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Reframing Scholarly Communication in the Digital Era: Open Access, Research Integrity, and the Evolving Role of Academic Journals

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Abstract
The digital transformation of scholarly communication has reshaped how research is produced, disseminated, evaluated, and preserved. Central to this transformation are open access publishing models, evolving peer review practices, and renewed attention to research ethics and transparency. This conceptual research article examines the contemporary scholarly publishing landscape, focusing on the normative foundations of open access, the role of journals as ethical stewards, and the challenges faced by emerging digital-first publications. Drawing on existing literature and policy frameworks, the article argues that academic journals must move beyond traditional gatekeeping roles and actively cultivate inclusive, accountable, and sustainable knowledge ecosystems. The paper proposes a principled framework for ethical digital publishing that emphasizes accessibility, editorial independence, research integrity, and long-term stewardship of scholarly knowledge.

Keywords
Scholarly Communication · Open Access · Research Integrity · Academic Journals · Digital Scholarship · Knowledge Commons · Publication Ethics · Peer Review · Epistemic Justice · Infrastructural Stewardship

1. Introduction:

The Unfinished Revolution in Scholarly Communication

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We are living through what many term a revolution in scholarly communication, yet its outcome remains profoundly uncertain. The shift from print to digital is not a simple translation of format but a radical re-mediation that alters the very substance of academic exchange [1]. This transformation, catalyzed by the affordances of the internet, challenges centuries-old practices rooted in the material constraints and economic models of the printing press. The traditional journal, once a slow, stable, and exclusive channel for certifying and distributing knowledge, now finds itself in a dynamic, networked, and often contentious digital arena [2].

This digital era presents a constellation of interconnected opportunities and perils. On one hand, it promises the democratization of knowledge: the potential to make publicly funded research universally accessible, to accelerate the pace of discovery through instant dissemination, and to foster global collaboration unfettered by institutional or geographic privilege [3]. Initiatives like Plan S, the growth of preprint servers, and the rise of diamond open access models testify to a vigorous, values-driven push to realign publishing with the ethos of open science [4][5]. On the other hand, this transition has spawned new forms of exclusion and distortion. The "article processing charge" (APC) model risks creating a pay-to-publish system that disadvantages researchers in the Global South and under-funded disciplines [6]. The predatory publishing industry exploits the OA ethos for profit, undermining trust [7]. Furthermore, the digitization of research evaluation through metrics like the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) can incentivize strategic, rather than sincere, scholarly behavior, potentially distorting research agendas [8].

At the heart of this tension lies the academic journal, an institution whose role is being forcefully renegotiated. Is it primarily a filter for quality, a brand for prestige, a platform for dissemination, or a node in a social network of scholars? In reality, it is all of these, and the balance between these functions is shifting. This article argues that for journals, especially new, digital-first ventures, to navigate this shift ethically and effectively, they must move beyond a narrow conception of their role. They must see themselves not merely as gatekeepers of a finished scholarly record, but as stewards of an ongoing scholarly process; not as vendors of certified content, but as curators and facilitators of a knowledge commons [9].

This paper adopts a conceptual and critical synthesis approach. Its purpose is not to present new empirical data but to connect, interrogate, and build upon existing discourses across multiple fields. We synthesize insights from:

- The political economy of academic publishing [10][11].
- Social epistemology and the philosophy of science [12][13].
- Critical data studies and platform governance [14][15].
- The growing literature on research integrity and ethics [16][17].

Through this synthesis, we seek to clarify the normative foundations that should underpin scholarly communication in the 21st century. We ask: What ethical obligations do journals bear in a digitally mediated, globally connected, but persistently unequal research ecosystem? How can the principles of open science be operationalized in a manner that is both rigorous and equitable? What does true "stewardship" of the scholarly record entail when that record is digital, fluid, and vast?

The structure of this article proceeds as follows. First, we provide a historical-contextual analysis to understand how the current system emerged and to disentangle its historically contingent features from its essential functions. Second, we perform a deep normative analysis of Open Access, framing it as a commitment to epistemic justice rather than merely a business model. Third, we examine the evolving institution of peer review, analyzing its crises and its promising innovations. Fourth, we expand the discussion of research integrity into a broader concept of ethical stewardship, encompassing everything from data transparency to algorithmic bias. Fifth, we analyze the political economy of digital publishing, confronting the sustainability question head-on. Sixth, we introduce and elaborate a four-pillar framework for ethical digital publishing. Finally, we conclude by envisioning the journal not as a fixed product of the digital era, but as an active participant in shaping a more humane, equitable, and intellectually vibrant future for scholarship itself.

2. Historical Context: From the Republic of Letters to the Platform Society

To understand the present juncture, we must appreciate the deep historical roots of scholarly communication. The modern academic journal did not emerge from a vacuum but evolved from earlier systems of knowledge exchange, each shaped by the dominant media and social structures of its time.

