

JLSC

ISSN 2162-3309 | JLSC is published by the Iowa State University Digital Press | <http://jpsc-pub.org>

Volume 12, 2 (2025)

The time for action is now: Equity and sustainability for diamond publishing in Aotearoa New Zealand

Luqman Hayes & Craig Murdoch

Hayes, L. & Murdoch, C. (2025). The time for action is now: Equity and sustainability for diamond publishing in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 12(2), eP18311. <https://doi.org/10.31274/jpsc.18311>

This article underwent semi-anonymous peer review in accordance with JLSC's peer review policy.



© 2025 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The time for action is now: Equity and sustainability for diamond publishing in Aotearoa New Zealand

Luqman Hayes

Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau

Craig Murdoch

Auckland University of Technology Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau

ABSTRACT

Diamond open access journals make a significant contribution to scholarship globally while enduring a precarious existence due to a lack of funding. The purpose of this study was to identify the necessary characteristics of a shared service that would deliver improved sustainability for diamond journals in Aotearoa New Zealand. We conducted semi-structured interviews with several of the editors of journals hosted by Tuwhera, Auckland University of Technology's diamond hosting service. We sought to understand their experiences, both positive and negative, via thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. These themes indicate that our diamond journal editors face significant burdens due to lack of funding, which threaten the unique contribution they make as journals of and from Aotearoa. We conclude that a shared open infrastructure is the most appropriate way to ensure the sustainability of diamond journals in Aotearoa, but that it must be accompanied by shared services that address the administrative and journal production load currently experienced by editors. We propose that such an endeavor should be funded by shifting a small percentage of existing library subscription expenditure from profit-making publishers to diamond journals.

Keywords: diamond open access, shared infrastructure, publishing equity, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, sustainability, Tuwhera, open research, Aotearoa, library budgets, bibliodiversity, radical librarianship

Received: 08/16/2024 Accepted: 12/02/2024



© 2025 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the CC BY license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

INTRODUCTION

Tuwhera's open journal hosting service was launched in 2016 with two previously established, peer-reviewed open access (OA) publications. Since then, it has grown to support 20 active OA journals, a monograph series, seven eBooks, and four conference proceedings. The journals hosting service, run on Public Knowledge Project's Open Journal Systems (OJS), is supported by a small number of staff from Auckland University of Technology (AUT)'s Te Mātāpuna Library and Learning Services, with application support and server provision from the University's IT services.

Supporting diamond¹ OA publishing, or publishing free from article processing or author-facing charges, is a values-based mission that has underpinned Tuwhera since its inception. Those values are informed and inspired by Māori concepts such as whaihua, āwhina, manaaki, and mana tangata, which are woven into philosophies of mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori². This translates to an approach to Tuwhera that is grounded in nurturing and inspiring new growth and possibility by enabling the wider sharing of our research.

Mindful of the financial and institutional factors that threaten the longevity and sustainability of diamond publishing, the authors have reflected on the possibility of creating a national shared open infrastructure for research institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand, support for which has been growing among the country's scholarly communications and academic librarians. We therefore undertook to research the perspectives and experience of our editors, and to gauge their views on the possibility of scaling a single institution system to one that supports diamond publishing across multiple sites, while staying true to an agreed set of values and principles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diamond open access journals

In 2003, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) noted the need for reform of the scholarly communication system ([The ACRL Scholarly Communication Committee](#),

¹ For the purposes of this article, we take diamond journals to include the spectrum of definitions for OA journals free from all author-facing and reader-facing charges, such as community-led, scholar-led, academic-led, and library-led.

² Whaihua is an adjective meaning useful, informative, worthwhile, or beneficial, and a verb to have value or benefits. Āwhina is a verb meaning to assist or help as well as the noun for assistance. Manaaki is both a verb and a noun meaning to support, take care, protect, show hospitality, respect, or generosity towards. Mana tangata relates to the mana (authority, power, influence) of (tangata) people. Mātauranga Māori means the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, its worldview and perspectives, expression and practices. Te ao Māori – Māori worldview encompassing its language, culture, and political and social structures.

2003). The ideas discussed in that paper can be traced directly to our current understanding of diamond journals, which are now an established part of the academic publishing landscape. In a blog post, Sir Tim Gowers (2012) popularized the term and concept of “diamond open access”. In 2013 Fuchs and Sandoval (2013) published the first definition of the diamond OA model: “not-for-profit, non-commercial organizations, associations or networks publish material that is made available online in digital format, is free of charge for readers and authors and does not allow commercial and for-profit re-use” (p. 438). More recently, Dufour et al. (2023) suggested a more compact definition: “We consider that diamond open access refers to open access publication without direct funding by authors” (p. 3).

In 2021, a comprehensive study estimated that there are up to 29,000 diamond journals worldwide (Bosman et al., 2021). Many of these are part of significant, well-established collectives like African Journals Online (AJOL)³, AmeliCA⁴, SciELO⁵, Openjournals.nl⁶, and Nepal Journals Online (NepJOL)⁷. Others are small collections hosted by universities and other institutions, such as our own, Tuwhera⁸. Numerous standalone journals also exist, run by individuals or societies.

Studies of diamond journals

A small body of literature describes the unique nature of diamond journals. An early study of New Zealand journal publishers concluded that “[a]n interesting and necessary project might be to devise models for scholarly communication that defend the diversity and independence of society journals and keep smaller journals viable, while still providing OA” (Rowland, 2005, p. 308). Later studies acknowledge the special contribution diamond publishing offers to the knowledge production ecosystem. Ma et al. (2023) note that “bibliodiversity calls for an inclusive and diverse scholarly communication landscape ... smaller, non-profit and/or library publishers are more likely to take on controversial topics and perspectives, as well as emerging scholars who may be sidelined due to unconscious biases based on their affiliations and personal characteristics such as, for example, ethnicity, race, gender identity, sex and country of origin” (p. 4).

