



Canadian Research
Knowledge Network

Réseau canadien
de documentation
pour la recherche

CRKN Webinar Series on Transformative Agreements: Report

Introduction & Context

With the guidance of the Content Strategy Committee (CSC), CRKN developed a four-part webinar series on transformative agreements to consider their place within a Canadian open access strategy. The central goal of the webinar series is to provide a forum for CRKN members to learn and discuss transformative agreements and to consider their strategic place in the Canadian scholarly ecosystem. Speakers from CRKN member institutions, other library consortia, stakeholders, and not-for-profit infrastructure providers have presented thus far on a range of topics to provide a snapshot of the current Canadian open access landscape and discuss priorities for the future. Presentations and discussions held during the webinar series will engage and equip participants with in-depth information and insights on transformative agreements, for their own work and for discussions at a one-day open access workshop to take place during the 2022 CRKN Conference.

Session Summaries

Webinar 1: An Introduction to Transformative Agreements in Canada

The first two sessions of the four-part webinar series on transformative agreements were held on May 11, 2022, and June 8, 2022. The goal of the first webinar, *An Introduction to Transformative Agreements in Canada*, was to provide an overview of transformative agreements in Canada at the institutional, regional, federal, and national level. The following speakers shared their expertise with 211 participants:

Institutional perspective	Graeme Slaght, Acting Head of Scholarly Communications and Copyright Outreach Office, University of Toronto Libraries Weijing Yuan, Head, Acquisitions & Collections Services, University of Toronto Libraries
Regional perspective	Kate Langrell, Copyright Coordinator, University of Saskatchewan and member of COPPUL's Scholarly Communications Working Group Carol Stephenson, Licensing Coordinator, Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL)
Federal libraries perspective	Allison Kelley, Chief, Federal Science Libraries Network

	Nina Burse, Library Partnerships Officer, Federal Science Libraries Network
CRKN national perspective	Craig Olsvik, Senior Manager, Licensing and Member Services, Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)

A facilitated discussion period was also held during the webinar. Four breakout rooms were made available on topics relating to transformative agreements, and participants were instructed to join the room that was of most interest to them. The topics were: Strategies for communicating transformative agreements on campus, Measuring the success of transformative agreements, Workflows for transformative agreement implementation, and a fourth room for open discussion. Discussion in each of the breakout rooms centred around several related themes, including transparency, financial sustainability, and communication strategies. Notes from the breakout room discussions are available in Appendix A.

Webinar participants also answered a set of poll questions to assist CRKN in identifying topics and future programming needs regarding open access and transformative agreements. The poll results revealed that there are many unanswered questions and concerns about the goal of transformative agreements. Other topics included a need for greater support in generating awareness of open access on campus, and teaching opportunities to better educate faculty and researchers. The full poll questions and responses are attached as Appendix B.

Webinar 2: Open Access Agreements: Where do Transformative Agreements Fit

The goal of the second webinar, *Open Access Agreements: Where do Transformative Agreements Fit?*, was to provide context for transformative agreements as a transitional tool toward open access and to consider transformative agreements within the context of other open access models and agreements. The following speakers shared their expertise with 177 participants:

International perspective	Anna Vernon, Head of licensing, Jisc Collections, Jisc
Content Strategy Committee perspective	Ian Robson, Head, Information Resources, Queen’s University Library
Scholarly communications perspective	Lindsey McCallum, Scholarly Publishing Librarian, Liaison Librarian to the Humanities, Mount Saint Vincent University Library
Infrastructure provider perspective	Tanja Niemann, Executive Director, Érudit
Policy perspective	Masha Cemina, Office of the Chief Science Advisor

To identify any gaps of knowledge that should be addressed in a future webinar, participants were asked to vote on the results from the poll from the first webinar. The top three topics that were of most interest are: transformative agreements: what are we transitioning to?; balancing support for transformative agreements and diamond open access; and open access cost models. The poll questions and full responses are attached as Appendix C.

Themes

Several themes were raised over the course of two highly engaging webinars. Members applauded the messages that were presented by the various speakers, in particular the need for greater communication about transformative agreements (both from CRKN and also from the library to researchers and other research units on campus), interest in a codified investment approach for not-for-profit publishers and open scholarship infrastructure providers, the importance of financial sustainability, and the need for transparency. A summary of the themes is outlined below.

Communication

Members highlighted the importance of, and expressed a willingness for, collaboration at the national level for communication materials and strategies related to open access. The conversations happening on campus are similar from one institution to the next, and members expressed that a cohesive national communications approach would benefit members by continuing to pool resources and to coordinate support for initiatives and strategies. We heard that CRKN can continue to support its members through information and resource sharing that supports libraries to engage in discussions with university administration, faculty and researchers, and colleagues.

Collective Investment

Members expressed interest in a codified investment approach for not-for-profit publishers, with a focus on community/academy-led approaches. While recognizing the need to continue to make available the research content published with commercial vendors, members also would like to prioritize the shifting of resources from commercial vendors to not-for-profit vendors and open scholarship infrastructure providers. In particular, advances in diamond open access models are of interest to the broader community and should be further considered as part of CRKN's overall strategy of transforming scholarly communications.