2.1 The Pre-Modern Foundations: Correspondence and Community

Prior to the 17th century, European scholars operated within the "Republic of Letters," an informal, transnational community sustained primarily through personal correspondence [18]. Knowledge circulated in manuscript form through networks of trust, often slowly and selectively. Validation was based on reputation and personal acknowledgment within these networks. The lack of a formal, public certification mechanism meant that priority disputes were common, and error could propagate without systematic correction [19].

2.2 The Birth of the Journal: Institutionalizing Certification

The founding of journals like Philosophical Transactions (1665) and Journal des sçavans (1665) marked a pivotal institutional innovation. They served three key functions that correspondence could not:

- Registration: Providing a public, time-stamped record of discovery to establish priority.
- Certification: Subjecting claims to some form of review (initially by the editor or a society's members) before dissemination.
- Dissemination: Distributing knowledge systematically to a wider audience than private letters allowed [20].

This system was inherently tied to the materiality of print. The economics of printing necessitated bundling articles into periodic issues, creating a rhythm to scholarly life. It also created barriers: the cost of production and distribution meant access was limited to wealthy individuals, institutions, or learned societies that could afford subscriptions. Knowledge became a commodity, and the journal became its primary packaging [21].

2.3 The 20th-Century Consolidation: Professionalization and Commercialization

The post-World War II expansion of higher education and research funding (the "big science" era) led to an explosion in the volume of research. Commercial publishers, recognizing a captive, institutionally-funded market, increasingly took over journal publishing from learned societies [22]. This period saw the consolidation of a powerful oligopoly, the standardization of the "peer review" process as a quality filter, and the rise of bibliometric indicators like the Impact Factor (created in the 1960s) as proxies for quality [23]. The system became characterized by what Larivière, Haustein, and Mongeon term the "triple pay": public funds pay for research, for peer review (performed largely by volunteer academics), and then again for access via library subscriptions [24]. The digital turn began in this context, initially as a way to streamline the production and distribution of the same print-based product.

2.4 The Digital Disruption: Unbundling and Re-Imagining

The internet fundamentally destabilized this settled ecology. It dramatically reduced the marginal cost of distribution to near-zero, unbundling articles from issues and issues from subscriptions. This created the technical possibility for open access. However, as van de Sompel et al. note, early digital efforts often merely "shoehorned the old system into the new technology," replicating PDFs of print pages online [25]. The true disruption came from actors outside the traditional publishing hierarchy: the launch of arXiv (1991) in physics created a culture of rapid, open pre-printing; the Public Library of Science (PLOS, founded 2000) proved a high-quality, APC-funded OA megajournal was viable; and the rise of institutional repositories provided an alternative, green OA pathway [26][27].

This history reveals a critical insight: the forms of scholarly communication, the journal, the issue, peer review, are social technologies, not natural laws. They were designed to solve specific problems (registration, certification, dissemination) within specific material and economic constraints (print, postal systems, institutional funding). The digital era has removed or altered many of those constraints, freeing us to re-imagine these social technologies. The central question of our time is not whether the system will change, but how and toward what ends it will be redesigned. Will it be reshaped primarily by commercial logics, by metric-driven performance management, or by a renewed commitment to the public good and epistemic integrity? The following sections delve into the core components of this redesign.

3. Open Access as a Normative Imperative: Beyond the Business Model Debate

Open Access is too often reduced to a discussion of "gold vs. green" or "APCs vs. subscriptions." While these operational models are important, such a framing risks missing the profound philosophical and ethical shift OA represents. At its core, OA is a normative commitment grounded in theories of justice, epistemology, and social contract.

3.1 The Philosophical Foundations: Knowledge as a Public Good

The most powerful argument for OA derives from the concept of knowledge as a public good. In economic terms, public goods are non-rivalrous (my consumption does not diminish yours) and non-excludable (it is difficult to prevent anyone from benefiting). Knowledge clearly fits this definition [28]. When research is locked behind paywalls, it creates artificial scarcity, leading to what economist Joseph Stiglitz calls a "deadweight loss" to society, the benefits of knowledge that are never realized because people cannot access it [29]. This is particularly egregious for publicly funded research, where taxpayers pay for the production of a good, they are then denied access to purchase. OA, therefore, is a matter of fiscal and democratic accountability.

From a capabilities approach perspective, as developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, access to knowledge is a fundamental capability that enables individuals to live lives of dignity, make informed choices, and participate fully in society [30]. Paywalls directly inhibit this capability, disproportionately affecting those already marginalized: independent scholars, practitioners in low-resource settings, journalists, policymakers, and the curious public. OA thus becomes a matter of epistemic justice, a concept extending distributive justice to the domain of knowledge, asking who is recognized as a knower and who has access to the means of knowing [31].

3.2 The Spectrum of Openness: From Gratis to Libre, and Beyond

It is crucial to distinguish between degrees of openness:

- Gratis OA: Merely removes price barriers. Users can read for free but may have no rights to reuse, redistribute, or build upon the work.
- Libre OA: Removes both price and permission barriers, typically through Creative Commons licenses, with the CC BY license representing the "gold standard" for reuse [32].