³ <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajol>

⁴ <http://amelica.org/index.php/en/home/>

⁵ <https://scielo.org/>

⁶ <https://openjournals.nl/>

⁷ <https://www.nepjol.info/>

⁸ <https://tuwhera.aut.ac.nz/>

Bosman et al. (2021) argue that diamond journals are more multilingual and have a stronger regional and community focus. Adema and Stone (2017, p. 47) describe an “ethics of care” as a feature of diamond journals—this applies “specifically to ‘below the line issues’ such as peer review and citation practices, in an effort to make these more inclusive” and foster marginalized scholars and scholarship.

Diamond publishing contributes to the development of open source technical solutions, such as OJS, which drives increased bibliodiversity. “[S]cholar-led publishing is a force to be reckoned with when it comes to technical solutions tending towards increased bibliodiversity” (Wrzesinski et al., 2021, p. 1). In turn, the improved tools make diamond publishing more accessible, usable, and sustainable.

Challenges and threats

Diamond journals exist in a challenging environment, the primary reason for which is a lack of funding (Borchardt et al., 2024; Kuchma & Ševkušić, 2024). It is only through this lens that more specific challenges may be understood. These include the journals’ small size, uncertain legal standing and governance, difficulty finding reviewers, a lack of content visibility and indexing in proprietary databases, and a reliance on volunteers (Bosman et al., 2021).

Article processing charges (APCs)⁹ and the dominant position of the profit-making publishers are seen as threats to diamond journals. While bibliodiversity is fostered and enabled by diamond publishing, “[t]he predominance of a few commercial publishers and the gold open access model, however, is diametrically opposed to bibliodiversity and counters the core values of the open access movement” (Ma et al., 2023, p. 2).

Becerril-García (2019) notes the curious fact that diamond journals seem “not to exist in the mainstream [indexing] databases” and suggests this is a result of the profit-making publishers having an effective monopoly that allows them to impede competition (pp. 11, 13). An interview subject in Adema and Stone (2017) stated that the “major indexing services ... are controlled by publishers, and they are pretty predictive with respect to what they deem to be scholarly content, to what they are going to index” (p. 62). Fuchs and Sandoval (2013) describe the journal selection methodology of the Thomson Reuters indexes as lacking transparency and objectivity, leaving diamond journals struggling to even know what is required of them.

⁹ Also known as gold OA.

Sustainability of diamond journals is the focus of Wrzesinski et al. (2021), who define sustainability as “enabling journals to publish constantly, with forethought, agilely, and efficiently” (p. 24).

Collaborative infrastructure and services

In addressing sustainability, the literature points to the need for shared, collaborative infrastructure to enable economies of scale and long-term technical stability (Becerril-García, 2019; Ma et al., 2023; Yoon et al., 2024). Both Ma et al. (2023) and Adema & Moore (2021) nevertheless argue for “scaling small”, in recognition that the unique community-focused, high-trust, caring nature of diamond journals could be lost in large ecosystems.

Recent studies recognize the need for shared services sitting alongside infrastructure (Bosman et al., 2021). Kuchma and Ševkušić (2024), in a study of the African diamond journal environment, note that “[m]ore than three quarters of the respondents (77.4%) would consider collaborating with other organizations, with the most popular areas for collaboration being training, support and/or advice on publishing policies and best practices, IT services, production, communications and editorial services” (p. 6).

Relevance of this research

Studies have been published based on surveys of diamond journal editors (Bosman et al., 2021; Dufour et al., 2023). Shook and Vecchione (2022) published a recent study based on interviews with faculty on their perceptions of OA publishing. Several researchers have conducted surveys on librarian perspectives of OA and specifically diamond publishing (Bosah et al., 2017; Sultan & Rafiq, 2021). While some of the subjects of these studies may also have been diamond journal editors, we can find no studies focusing specifically on the perceptions of diamond journal editors using interview as a method.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method of thematic analysis was employed in carrying out this study. This enabled us to identify, analyze, and discuss common themes within the data. The data were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with editors of Tuwhera journals. As a methodology, thematic analysis allows for a nuanced reading of the kinds of rich, layered data that are derived from such dialogue.

Editors from Tuwhera’s 18 active journals were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews in an expert capacity. Editors from nine Tuwhera publications agreed to participate in

the research. Eleven interviews were carried out in total, including one that featured two editors from the same journal, where editorship is shared between academics from two institutions. Two of the editors from another journal also chose to be interviewed, but separately. In all other cases, one editor from each publication was interviewed.

Of the nine publications featured, three were newly established journals when they launched on Tuwhera. Of the remaining six, five had been publishing regular issues for five years or more and one less than five years. Three of the journals had been publishing for more than twenty years when they joined Tuwhera (see [Table 1](#)).

Journal code	Established	Hosted on Tuwhera
J1	1994	2016
J2	2008	2017
J3	2017	2017
J4	2018	2018
J5-A, J5-B	2004	2018
J6-A, J6-B	1976	2019
J7	1990	2019
J8	2017	2021
J9	2022	2022

Table 1. Tuwhera journals

In all but two cases, both authors of this paper were present to conduct the interviews. The interviews were all carried out online apart from one case in which the editor requested to have the interview conducted in person. All but one of the online interviews was conducted over Microsoft Teams video, with one carried out over Zoom. The Teams recording and transcription function was used to record the interviews, with the Zoom cloud recording function used in the single Zoom interview. Written notes were also taken by the authors. The automatic transcripts from the recordings were manually checked and cleaned by the authors to correct any inaccuracies and misspellings generated by the transcription software.

The interviews were designed to enable each of the editors to describe their experience of running an OA journal on Tuwhera, uncovering the operational, personal, and professional challenges and successes in doing so. We sought to explore the editors’ values and aspirations, as well as to ask what they perceive as being the future for Tuwhera, and diamond OA more broadly, in Aotearoa, the Pacific region, and the world.

While a set of questions was pre-determined, adopting a semi-structured approach to the interviews opened the space for both interviewer and interviewee to build on, explore and augment some of the questions and discussion, where significant or pertinent to the aims of the study. This allowed for a freer exchange of ideas and opinions and enabled the interviewers to probe the interviewee on specific points of interest or where expanding on a particular thought might provide richer data.

