the coming 5 years with our host institution, rewriting our publisher-level policies, strengthening links across our growing Janeway user community, and also expanding our advocacy activities.

In terms of expanding advocacy efforts, we have written to the recently established Open Access Institutional Publishers (OIPA) group and are also in conversation with the Library Publishing Coalition (LPC) to become a member of their Strategic Affiliate Program. We have strong links with OASPA with 2 of our OLH staff currently sitting on their boards (Caroline Edwards is on the Board of Directors and Andy Byers is on the OA Toolkit Advisory Group) and also the team behind Plan S. We have been meeting with DIAMAS as part of their research in drafting the Extensible Quality Standard in Institutional Publishing (EQSIP). Furthermore, we are keen to support CoARA as another organisation working for change in research assessment, which impacts authors’ decisions on where to publish. Although the OLH is not eligible to join (since we are a publisher), we are in conversation with Birkbeck to consider an institutional level of support.

 We would be grateful to hear from LPS partners whether there are other organisations that library partners would like us to work with.