Transformative Agreements as Transitional

Both speakers and participants of the webinars raised concerns regarding the sustainability and limitations of transformative agreements as defined by commercial vendors. Primarily, concerns were raised regarding the commercialization and further cementing a reliance on an oligopoly of commercial vendors, as well as ethical considerations with regards to open science and ensuring access to read and publish scholarly materials globally. While widespread support continues to exist for models that increase open access to scholarship, the notion of commercial led systems built on the exclusion of scholars and institutions without the financial means to pay for APCs poses significant concerns for some CRKN members. Ensuring that the community has a shared understanding of our collective goals when it comes to the end result of transformative agreements with commercial vendors is paramount, as is the need to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to non-APC based open access models and agreements.

Financial Sustainability

Regardless of the model for open access with commercial publishers, members emphasized the importance of cost reductions in publisher agreements. The general sentiment was that the strategy should focus on cost reductions with commercial publishers over the pursuit of transformative agreements so that funds can be redirected to support Canadian society and not-for-profit publishers and university presses. It is vital to consider the long-term goals of transformative agreements and members cautioned CRKN of the potential effect of a “Big Deal 2.0” that could further monopolize library collections budgets. Additionally, members expressed strongly they are not in favour of pursuing APC-based open access models as these risks maintaining the status quo and does not encourage publishers to transform their business model.

Transparency

In alignment with CRKN’s Licensing Principles, members identified a need for improved transparency from publishers (commercial and not-for-profit) of the cost of article and monograph production. Members acknowledged that generally not-for-profit publishers are willing to share the cost of operations and article/monograph production, but it is more difficult to acquire that information from commercial publishers. Cost transparency is vital to determine fair pricing and must be shared with libraries and library consortia when evaluating the cost of transformative agreements.

Considerations & Insights

CRKN staff and CSC members have much to take away from these teleconferences:

- The financial sustainability of transformative agreements is a critical concern for members. Library collections budgets are not increasing and are unable to support new open access initiatives and infrastructure. Therefore, cost reductions with large commercial publishers is critical in order to support community-led open initiatives.
- Considerations for alternative pathways to open access, such as green open access, and support for repositories should be considered as part of a national open access strategy. Leveraging existing infrastructure for a “made in Canada” solution should be prioritized.
- Engaging the Canadian funding agencies is a vital step in securing the necessary ongoing funds to support Canadian researchers publishing as open access. This funding should not be in the form of APC subventions or funds. Funders, policy-makers, and university administrators have a role to play in enabling transformational change in the scholarly communications landscape in moving away from prioritizing publications in ‘prestigious’ journals.
- There is a need to develop an effective communications strategy to advocate on behalf of libraries with researchers and administrators to raise awareness of the benefits of open access.

Next Steps

The CSC is currently organizing the final two webinars in this series: *A Conversation with Canadian Publishers on the Future of Open Access Agreements* and *A Canadian Open Access Strategy*. Dates and registration information will be released this summer. The webinar series culminates with a [one-day workshop on open scholarship at the CRKN Conference](#) in November. If there is a topic that you wish to

discuss during this webinar series, please let us know by sending an email to Rebecca Ross at ross@crkn.ca. For all other questions, please email Amanda Holmes at aholmes@crkn.ca.

Links to both recordings are available here:

[Webinar 1: An Introduction to Transformative Agreements in Canada](#)

[Webinar 2: Open Access Agreements: Where do Transformative Agreements Fit?](#)

Appendix A: Webinar 1 Breakout Room Notes

Topic 1: Strategies for communicating TAs

https://docs.google.com/document/d/13fgXyZD8u4RsJAIYPZ_Cdv8_s1pv8velphjnSbAXWg/edit?usp=sharing

Topic 2: Measuring the success of TAs

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jJYItaoRvbzwhrN8Wke5zEBxVq1-fC81lo5hgXvpA/edit?usp=sharing>

Topic 3: Workflows for transformative agreement implementation

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qUsl0SA61Qqw4E0mocr17Q4Ak8kCAbrgFTTdo_VZUjA/edit?usp=sharing

Topic 4: “Hot topics”

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rK-1bQSI-H7fqQeLflsv-PEq2-wi-6vLaAfhs3oML_c/edit

Untitled

Current run (last updated May 12, 2022 8:31am)

3

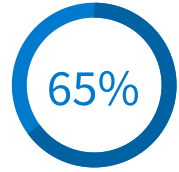
Activities

23

Participants

17

Average responses



Average engagement

What is one take-away from the breakout room discussions? | Quel est l'un des points à retenir des discussions en salle de sous-groupe ?

“ Many of us are not convinced that TAs will achieve tranformation the business model away from toll access to OA ”

“ In order to move OA forward, we need increased researcher awareness of options for authors and when their APCs are covered.”

Responses

Many of us are not convinced that TAs will achieve tranformation the business model away from toll access to OA

In order to move OA forward, we need increased researcher awareness of options for authors and when their APCs are covered

Complex, many moving parts to keep in line.