The resulting transcripts were read and re-read with thematic patterns noted by the authors. A broad set of themes was observed in the data which were subsequently refined and named, and further categorized as falling into identifiable positive or negative characteristics, experiences, and outcomes.

ANALYSIS/THEMES

The data reveal limiting factors that negatively affect the management and sustainability of Tuwhera journals, along with an equal (if not greater) number of positive outcomes, characteristics, and aspirations associated with them.

Lack of time/personal expenditure

The workload of a full-time academic in Aotearoa New Zealand is framed by certain generally accepted parameters. Typically, 40 percent of a role is allocated to teaching, 40 percent to research, and 20 percent theoretically left for work broadly defined as professional activities, or “service”. This 20 percent is where, for most of the editors surveyed, managing and editing a journal resides, alongside activities such as media appearances and interviews, webinars, peer reviewing, mentoring, et cetera.

All of the editors interviewed expressed the extent to which having limited time to commit to their journals is a consequence of the structure of their jobs:

If we're 40-40-20...that's...what we're supposed to be. It doesn't come into teaching, and it doesn't come into research. So, everything gets packed into that very expandable 20 percent of an academic's job. **Editor J2**

All of our jobs are busy...But you know...we try to cram these things together and get them out and keep it going. **Editor J7**

Limits on time are further compounded where there are additional demands due to challenges with staffing levels:

My TTH¹⁰ is 240. I'm currently doing...320. And... if you have some kind of portion of TTH to be able to dedicate ourselves inside our...academic journey, it will be already great. You're not necessarily [having] to do during the weekends. **Editor J9**

Lack of recognition and financial support

Time constraints within the academic's role are a dominant theme in the data. This is coupled with a deeper sense, shared by many of the editors surveyed, that the work undertaken to maintain and contribute to diamond publications that are affiliated to their institution is not recognized, valued, or acknowledged professionally or financially by that institution:

Our weekends..., our holidays are being appropriated by the university to do this kind of work. So...that does...lead quite directly to some quite sticky kind of ethical questions. **Editor J2**

For some, the labor associated with being a journal editor is no longer perceived as integral to the role of the research-led academic and therefore has implications for how that work is funded:

The biggest issue is time...In the past academics had much more dedicated time...ring fenced time for research...which includes editorial work. **Editor J3**

This is despite the positive contribution that running such publications brings to the institution in terms of opportunity and reputation:

If I were going to publish, it's going to be me paying every form of cost...[T]he school itself just didn't give a single dollar. It means, how much the institution see as something is important for the community, even though that we [are] publishing, you know, emergent researchers. **Editor J9**

That absence of credit can be viewed conversely, as a reflection of the commitment that editors have to their publications:

It's something made by love. Because it's absolutely all my free time...I translate everything for free. I never get much recognition [*sic*] from the school itself. **Editor J9**

¹⁰ Timetabled teaching hours (per semester).

Lack of copyediting and administrative support

Among the most time-consuming tasks that editors undertake, copyediting, proofreading, and formatting are the most widely cited in the data. In some cases, this work is shared between editors on a journal, while in others it falls to one editor to undertake that labor.

For an editor on a more recently established journal, copyediting is “what takes up most of my time” and is “way more time consuming than I originally thought it would be” (**Editor J4**).

For another editor, it is among a number of tasks that lead to a feeling of overwhelm, along with the sense that more important editorial duties should be prioritized. Furthermore, undertaking copyediting can be perceived as duplicating work:

[It’s] that kind of gradual realisation that...you’re not actually the editor, you’re the copy editor and everything else as well...I’m so overloaded...it’s just ridiculous... I just don’t have time to do copyediting. **Editor J2**

It’s exciting to read the papers and send them out to review...and we have a strong sense of community around that. But the copy editing is fairly tedious, because they’re papers we’ve already read and approved of. **Editor J5-A**

[Copyediting] sits on the shoulders of academics, who would rather do their own research...and, as [co-editor] says...reviewing papers and reading them to make sure they fit the journal—this is all interesting work. And this is all important work that we can’t really outsource. But then, going through...the grammar and the typos...that is very challenging. **Editor J5-B**

Limitations of financial support

The editors on one of the well-established journals pay for a copyeditor but do so out of personal funds, a decision made in order to ensure the journal’s survival. The alternative, the editors report, is to “persuade” two or three other people to carry out the work, sharing the copyediting of 15 articles per year “which is quite a load actually” (**Editor J6-B**).

We’ve had very little if not zero financial support from the universities... And that’s been really financially very hard on [co-editor]. And we’ve had to pay the sub editors...and all the costs, particularly when we used to mail the journal out. And that was financially not sustainable. It still isn’t. We still haven’t got a funding model. **Editor J6-A**

The reliance on voluntary labor for essential journal production tasks highlights the vulnerability and precarity of such arrangements:

[The journal has] relied very heavily on my wife, who does the design work...If we had to pay for that sort of work outside it would be very unsustainable. **Editor J1**

Two of the publications are able to raise modest funds to assist with marketing, communications, occasional print runs and, in one case, copyediting and layout. The governance on this publication, being through a trust, differs from the others but has provided sufficient funding to employ an individual to carry out those tasks. For all the other editors interviewed, there is an absence of financial support available:

We're expected to account for everything we do financially...So every hour that I spend on [*journal name*], it's like, well, who's funding this? **Editor J3**

Funding, when it is available, can be short term, such as through grants or time-specific research funding allocations. This again highlights the precarious and unsustainable nature of such ad hoc support (or, indeed, the absence of a viable, secure funding model):

Last year...we actually were successful in getting PBRF¹¹ money to help with the research assistant to help us...Not sure how sustainable that is. **Editor J3**

The majority of interviewees comment that having the guaranteed funds to provide assistance would have enormous benefits to them as editors:

I think [co-editor]...does a huge amount of work which is unrecognised...financially unrecognised...[T]hat would be a real step forward...if we could somehow or other access some funds which would...pay somebody to do the final proofreading, the copyediting...that would be great. But also...[co-editor] is a doing huge amount of work for nothing, and it would be good if we could have even...notional compensation for him. **Editor J5-A**

If I [could] have a couple of...hours of a research assistant, it will relieve me so much in terms of what I could do in terms of communication. **Editor J9**

How do people find the time? ...Maybe...there needs to be an FTE associated with editing a Tuwhera journal. **Editor J2**

¹¹ Performance-Based Research Fund. PBRF is currently under review in Aotearoa NZ.

