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Information Research at 30: its role as a diamond open access journal supporting scholarly communication in library and information science

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Abstract

Introduction. This paper examines the contributions of *Information Research* as a diamond open access (OA) journal within the library and information science field.

Method. The dataset was extracted from the Web of Science Core Collection.

Results. The journal's commitment to geographical diversity, its sustained journal impact and its role as a scholar-led publisher were revealed.

Conclusion. The journal demonstrates the potential of diamond open access publishing while maintaining high impact and visibility.

Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, the emergence of journal big deals and the rapid rise in subscription fees have created significant barriers to accessing and using published research. Open access (OA) publishing has emerged as an alternative to address these accessibility issues. However, the dominance of mega-commercial publishers in the open access movement has raised concerns about market-driven approaches that prioritise profitability over their responsibilities for promoting scholarly communication. This has led to epistemic injustice, exacerbating disparities in global knowledge production and dissemination. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of gold open access has also led to the proliferation of predatory journals that exploit the open access model by charging authors fees without providing rigorous peer review or editorial standards.

Diamond open access is a promising publishing model that aligns directly with the principles of equitable and scholar-led publishing (Ancion et al., 2022). Diamond open access journals operate without article processing charges (APCs), relying instead on institutional, governmental, or community-based funding, and the voluntary efforts of the researchers themselves. This model also fosters bibliodiversity by supporting multilingual and regional publishing and facilitating broader participation from under-represented research communities (Ancion et al., 2022). Despite its advantages, diamond open access continues to face questions about its long-term financial sustainability and journal impact and visibility within global scholarly communication (Bosman et al., 2021).

As a pioneering example of a scholar-led diamond open access journal, *Information Research* has provided valuable insights into the potential of this publishing model. The journal has successfully demonstrated that diamond open access journals can achieve recognition and influence in scholarly communication while remaining sustainable and high journal impact. This paper examines the contributions of *Information Research* as a venue for enhancing scholar-led research and bibliodiversity within the library and information science (LIS) field.

Methods

To analyse the role of *Information Research* in supporting library and information science research, data were collected from the Web of Science Core Collection (WoS CC) on 7 March 2025. Two datasets were retrieved.

The first dataset was retrieved from the Web of Science Core Collection, where *Information Research* has been indexed since 2004. All records from 2004 to 2024 were included, but no records for 2025 were available at the time of collection. After excluding proceedings papers, a final dataset of 797 papers was derived for analysis.

The second dataset was retrieved from the Information science & library science (ISLS) category to compare *Information Research* with broader library and information science research trends. Specific paper types (proceedings papers, early access publications, book chapters, retracted publications, data papers, publications with expressions of concern, and withdrawn publications) were excluded. For comparability, only papers published between 2004 and 2024 inclusive were analysed, resulting in an initial dataset of 89,828 records. Furthermore, journals indexed in multidisciplinary categories outside Information science & library science category were also excluded, as *Information Research* is exclusively indexed in this category. This refinement resulted in a final dataset of 42,293 papers. (Hereafter, this dataset is called Information science & library science category.)

Table 1 shows that the number of papers published in *Information Research* has steadily grown since 2004. This is consistent with the overall growth in papers and the number of journals in the Information science & library science category (although it is unknown how many journals in the category are open access). In part, this is reflective of a broader, concomitant trend of the growth

of scholarly journals in the field. Additionally, a marked increase can be seen in the later years that reflects the inclusion of the Emerging sources citation index (ESCI) into the Web of Science Core Collection.

Period	No. of *Information Research* papers	No. of Information science & library science category papers	No. of Information science & library science category journals
2004–2010	237	7,851	52
2011–2017	277	10,533	49
2018–2024	283	23,909	124
Total (2004–2024)	797	42,293	134

Table 1. Comparison between *Information Research* and other journals in the Information science & library science category (2004–2024)

The dominance of mega-commercial publishers in library and information science

The commercialisation and monopolisation of scholarly communication by a small number of dominant publishers has raised serious concerns. Ma et al. (2023b) argue that it undermines the scholarly communication ecosystem and contradicts the core principles of the open access movement. Crawford's annual report on gold open access journals indicates that in 2023, the average article processing charge rose to USD$1,480, reflecting a $170 increase from 2022, with open access revenue becoming increasingly concentrated among a small number of publishers. The top eleven of these publishers, known as The Big Eleven (MDPI, Holtzbrinck, Elsevier, Wiley, Wolters Kluwer, Taylor & Francis, Oxford, PLOS, SAGE, IEEE, and BMJ), account for only 8.8% of gold open access journals but capture 88.9% of the total open access revenue, amounting to USD$1,897,135,559 (Crawford, 2024). Ma (2023b) and Sharp et al. (2023) argue that these mega-commercial publishers are accelerating a market-driven scholarly communication system. Under the controls of dominant commercial publishers, smaller publishers and regional academic presses face declining competitiveness, reducing the diversity of research output (Ma, 2023b).

Additionally, concerns have emerged regarding the vertical integration of mega-commercial publishers that are expanding beyond publishing into data-driven scholarly information services (Sharp et al., 2023). Ma (2023a) refers to this monopolisation of scholarly communication as "*platformization*", whereby scholarly communication data are increasingly "datafied" and "commodified", allowing a small number of publishers to dominate the scholarly communication ecosystem.

