



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 about and discuss transformative agreements, and to consider their strategic place in the Canadian scholarly ecosystem. Speakers from CRKN member institutions, other library consortia, stakeholders, not-for-profit infrastructure providers, and Canadian publishers 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. The presentations and discussions held during the webinar series have equipped participants with in-depth information and insights on transformative agreements, for their own work and for discussions at the one-day open access workshop that took 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.

Webinar 3: A Conversation with Canadian Publishers on the Future of Open Access Agreements

The goal of the third webinar, *A Conversation with Canadian Publishers on the Future of Open Access Agreements*, was designed for attendees to gain insight into publishers' perspectives on open access. The panel of speakers was comprised of both for-profit and not-for-profit serials and monograph publishers, with a focus on Canadian publishers. While each publisher described the open access initiatives at their presses, it was noted by all speakers that sustainability is an important factor to ensure their longevity. The following speakers shared their expertise with 125 participants:

Not for profit serial publisher	Samuel Diné, Coordinator of Operations and Process, Relations Industrielles / Industrial Relations
Not for profit serial publisher	Michael Donaldson, Director, Strategic Initiatives, Canadian Science Publishing
For profit serial publisher	David Kim, Director of Partnerships and Open Access Research, JMIR Publications
Not for profit monograph publisher	Megan Hall, Director, Athabasca University Press

As Canadian academic libraries consider how best to support open access initiatives, members made it clear that supporting Canadian publishers is important. Publishers' perspectives on open access were deemed to be critical to understanding and opening the discussion on how members might support them. However, it was also noted that in order for open access to be sustainable, the fees paid to the publishers must reflect the true cost of their services.

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 an 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 commercial 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 strongly expressed that they are not in favour of pursuing APC-based open access models, as these models risk maintaining the status quo and do not encourage publishers to transform their business model.

Canadian publishers are also focused on the long-term sustainability of open access. Many Canadian publishers are cautiously heading toward the open access space as they consider how they will continue to support researchers and their publishing activities in an open access future. Additionally, it was noted that partnerships are an important key in building sustainable pathways to open access, particularly for not-for-profit publishers. Many publishers are partnering with libraries, researchers, funding agencies, and other organizations to create relationships that will enable them to build a sustainable open future.

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 webinar in this series. The webinar will be held in March 2023, and the confirmed date and registration information will be released in early 2023. If you would like to recommend a speaker for the final webinar or if you have any questions, please send an email to Amanda Holmes at aholmes@crkn.ca.

Links to recordings of the previous webinars in the series are available here:

- [Webinar 1: An Introduction to Transformative Agreements in Canada](#)
- [Webinar 2: Open Access Agreements: Where do Transformative Agreements Fit?](#)
- [Webinar 3: A Conversation with Canadian Publishers on the Future of Open Access Agreements](#)

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