In most cases, the editors report that this lack of support with copyediting, administration, and associated tasks restricts their ability to engage with processes involved in helping to evolve their publications, and to, in one editor's words, "invest more time in that creative side of things." This may take the form of marketing and communications, it may be undertaking the work required to adhere to criteria needed to be indexed by services such as Scopus or the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), or it may relate to thinking and planning ways to develop the journal's editorial identity, coverage, and perception:

I would like to do more...strategic work...bringing new people on board and... branching out. This is all a lot of work, and it has to be spread out over years, really, because there's just not the time available to do it in six months.

Finding the time to do the work to do Scopus indexing is a challenge. I wanted to have done the Scopus indexing about a year ago...but I had to spend my time to... bring more people on board to free up the time to do this work which I'm doing right now.

... I think this is the conundrum in which we operating... We [are] trying to grow, we grow. We have less time to grow. We have to do...the work on the ground. **Editor J5-B**

Ultimately, these barriers encountered by the editors can threaten the ongoing existence of their publications:

"[H]aving limited resources...to be able to carry on is quite hard." **Editor J8**

Limited training and technical support

Training and ongoing user administrative support for Tuwhera editors is provided by two to three librarians from AUT Library. This is, on the one hand, acknowledged as being highly valued and useful, a safety net without which some editors feel a sense of resignation:

Without the technical (OJS) support from Tuwhera, "I probably would have given up." **Editor J3**

However, for others the training provided is insufficient. Time away from the system means they may forget workflows and refreshers are required, but not necessarily formally available:

I still don't know how to use the software and I'm completely frustrated...I wasted a couple of hours last week trying to upload someone's review because they had been unable to upload it themselves...And I'm not engaging with the software enough to actually...get familiar enough with it so that I'm confident. **Editor J2**

Technical frustrations and time spent learning new systems again lead to loss of focus on priorities of editorial responsibility and journal management.

I am frustrated because I took on the role [of editor] with good faith and wanted to get the journal going again...properly. **Editor J2**

Limitations on the provision of technical and user administrative support can affect some individual editors more than others, particularly where technical competencies may vary:

I'm always in trouble with the website and [co-editor] is always having to rescue me. So...please bear in mind that there are really...digitally incompetent people like myself who are trying to use this. Trying to get from the reader interface to an editor interface, and sometimes to a reviewer interface, is a bit challenging. **Editor J5-A**

Lack of support for marketing and communication

A further challenge to running a Tuwhera journal is in sourcing the support and expertise needed to help market and develop its profile. While connecting to community and building an audience is important, knowing how best to nurture and grow that connection is a skill set that most editors either feel they lack or do not have the time to commit to.

One journal attempted unsuccessfully to use marketing students to develop a strategy for growing their readership, noting "I don't know anything about marketing, right? And studying that will take a lot of time, but I don't. I work weekends as it is..." (**Editor J4**).

The resource required to maintain what one editor refers to as a "perception of quality" in which there is a consistency of style in terms of the language used to suit both academics and practitioners goes beyond the published content to the overall image and reputation of the journal:

That's...the biggest issue all the time. How can you actually do that? How can you be relevant? How can you be quality? How can you ensure that people know about you? **Editor J6-B**

That paucity of support prevents editors from planning or executing strategies that could broaden the visibility and reach of their publications. This, in turn, leads to a perception that they will remain small:

I think it limits the scale. I think it means that we just get less publications and we have less time for using social media or just for sharing, you know, for enlarging our network...[to] bring it to the attention of more people. So, I think it's more scalability that's an issue. **Editor J3**

The barriers to raising awareness also include the need to promote and educate the wider academic body on the significance and impact of diamond open publishing:

There needs to be more understanding by the academics of the power of this...A lot of us are quite old and...there's a lot of people over 55, who're working at AUT and other universities...[I]t's quite hard for them to understand all this stuff...You talk about diamond open access...a lot of researchers might not know what that means, what it could do in the region. **Editor J3**

Greater visibility and enhanced reputation aids the process of recruiting new editorial team members. For many of our editors, the challenge of an aging workforce has a direct implication for succession planning. Those editors who have attempted to engage younger researchers have had little success:

We've brought in a few to help at one point or another and they freak out...we've got...to slowly bring people and to work on it and then to take ownership. It just takes a little bit of time and finding people who are interested. **Editor J7**

The biggest challenge we've faced is that we're all of a sort of more or less a generation that's...getting older, and we haven't been able to...We've got one or two younger people come in, but none of none of them are actually involved in the production of the editorial side...And that's I think one of the big headaches for us is how do we attract...? **Editor J1**

Where organizational changes and restructures have impacted academic staffing levels, there is a further level of uncertainty that threatens a publication's sustainability:

That's a...real big worry for us because so many of us...now are on short-term contracts...We're...just hanging, hanging there by a thread. What happens to those of us on the periphery? **Editor J6-A**

Perception, ranking, and indexing

Many of the Tuwhera journals provide researchers with opportunities for early or even first publications in academia. This presents numerous challenges, from the additional workload required to bring copy up to standard, to how it affects the way the journal is perceived within the wider scholarly communications landscape:

We probably work with some papers that other journals would...reject out of hand because of the quality of the first submission, but with a little bit of... scaffolding support and feedback, quite a few of these articles make it to an acceptable standard, which I think is a good service that we provide for the sector and for the discipline really, especially for emerging researchers. Which creates then the challenge of...the journal lives not just from emerging researchers, but...to raise the quality or the standard of the journal we also would need more copy from...established researchers and in between, to...raise the standard of everyone within.