Use direct communication with researchers to clarify TS (and OA at large)

TAs will require a lot of careful thought. We need to focus as much on other means of promoting OA.

That everyone is still sorting things out!

Administering OA is lots of work, and we need to re-shuffle people in the organization to get it done.

That we should talk together more often!

No one really has this figured out yet.

looking at savings in cost vs savings paid

communicating to authors/stakeholders is difficult - best communication methods, how to reach authors

That many of us share the same concerns and challenges!

Big deal pricing (for TAs) is still a concern for some members

"Value" - what is value to a library? consortium? publisher? How do we judge?



Engagement

14

Responses

What outstanding questions about transformative agreements do you have? | Quelles autres questions avez-vous au sujet des accords transformatifs?

“ concern about building dependencies on APCs and losing ability to cancel ”

“ Communications to faculty/institution need to carefully balance the message that TAs provide free publishing options with the bigger message of why we

Responses

concern about building dependencies on APCs and losing ability to cancel

Communications to faculty/institution need to carefully balance the message that TAs provide free publishing options with the bigger message of why we need to shift the publishing environment away from large commercial traditional publishing.

How do we balance TAs with supporting Diamond OA and true transformative agreements (outside the big publishers)?

Continues to be misunderstanding of OA journals, their quality and reputation. How do we communicate their value?

If, as late adopters, there is much advantage to going full throttle

How are libraries managing the information on the back end? Organizing the different clauses, requirements, etc., and keeping track of the administrative work?

What are the unintended consequences?!

What does it mean to have a national TA vs. institutional?

There was a good conversation about communication, but I think there is still a lot to learn from each other on how best to communicate about TAs.

Will the cost models be redistributed over time?

What is the end-game for OA with these publishers? All their journals will be gold OA? All will be hybrid? What do CRKN member want?

How do we get out of them when they prove to be unaffordable for libraries/authors.



Engagement

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Responses

Responses

Which publishers are not open to TAs?

What is the endgame?

Are TAs the right way forward?

Is it possible to have a TA that costs less than a read license?

What are we transforming to?

Are TAs the best way forward?

How transformative are they, really?

What topics would you like to see discussed at future webinars? | Quels sujets aimeriez-vous voir aborder lors des prochains webinaires ?

“ How do we avoid a world of new "big deals" that are simply framed around TAs. I.e. we need to ensure that TAs do truly live up to their name of transforming the publishing industry. Right now TAs seem to still keep us very much at the mercy of publishers ”

Responses

How do we avoid a world of new "big deals" that are simply framed around TAs. I.e. we need to ensure that TAs do truly live up to their name of transforming the publishing industry. Right now TAs seem to still keep us very much at the mercy of publishers

Automatic approvals: ARE there reasons to question authors? (e.g., hospital researchers)

structurally how libraries are doing this- ie collections? acquisitions? schol comms? liaisons? Knowing people's workflows

Share tools to promote OA

The relative merits of working with small/non-commercial publishers vs large commercial publishers. And long-term implications of each.

OA advocacy strategies for educating Canadian researchers.

Is anyone else concerned about the risk to cancelling a TA vs traditional big deals? And how to manage expectations?

Ways that we should be talking to/ dealing with Tri-Agencies

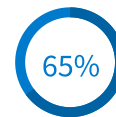
What is happening on a global level, impact on Global South.

Successful examples of OA being used to increase library budgets.

Assessment of value and commercial publishing. What is an APC worth?

Looking forward to learning more about rubrics to assess OA support requests/opportunities.

Something about Subscribe to Open options



Engagement

17

Responses

Responses

promoting open access

Discussion for and against TAs

Variances among primarily teaching and primarily research institutions.

Communication across/on campus to key stakeholders - how are you promoting TAs/ OA publishing?

Please rank the following subjects in order of interest for a future webinar. | Veuillez classer les sujets suivants par ordre d'intérêt pour un futur webinaire. [Rename](#)

Current run (last updated Jun 9, 2022 2:29pm) [Update report](#)

1

Activities

37

Participants

37

Average responses



Average engagement

Please rank the following subjects in order of interest for a future webinar. | Veuillez classer les sujets suivants par ordre d'intérêt pour un futur webinaire.



Response options	Rank
TAs: what are we transitioning to? Accords transformatifs: vers quoi passe-t-on?	1st
Balancing support for transformative agreements and Diamond OA Équilibrer l'appui pour les accords transformatif et la voie diamant	2nd
Open access cost models Modèles de coût du libre accès	3rd
Big Deal exit strategy Stratégie de retrait de la méga-entente	4th
Communicating OA on campus Communiquer le libre accès sur le campus	5th
Managing the administrative work of OA agreements Gérer le travail administratif des accords de libre accès	6th
National vs. institutional transformative agreements Les accords transformatifs au niveau national versus au niveau de l'établissement	7th
Clearing up the misinformation about the value and quality of OA journals Dissiper la désinformation sur la valeur et la qualité des revues en libre accès	8th



Engagement

37

Responses