Analysis of data provided in Table 2 and Table 3 reveals this dominance in library and information science scholarly publishing. Elsevier, Emerald Group Publishing, and Taylor & Francis have consistently ranked as the top three publishers, with Wiley and Sage also prominent. Table 3 shows that the top five publishers alone accounted for between 43% and 46% of Information science & library science papers across different periods, while the top ten publishers accounted for over fifty-five per cent.

Rank	2004–2010	2011–2017	2018–2024	Overall (2004-2024)
1	Elsevier	Elsevier	Elsevier	Elsevier
2	Emerald Group Publishing	Emerald Group Publishing	Emerald Group Publishing	Emerald Group Publishing
3	Online Inc.	Taylor & Francis	Taylor & Francis	Taylor & Francis
4	Johns Hopkins Univ. Press	Sage	IGI Global	Wiley
5	Reed Business Information	Reed Business Information	Sage	Sage
6	Wiley	Johns Hopkins Univ. Press	Wiley	Johns Hopkins Univ. Press
7	American Library Association	Wiley	EPI	IGI Global
8	Medical Library Association	EPI	Walter De Gruyter	Reed Business Information
9	EPI	American Library Association	Johns Hopkins Univ. Press	Walter De Gruyter
10	Bowker Magazine Group Cahners Magazine Division	Online Inc.	Russian Natl Public Library Science & Technology	EPI

Table 2. Top ten publishers of Information science & library science category papers

Period	Top five publishers		Top ten publishers	
	No. of papers	% *	No. of papers	% *
2004–2010	3,490	44.45	5,096	64.91
2011–2017	4,816	45.72	6,814	64.69
2018–2024	10,428	43.62	13,558	56.71
Total (2004–2024)	18,734	44.30	25,468	60.22

* %s are calculated based on the number of papers in each period (see Table 1)

Table 3. Number and percentage of Information science & library science papers published by the top 5 and top 10 publishers (2004–2024)

Geographic diversity in *Information Research* and library and information science journals

Article processing charges in gold open access present a barrier to geographic diversity, reducing the representation of different cultural and regional scholarship. Despite this, *Information Research* stands out as an outlet for library and information science research where a wider range of international scholarly work can be accessed. Table 4 compares the number of author countries of *Information Research* and Information science & library science category journals, and Table 5 presents the number of papers from top 10% author countries, which is based on the number of papers from the countries. Over 75% of papers originated from authors in the top 10% of countries in Information science & library science category journals, whereas only about 50% of *Information Research* papers came from the top 10% of author countries, showing greater geographic diversity.

	Information Research	Information science & library science category
2004–2010	41	105
2011–2017	47	124
2018–2024	53	160
Total (2004–2024)	66	165

Table 4. Number of author countries of *Information Research* and Information science & library science category journals

	Information Research		Information science & library science category	
	No.	% *	No.	% *
2004–2010	135	51.72	5,594	76.84
2011–2017	168	48.70	8,493	72.73
2018–2024	156	43.33	20,920	70.60
Total (2004–2024)	557	57.66	36,226	74.55

* %s are calculated based on the number of papers in each period (see Table 1)

Table 5. Number and percentage of papers published from top 10% author countries

The journal impact of *Information Research* as a diamond open access journal

According to the *Open Access Diamond Journals Study* (Bosman et al., 2021), journal impact and visibility are the primary reasons many editors of diamond open access journals consider transitioning away from this model.

Despite decades of criticism, the journal impact factor (JIF) remains a dominant metric in academia. Many researchers rely on the journal impact factor to guide their choice of publication venues and to inform hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions (Brock, 2019). Although the core principles of open access, which emphasise openness and inclusivity, conflict with the journal impact factor's focus on citation-based impact, the journal impact factor's role in academia continues to shape researchers' publication behaviour. To better reflect and respond to this behaviour, and to align with prevailing academic practices, the journal impact factors of diamond open access journals need to be strengthened to enhance their recognition in scholarly communication.

A comparative analysis of datasets from the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and 2023 released *Journal Citation Report* (JCR) in all fields revealed that, while 24.73% of gold open access journals had a journal impact factor, only 3.25% of diamond open access journals were indexed with a journal impact factor (we discuss this in a paper currently under review).

However, within the Web of Science Core Collection Information science & library science category, six out of eighty-four journals (7.14%) are diamond open access, with four journals (*Investigacion Bibliotecologica*, *Revista Espanola de Documentacion Cientifica*, *College & Research Libraires*, *Information Research*) exclusively listed in Information science & library science category. The remaining two journals (*Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *Information Technology and Libraries*) are listed in multiple categories.

These findings underscore the leadership role of the library and information science field in advancing scholarly communication and show how *Information Research* has exemplified sustained high impact for over two decades.

Conclusion

The study highlights the increasing monopolisation of scholarly publishing by mega-commercial publishers, while underscoring the significant role of *Information Research* in embodying open access principles and fostering scholar-led publishing. As an exemplar of a diamond open access journal, *Information Research* has maintained high impact and visibility while prioritising equitable access to knowledge.

Information Research owes its success to the dedication of Professor T.D. Wilson, the editorial team, peer reviewers, and library and information science researchers who have contributed their work to the journal. For diamond open access\A journals to be sustainable, as stated in the 'Action Plan for Diamond Open Access' (Ancion et al., 2022), it is necessary to develop systems and frameworks that effectively support their operations and maintain journal quality and impact. Additionally, researchers must acknowledge the ongoing challenges in scholarly communication and actively participate in strengthening scholar-led publishing models. In this regard, we express deep appreciation for Professor T.D. Wilson and all editors who have long been committed to *Information Research*.

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