Editor J5-B

The values that underpin the running of the journals, whether in relation to supporting emergent researchers or connecting more closely with the community, can operate in opposition to the standards set by profit-making publisher-designed rankings and metrics systems:

I think the biggest challenge for us has become...how academia values and...how it ranks journals...As much as you would like to run a publication in a certain way to make it inclusive to, to really connect with communities, the way the model of academia now is such that what has been for the last 20 years or so is something such that you have to jump through the ranking hoops and get your publication to stand out and have some kind of prestige. **Editor J4**

Not participating in indexing services like Scopus, due to its prioritization by the academic establishment, has implications for attracting submissions:

The other challenge that we face...is where the Scopus indexing is becoming important...[A]cademia...is more and more focused on the international rankings which is tied to Scopus. And... to stay attractive for national academics to publish, we need to make sure that the journal is actually indexed in Scopus, which wouldn't change any of the quality or any of the work that we are doing, but it is important... just having this tick box. **Editor J5-B**

Furthermore, despite the off-putting and arduous work required to participate in the rankings and prestige game, some editors continue to be aware of and be steered by the power and influence of such perverse systems on their professional careers:

The technical, administrative side of things that take up a lot of time to research and find out how to sign up to these things and how they work. Which ones are useful, which one aren't. But I think that's the biggest hurdle. All because people get promoted and measured based on ranking of the journal. **Editor J4**

Nurturing and mentoring early career academics

Tuwhera editors expressed a strong desire to foster the skills and experience of early career researchers in a positive, encouraging environment. They are acutely aware that the review processes used by traditional journals, particularly around peer feedback, can often be intimidating and disheartening. A common goal of the journals is to “reject as a last resort”, through working closely with authors whose articles need revision to get them to an acceptable level for publication:

We use a scaffolding kind of approach, very community focused—I mean, we have rejections but we keep them fairly small because most of the submissions we get are genuinely interested in a conversation with the sector, and so we try to support authors through to [publication]. **Editor J5-B**

[W]e offer something that's a little bit more personalised in our responses and in our support, we probably give a bit more support, especially to emerging researchers and students who submit articles that need quite a lot of work. **Editor J3**

This support is a significant commitment in time and emotional energy but is an activity that several expressed a passion for. They noted the contribution that this work makes to scholarship and career progress. Accompanied by this type of editorial nurturing, “reject as a last resort” does not lead to a lack of quality. Rather it leads to a wider, more diverse pool of scholars capable of communicating their research effectively:

[This] became for many of my colleagues the first time they published. So we create almost a culture of mentorship towards publishing. **Editor J9**

We have a really useful position for people making their first publication because we are incredibly helpful compared with many journals ... we will put in a lot of effort to bring a paper up to standard. **Editor J5-A**

For some people, let's say it's the first or second or third journal article they ever published and it's very much getting them going. So there is something about developing the field there that we find is quite important. **Editor J6-B**

Fostering Indigenous voices

Our editors observed that traditional journals and their processes can be a questionably safe space for Indigenous researchers. Their diamond journals recognize this by fostering the voices of those researchers, along with Indigenous research methodologies:

So just to add another element that I think is really important, almost half of the participants from [journal name], they come from Te Ara Poutama and they are Māori. In some ways, Māori are terrified because they don't trust journals. They usually are never accepted because the language and everything is just full of barriers. **Editor J9**

Editor J5-B recognized the need to be more engaged with and more “friendly” towards Indigenous researchers and topics. The journal has appointed Māori associate editors as part of an “initiative over the last couple of years to be more attractive for indigenous researchers, in New Zealand and overseas.”

Others expressed the belief that, in platforming marginalized voices, they are doing something unique:

I've seen our role as a publishing entity that supports marginalised voices right from the very beginning. And we've always approached the journal from that perspective. And we realised that the type of publishing that we do, no other journal's doing that. **Editor J1**

The rationale, the point of [journal name] is that there are very, very few journals that have a Māori or Indigenous sort of identity or brief. **Editor J2**

Some editors observed the difficulty for Indigenous authors in getting published in traditional journals, and the sensitivities around dealing with Indigenous research and data. One editor, a recent immigrant to Aotearoa New Zealand, noted his observation that publication itself could be healing and empowering for Indigenous researchers:

[Indigenous researchers] want their voice to be heard somewhere. And it seems that whatever pain they carry, it seems to dilute when they spread these words around. **Editor J9**

Access for non-academic audiences, industry, analysts

Diamond journals provide access to academic research for lay (or non-academic) audiences. A high value is placed on reaching a non-academic readership due to the lack of paywalls or institutional subscription requirement:

After switching to open access we noticed a really big difference in the readership. For example, in some articles we've had several thousand reads...which we would never have got that scale. **Editor J1**

In addition to OA, or possibly because of it, editors noted the importance of style, length, and voice for non-academic readers:

[We] need to be much stronger in how we communicate and disseminate research in an accessible way ... shorter articles free of jargon. **Editor J3**

We're trying to change some of the journal articles a little bit by making them shorter and sharper and more focused on day-to-day issues. **Editor J6-B**

These journals also provide a publication platform for industry voices and for practice-led research:

Our journal provides marginalised groups, Pasifika, Māori, and trade unions with an avenue of expression that they are also able to write commentaries, research notes, full blown articles and get exposure to their ideas in the journal, and have a wider exposure that open access allows. **Editor J6-A**

Editor J5-B noted the significant barrier APCs create for those outside the university system:

We want to be available to the sector, and we want to be available for people in the sector to publish in. And if we would have authors paid model [APCs], then we would get no copy from anyone who's not in a university.

