



## Minutes of the OLH Library Board

Held on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 at 3pm UTC via Microsoft Teams.

**Present:** Caroline Edwards, Paula Clemente Vega, Robert Atkinson, Maureen Walsh, Susanne van Rijn, Shiela Winchester, Katrina Wiberg, Theo Andrew, Agnes Ponsati.

**Apologies from:** James Kessenides, Oya Rieger, and Demmy Verbeke.

### 1.0 Welcome and thanks

- 1.1 Caroline Edwards (CE) welcomed everyone to the first board meeting and expressed gratitude in the context of heavy workloads.
- 1.2 Each member of the board provided a brief introduction and their professional interest in open access.
- 1.3 CE suggested using the pre-circulated OLH Report to the Library Board and the questions as a way to structure the session.
- 1.4 Board member Demmy Verbeke (DV) circulated remarks in absentia. DV fully supports the reestablishment of the Library Board and the openness/involvement this represents but is also glad to see the plan is to meet (only) biannually or annually. This sounds sustainable, given other commitments on multiple open access committees and advisory boards. DV reports that they chair a working group about the future of scholarly publishing at KU Leuven and will use the OLH rebrand as a chance to update the group about the OLH. DV also reflects that the new Platinum tier for library membership will likely be of most interest to funding agencies or national library consortia but is beyond the funds of ordinary library budgets.

### 2.0 Aims and logistics of the Board

- 2.1 CE proposed that CE and Paula Clemente Vega (PCV) may offer a supporting role as OLH staff, but that the Board might have its own agency and decisions-making powers. For example, the minutes could be published but this is something the board could decide amongst itself.
- 2.2 The Board expressed that their motivation was to help the OLH and be guided by what feels most helpful and urgent. Any other aims can evolve naturally, but the primary aim should be to help the OLH navigate next steps in growth.

### 3.0 The OLH's elevator pitch

- 3.1 The Board acknowledged a new climate, with many publishers looking towards sustainable funding. Libraries are approached by many diamond OA initiatives throughout the year.

The OLH therefore needs to have an 'elevator pitch' that would differentiate it from similar programmes.

- 3.2 There also needs to be an effort to drive renewal and gradually increase library funding, once libraries have already signed up. The Board asked what information the OLH provides to members to inspire ongoing support.
- 3.3 CE expressed that it would be useful to hear what the Board expects to hear from such pitches.
- 3.4 The Board replied that there needs to be a transition from 'altruism' towards 'excellent scholarly content' and 'impact' (defined as both disciplinary and real-world). This framing around quality makes it easier for librarians who are always thinking about the needs of who they are serving. It is stated that OA initiatives cannot rely on an innovative business model at this juncture.
- 3.5 CE shared the OLH beta website, currently under development, and expressed that the next phase for the OLH is increased professionalisation. The new branding emphasises prestige, quality, eye-catching graphics, and a clean design that seeks to look better than competitors.

**Decision:** The OLH will continue work on its rebrand to emphasise prestige, quality, and the organisation's scholar-led credentials. The OLH should not be 'begging for money as an altruistic favour' but should showcase how its offer is better *and* for the benefit of the community. There is both a 'feel-good' factor and the reassurance of a good service.

#### 4.0 Request for more clarity around indexing and higher-level pricing tiers

- 4.1 The Board observed a lack of clarity in OLH communications (cf. the pre-circulated Report to the Library Board) about which indexers carry OLH journal content. There was acknowledgement about the amount of time it takes to make some of these applications.
- 4.2 PCV summarises that the OLH has grown from 3 to 10 members of staff and will now have more capacity to focus on indexing, especially considering the appointment of the new Publishing Technologies Librarian in 2023.
- 4.3 CE expressed that indexing and metadata is an area that the Board could help with, as library science is not her background, and her networks are stronger in humanities academia.
- 4.4 The Board required further clarity about the gold, silver, and bronze pricing tiers for OLH membership and whether this granted access privileges.
- 4.5 CE explained that there is no benefit in terms of exclusive access. Instead, the OLH is seeking to frame its work as political, insofar as it is building a sustainable transition towards not-for-profit diamond open access, away from commercially provided open access. Librarians will see more journal flips if there is more financial support at higher tiers and this will put more pressure on commercial publishers to adapt their models.

#### 5.0 The relationship between OLH and Janeway

- 5.1 The Board expressed some uncertainty about the relationship between these two parts of the organisation and queried whether Janeway is profit making.
- 5.2 CE gave a background to Janeway. She explained that when the OLH was launched there was not time to build a platform prior to launch. The OLH used the third-party Ubiquity Press who have more recently been commercially acquired. The OLH weren't comfortable using a third party because of the risk of commercial acquisition. Therefore, the OLH started building its own publishing platform. There was also discomfort with paying someone else

when it wasn't clear where the money was going. At first the OLH published its own content via Janeway, which allowed control over the whole process. Over time, other publishers expressed interest in using Janeway as an open-source platform and the OLH developed a hosting service option.

- 5.3 CE summarised that the OLH now employs five full-time technology developers, who are working on rebranding Janeway (alongside the OLH rebrand). In short: Janeway ultimately belongs to the OLH, but other publishers use it too. It is available as open source or clients can pay for a hosted service.
- 5.4 The Board expressed that the mission-aligned nature of Janeway is a unique selling point. They commented on an exciting trend of academic-aligned infrastructure, which allows for a level of control and sustainability. The Board agreed that it is key to be able to talk about OLH and Janeway together.
- 5.5 The Board agreed that Janeway should continue to focus on facilitating community. They expressed that it would be useful to emphasise the shared forum and the network aspects, with editors coming together to talk about how they run journals. The emphasis should be not just on technical infrastructure but a community; once you have that community 'it becomes strong and powerful'. The Board discussed the benefit of going beyond the customer/provider relationship, to function as equals sharing expertise.

## **6.0 Areas of focus for the Board**

- 6.1 The Board articulated a willingness to help develop OLH strategy over the next five years, concerning: journal flipping, the direction of Janeway/OLH, branding and ways to enhance the quality of the OLH's publications.
- 6.2 It was acknowledged that funding for libraries, at least in the UK, comes primarily from block grants. Therefore, institutions are starting to firm up criteria for who to support. There may be an opportunity for sharing that information.
- 6.3 There was an offer to help decode research funding and how it works (recommended to look at how the OLH supports funders like the Wellcome).
- 6.4 CE explained that her strength is her academic network and ability to find out which journals are unhappy or in trouble and might be interested in flip. However, she needs more help with the library networks as this is not her background. The aspiration is to be the best publisher from a librarian's point of view.
- 6.5 The OLH would also like assistance in strategy for growing library numbers, now that the organisation has more staff and operational capacity for library outreach.
- 6.6 Metadata and indexing are areas that the OLH would benefit from the Board's expertise (CE noted that the appointment of the Publishing Technologies Librarian should to an extent fill this gap).

## **7.0 Minutes and final words**

- 7.1 CE expressed a hope to meet every 6-12 months.
- 7.2 CE noted that Pekka Olsbo has left his role at the University of Jyväskylä and no longer works at a university. He has therefore requested to leave the Library Board. PCV will update the Board's members page on the new OLH website.
- 7.3 It would be most appreciated if CE could email the Board on an ad hoc basis, about niche questions where their expertise would be invaluable.
- 7.4 The Board showed willingness to help and were informed that they would be contacted in the coming weeks with the minutes and a doodle poll to schedule the next Board meeting.

- 7.5 The OLH expressed an intention to make the minutes public and share them with library members network, if the Board are amenable, as this would enhance transparency.
- 7.6 Board members were thanked for their time and insights.