There would be a number of people that might not necessarily be employed by a university, for instance, who can read the articles and *submit them too* [emphasis added]. **Editor J8**

Diamond journals provide researchers with a venue for discussion with practitioners. This leads to a better connection of research to practice—a beneficial cycle of applied research

and real-world impact results. The editors point out that this includes the need for a broader range of views to be heard by those who work in policy development. Their journals seek to enable this:

[W]e want policy makers to actually have access to the latest research. **Editor J4**

Encouraging diverse formats

The editors encourage research publications in new and diverse formats. These may have a difficult path to acceptance in a traditional journal, they may suit particular genres of research, and they may suit particular forms of individual expression. While outside the scope of the traditional research article, they are seen as valid and worthy, and expand the communication of research activity to fresh, new perspectives and challenges:

We wanted an open access journal that allowed for creative submissions. So, many of the people who submit use methodologies that might be hard to publish elsewhere. They incorporate poetry or auto-ethnography, so stories about themselves within context to the topic they're researching. Or they might have photographs and drawings and things like that. And so they often find it hard to find a place where they can express research in that way. **Editor J8**

Thus, diamond journals not only provide a forum for marginalized voices (as noted above), they actually challenge the notion of what is acceptable knowledge production. They expand the traditional concept of what research should look like and sound like:

[It's] more than just giving voice to people on the margins, but actually allowing a new kind of or a different, a diverse kind of discourse to appear and be supported.

Editor J8

Being part of the community

Tuwhera editors run local and regional journals that reflect their communities, both academic and societal. The journals are nimble, recognizing the need for flexibility to adapt to changing community needs. The focus is on applicable research, in accessible form, making a genuine contribution to the places they live and work and from which they derive their research:

We see [the journal] as a service to our community ... the community of working teachers. **Editor J5-A**

The journals are increasing their use of special issues. Benefits include addressing current issues in a coherent and timely way, and providing scope for the fresh perspectives of guest editors and space for new and lesser heard voices:

We try to do one special issue a year ... we have somebody totally outside to put forward an idea and run with it. And they can do things in terms of the wider field [of the journal]. So we can widen it out a bit. And that means that we will always have more up to date issues that we can tackle. **Editor J6-B**

Te Tiriti o Waitangi¹²—Decolonizing the journal itself

Some of our editors reflected on the context of running journals in a society struggling with its history of colonization. Alongside supporting Indigenous voices, they are also actively seeking to decolonize the journal itself. In some cases, they see themselves making a small contribution to a global goal of decolonizing the production and dissemination of knowledge:

So our [journal name] sort of necessitates that our approach to publishing is also decolonising, otherwise you don't walk the talk. **Editor J4**

We're a journal of employment relations, we shouldn't be exploiting our workers. **Editor J6-A**

(Referring to submission to traditional journals) And certainly when you're trying to publish some of our research that's used different methodologies inspired by kaupapa Māori¹³ research you feel you're almost colonising your research all over again by rewriting it to fit the requirements of a journal that's based on westernised, science-based knowledge. **Editor J8**

¹² *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*—the te reo Māori version of the treaty signed between Māori and the British Crown in 1840. *The Treaty of Waitangi*, the English language version, is significantly different in wording. The authors regard *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* as the authoritative version.

¹³ Kaupapa Māori—a philosophical doctrine incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of Māori society.

DISCUSSION

Shared values and purpose

There is a genuine sense of shared values and a shared purpose between our editors and Tuwhera/the Tuwhera team itself. The editors question whether those values would be shared in a lived sense by the profit-making publishers. Our diamond journal editors treasure values like nurture, compassion, authenticity, collaboration, local community impact, and honoring obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Any proposed infrastructure or services would need to be built upon these values and be committed to upholding and honoring them.

Sustainability

Tuwhera editors agreed that the most significant barrier to sustainability of their journal is the amount of administrative and pre-production work they do just to keep the journal running. Despite sometimes exorbitant prices, profit-making publishers are attractive due to their provision of layout, design, and copyediting services. These are the areas into which the service provided by Tuwhera needs to expand.

Paying for services like proofreading, layout, and communications is prohibitively expensive both for a diamond journal itself, and for a small provider like Tuwhera. These services could be provided as a shared pool of resources that can be drawn on as needed. There was significant excitement and support from our editors when they considered the possibility of a shared national infrastructure and services for diamond journals:

Well, I'd be absolutely incredibly enthusiastic about that because I see that as being a solution to many of the challenges of small journals that are stand-alone publications. It's that shared production capacity and support that I think is very attractive to many editors because it takes away a lot of the headaches that we have to approach for every edition. **Editor J1**

Absolutely, that will be absolutely wonderful ... this is something that can change the whole landscape of knowledge itself. It can ... you know, change the world. **Editor J9**

And I'm thinking it's a great idea because, you know New Zealand is a small place in terms of population ... And though we have quite a lot of universities, in terms of the number of people we have here, it's quite important that we pool our resources. **Editor J6-B**

It all comes down to money

We have been given a clear message that the full potential of our journals will only be unlocked once our existing offerings are complemented by services that directly address our editors' most significant challenges—the likes of proofreading, copyediting, layout, design, marketing, and communication. In a small country, this can only be done cooperatively.

The nature of a Tuwhera diamond journal is that things are done differently for very good reasons. While on the surface they appear to serve the same purpose, in the end it is perhaps futile to compare diamond journals with the journals of the profit-making publishers. “Big” journals thrive on reputation, impact factor and their importance in tenure and promotion decisions. Diamond journals thrive on contribution to community, nurture of early career authors, and platforming marginalized voices and methodologies.

Both these have their place, but only one is prioritized in budgets.

As such, the elephant in the room remains the allocation of funding by the academic and research communities. We choose to spend millions upon millions of dollars with the profit-making publishers while we spend virtually nothing on our diamond journals. In doing so we make our values clear. Regardless of the reasons—budget inertia, cost visibility, publisher pressure, purely neo-liberal measures of impact—the contribution and even existence of diamond journals is not valued.

Discussions around bibliodiversity provide some level of recognition and support for diamond journals. We agree with Ma et al. (2023), who argue that APCs are “driving the destruction of bibliodiversity” (p. 2). Without action in the form of investment, the potential of diamond journals will not be realized. They will continue to subsist and be tolerated rather than survive and thrive. The “Jussieu Call for Open science and bibliodiversity” makes clear that bibliodiversity and innovation in publishing can only thrive if solutions like diamond journals are a budget priority, and it outlines a method for re-directing spending: “Current journal subscription spendings should be changed into investments enabling the scientific community to regain control over the publishing system and not merely into new spendings only earmarked to pay the publication fees for researchers to commercial publishers” (“Jussieu Call for Open science and bibliodiversity,” 2017).

Honoring our obligations to Māori

From an Aotearoa New Zealand perspective, serious consideration must be given as to whether the traditional journal publishing model honors Te Tiriti o Waitangi, Aotearoa

New Zealand's founding document. At a national level, this is a complex and emotive issue, one that cannot be understood outside the terms of tikanga¹⁴. Nevertheless, it remains the obligation of New Zealanders, especially those working in colonizer institutions, to uphold the mana of tangata whenua¹⁵. This means making space for Māori researchers and methodologies (mātauranga Māori); publishing in te reo Māori¹⁶; self-determination in research; respect for the sovereignty of Māori data; and mana motuhake¹⁷ in the entire publishing process.

CONCLUSION

Our research clearly demonstrates both the value of diamond OA publishing, and the burden it places on researchers and editors. In doing so, it has revealed the characteristics of as well as the need for a sustainable, values-based shared service. In terms of funding, there can be little doubt that the societal contribution of diamond journals is significantly greater than the investment it receives.

It is our position that the return on investment created by diamond journals in Aotearoa New Zealand is unlikely to be replicable in any useful way by the profit-making publishers. This is particularly true of honoring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. There is no mandate, nor the requisite knowledge and cultural intelligence, to enable this at a profit-driven, offshore publisher. Indeed, it is not a role that could ever be done competently or appropriately.

Addressing these issues at a national level requires investment. Stable, predictable funding for a national diamond journal infrastructure and associated services would ensure diamond journals are afforded the mana-enhancing respect they deserve. This will require vision and courage but is affordable and achievable. The eight New Zealand universities collectively spend \$67 million annually on journal subscriptions and read and publish agreements ([Council of Australian University Librarians, 2020](#)). This money, effectively funded by taxpayers, is almost all spent offshore. A small portion of it redirected towards diamond journals would enable sustainable, equitable open infrastructure and service. We propose that the time for action towards this goal is now.

In the appendix, we outline an idea for infrastructure and services, with broad costings.

¹⁴ Tikanga—customs, values, and practices embedded in Māori culture and social contexts.

¹⁵ Tangata whenua—Indigenous people. From tangata (people) and whenua (land and/or placenta).

¹⁶ Te reo Māori—Māori language.

¹⁷ Mana motuhake (noun)—autonomy, self-determination.

REFERENCES

- Adema, J., & Moore, S. A. (2021). Scaling small; Or how to envision new relationalities for knowledge production. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 16(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.16997/wpc.918>
- Adema, J., & Stone, G. (2017). Changing publishing ecologies: A landscape study of new university presses and academic-led publishing: A report to JISC [Report]. JISC. Retrieved August 2, 2024, from <https://digitallcommons.unl.edu/scholcom/80>
- Becerril-García, A. (2019). The value of the scholarly-led, non-profit business model to achieve open access and scholarly publishing beyond APC: AmeliCA's cooperative approach. *Septentrio Conference Series*, 1, Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.7557/5.4964>
- Borchardt, R., Schultz, T., & Dawson, D. (2024). Financial and other perceived barriers to transitioning to an equitable no-publishing fee open access model: A survey of LIS journal editors. *College & Research Libraries*, 85(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.85.1.96>
- Bosah, G., Okeji, C. C., & Baro, E. E. (2017). Perceptions, preferences of scholarly publishing in open access journals: A survey of academic librarians in Africa. *Digital Library Perspectives*, 33(4), 378–394. <https://doi.org/10.1108/DLP-03-2017-0011>
- Bosman, J., Frantsvåg, J. E., Kramer, B., Langlais, P.-C., & Proudman, V. (2021). *OA Diamond Journals Study. Part 1: Findings*. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4558704>
- Council of Australian University Librarians. (2020). *CAUL Statistics. 2020 Academic Libraries* [Dataset]. https://www.caul.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/stats/2020_caul_statistics.xlsx
- Dufour, Q., Pontille, D., & Torny, D. (2023). Supporting diamond open access journals. *Nordic Journal of Library and Information Studies*, 4(2), 35. <https://doi.org/10.7146/njlis.v4i2.140344>
- Fuchs, C., & Sandoval, M. (2013). The diamond model of open access publishing: Why policy makers, scholars, universities, libraries, labour unions and the publishing world need to take non-commercial, non-profit open access serious. *TripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*, 11(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.31269/vol11iss2pp428-443>
- Gowers, T. (2012, July 2). *A new open-access venture from Cambridge University Press*. Gowers's Weblog. Retrieved August 15, 2024, from <https://gowers.wordpress.com/2012/07/02/a-new-open-access-venture-from-cambridge-university-press/>
- “Jussieu Call for Open science and bibliodiversity.” (2017, October 10). Retrieved August 13, 2024, from <https://jussieucall.org/jussieu-call/>
- Kuchma, I., & Ševkušić, M. (2024). *Landscape of no-fee open access publishing in Africa*. Zenodo. Retrieved August 2, 2024, from <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.12792474>
- Lewis, D. W. (2017, September 11). *The 2.5% commitment*. <https://doi.org/10.7912/C2JD29>

Ma, L., Buggle, J., & O'Neill, M. (2023). Open access at a crossroads: Library publishing and bibliodiversity. *Insights*, 36(1). <https://doi.org/10.1629/uksg.613>

Rowland, F. (2005). Scholarly journal publishing in New Zealand. *Learned Publishing*, 18(4), 300–310. <https://doi.org/10.1087/095315105774648852>

Shook, E., & Vecchione, A. (2022). Faculty perceptions of open access publishing: Investigating faculty publishing habits to evaluate library collection alignment. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 10(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.31274/jlsc.13216>

Sultan, M., & Rafiq, M. (2021). Open access information resources and university libraries: Analysis of perceived awareness, challenges, and opportunities. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 47(4), 102367. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2021.102367>

The ACRL Scholarly Communication Committee. (2003). Scholarly Communication: Principles and strategies for the reform of scholarly communication: Issues related to the formal system of scholarly communication. *College & Research Libraries News*, 64(8), Article 8. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.64.8.526>

Wrzesinski, M., Riechert, P. U., Dubois, F., & Katzenbach, C. (2021). *Working with publication technology to make open access journals sustainable* (Working Paper 2021–2). HIIG Discussion Paper Series. Zenodo. Retrieved July 26, 2024, from <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4558781>

Yoon, J., Ku, H., & Chung, E. (2024). The road to sustainability: Examining key drivers in open access diamond journal publishing. *Learned Publishing*, 37(3), e1611. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1611>

APPENDIX 1

DIAMOND OPEN PUBLISHING INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES FOR AOTEAROA

The following thoughts are based on our knowledge of what has worked well for Tuwhera journals, and our learnings from the interviews with our editors. We assume a full scoping exercise has been completed, and the decision made to proceed.

Infrastructure and associated provider services

A multi-tenant, multi-instance OJS platform, with an expectation of rapid uptake to 100+ titles (including migration of ~70 existing diamond OJS titles).

- Cloud hosted in Aotearoa by locally owned provider (data sovereignty)
- Dedicated virtual servers for production, test and development, with load balancing, warm redundancy, 24/7 support, multi-location backups
- Cloud storage and network transfer
- Infrastructure support and administration
- Maintenance including yearly OJS upgrades, patches, staged migrations
- Development budget including support for upstreaming and working with the OJS community
- Journal portal and shared service website, running on VuFind®

Maximum estimated cost – NZD500,000 per annum.

Shared services

A set of services available to editors at no charge (based on 2,000 articles per year - 100 titles, 2 issues per year, 10 articles per issue).

- Journal set-up and OJS training
- Supported themes and plugins
- Production - proof-reading, copyediting, layout, file conversion (PDF, ePUB, HTML)
- Indexing and persistent identifiers
- Communications support

Administration

- 2 FTE – management, administration
- Overheads and operating costs
- Contribution to OJS and VuFind® projects

Maximum estimated cost – NZD400,000 per annum

Funding

Funding for the shared infrastructure and services is based on the eight New Zealand universities investing 2.5% of their current subscription and APC spend of \$67,000,000 (Council of Australian University Librarians, 2020). This would provide a starting point of \$1,675,000 per annum. The 2.5% figure is derived from “The 2.5% Commitment”, in which David W. Lewis argues that “every academic library should commit to contribute 2.5% of its total budget to support the common infrastructure [software, projects, repositories, organizations] needed to create the open scholarly commons” (2017, p. 3). Given the narrower scope of our proposal, we acknowledge that expecting a percentage of the total budget is unrealistic. Rather we follow the *Jussieu Call* in seeking a “like-for-like” transition—switching spending with commercial publishers to investment in diamond journals.

APPENDIX 2 FURTHER READING

Adema, J., & Moore, S. A. (2018). Collectivity and collaboration: Imagining new forms of communality to create resilience in scholar-led publishing. *Insights*, 31(0). <https://doi.org/10.1629/uksg.399>

Adema, J., & Moore, S. A. (2024). ‘Just one day of unstructured autonomous time’: Samuel A. Moore supporting editorial labour for ethical publishing within the university. *New Formations*, 110(110–111), 8–27. <https://doi.org/10.3898/NewF:110-111.01.2024>

Björk, B.-C. (2019). Open access journal publishing in the Nordic countries. *Learned Publishing*, 32(3), 227–236. <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1231>

Cameron-Pesant, S. (n.d.). *Knowledge synthesis. The past, present, and future of scholarly communication*. UNESCO Chair on Open Science. Retrieved July 26, 2024, from <https://unesco>

[.ebsi.umontreal.ca/en/publications/knowledge-synthesis-the-past-present-and-future-of-scholarly-communication/](https://ebsi.umontreal.ca/en/publications/knowledge-synthesis-the-past-present-and-future-of-scholarly-communication/)

Cetto, A. M., Alonso-Gamboa, J. O., & González, S. C. (2010). Ibero-American systems for the dissemination of scholarly journals: A contribution to public knowledge worldwide. *Scholarly and Research Communication*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.22230/src.2010v1n1a17>

Crow, R. (2006). Publishing cooperatives: An alternative for non-profit publishers. *First Monday*. <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v11i9.1396>

Hagve, M. (2020). The money behind academic publishing. *Tidsskr Nor Legeforen*, 140. <https://doi.org/doi:10.4045/tidsskr.20.0118>

Lewis, D. W., Goetsch, L., Graves, D., & Roy, M. (2018). Funding community controlled open infrastructure for scholarly communication: The 2.5% commitment initiative. *College & Research Libraries News*, 79(3), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.79.3.133>

Moore, S. (2019). Revisiting ‘the 1990s debutante’: Scholar-led publishing and the pre-history of the open access movement (postprint). *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 2019, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.24306>

Moorefield, J.C. (n.d). *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*. <https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/>

Octavio Alonso-Gamboa, J., & Russell, J. M. (2012). Latin American scholarly journal databases: A look back to the way forward. *Aslib Proceedings*, 64(1), 32–45. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00012531211196693>

Packer, A. L. (2009). The SciELO Open Access: A gold way from the south. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education/La Revue Canadienne d'enseignement Supérieur*, 39(3), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.v39i3.479>

Piwohar, H., Priem, J., Larivière, V., Alperin, J. P., Matthias, L., Norlander, B., Farley, A., West, J., & Haustein, S. (2018). The state of OA: A large-scale analysis of the prevalence and impact of open access articles. *PeerJ*, 6, e4375. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.4375>

Robie, D. (2024, July 15). *Pacific media academics slam global research journal model, defend regional niche titles*. Asia Pacific Report. <https://asiapacificreport.nz/2024/07/15/pacific-media-academics-slam-global-research-journal-model-defend-regional-niche-titles/>