True openness advocates for Libre OA, as it enables the full computational and collaborative potential of digital scholarship: text and data mining, translation, republication in educational resources, and more. Furthermore, OA must encompass not just final articles but the underlying research outputs: data, code, protocols, and preprints. This "open science" paradigm views transparency and reproducibility as intrinsic scientific and ethical values [33].

3.3 Critiques and Complexities: Confronting the Shadow Side

A responsible analysis must engage with the legitimate critiques of the OA movement:

- The Equity Paradox: The APC model, while solving the access problem for readers, can create a significant publication barrier for authors without grant funding or from low-income institutions. This risks perpetuating a "Matthew Effect" in publishing, where those who already have resources get more visibility [34]. Diamond/Platinum OA (no fees for authors or readers) is a vital alternative but faces sustainability challenges.
- Quality and Predation: The "author-pays" model creates a perverse incentive for unscrupulous operators to accept manuscripts with minimal review to collect fees. The explosion of predatory journals has poisoned the well of trust, making researchers, especially early-career ones, wary of all OA [35]. This underscores that OA without rigorous, ethical editorial processes is meaningless and harmful.
- Infrastructural Capture: There is a danger that OA simply shifts the oligopoly from subscription-based giants to APC-based giants, without democratizing control. Major commercial publishers now dominate the gold OA market, potentially replicating the same extractive relationships under a new banner [36].

These critiques do not invalidate the OA imperative; they specify the conditions for its ethical implementation. OA must be pursued in tandem with equitable funding models, strong ethical governance, and support for community-controlled, non-profit infrastructure. The goal is not just open access, but an open, participatory, and equitable scholarly ecosystem.

4. Peer Review in the Crucible: Between Crisis and Reformation

Peer review is the sacred cow of scholarly publishing, simultaneously revered as the guarantor of quality and reviled as a broken, biased, and inefficient system. This tension is not new, but the digital environment has both exacerbated its flaws and created unprecedented opportunities for reform.

4.1 The Standard Model and Its Discontents

The traditional double-blind peer review system aims for objectivity by anonymizing authors and reviewers. Its strengths are its familiarity and its theoretical containment of status-based bias. However, decades of sociological research have revealed its weaknesses [37]:

- Conservatism and Bias: Reviewers tend to favor established paradigms, methods, and authors from prestigious institutions. Implicit bias regarding gender, nationality, and race has been repeatedly
- Unreliability: Studies showing low inter-reviewer agreement suggest the process is as much a lottery as a precise measurement of quality [40].
- Inefficiency and Delay: The process is slow, relying on the unpaid, overworked labor of academics. Delays of many months are common, slowing down science and frustrating authors.
- Lack of Transparency: The process occurs behind closed curtains, offering no accountability for harsh or erroneous reviews and no public record of the scholarly conversation that shaped the final work.

4.2 Digital Innovations and Experimental Models

The digital platform allows us to experiment with the social technology of peer review. These innovations can be mapped across two axes: transparency (closed to open) and timing (pre- to post-publication).

- Open Identities: Reviewers sign their reports, promoting accountability and civility. Some journals, like BMJ, have long used this model.
- Open Reports: Published alongside the article, revealing the review process's intellectual substance. This provides a valuable pedagogical resource and acknowledges reviewers' intellectual labor.
- Open Participation: Platforms like PubPeer allow for post-publication commentary, creating a continuous, community-wide review process [41].
- Registered Reports: This revolutionary format shifts review to the study protocol stage before results are known. Journals commit to publishing the final paper based on the

soundness of the question and method, regardless of the outcome. This directly combats publication bias and "p-hacking," incentivizing rigorous science over flashy results [42].

4.3 Toward a Functional, Pluralistic Ecosystem

The future likely lies not in one "best" model replacing all others, but in a pluralistic, fit-for-purpose ecosystem. Different review models serve different functions:

Double-Blind Review may remain the default for disciplines or journals where minimizing bias is the paramount concern for establishing legitimacy.

- Open Peer Review (with identities and/or reports disclosed) aligns with OA values of transparency and can be a powerful tool for community building and quality improvement.
- Post-Publication Review is essential as a complementary, ongoing correction and discussion mechanism, acknowledging that review does not end at publication.
- Registered Reports should become the standard for hypothesis-testing research in the empirical sciences.

For journals, the imperative is to be intentional and transparent about their chosen model(s). They must also invest in reviewer support and recognition, treating peer review not as an extracted free resource but as a core scholarly practice to be nurtured, trained, and credited. Ultimately, peer review should be re-conceptualized from a gatekeeping filter to a collaborative, dialogic process of scholarly improvement and community validation. Its goal is not merely to select papers for a journal's pages, but to improve the quality of scholarship in the public domain and to curate a reliable, evolving scholarly record.

5. Research Integrity and Ethical Stewardship: From Compliance to Culture

The concept of research integrity has expanded dramatically in the digital era, moving beyond classic definitions of avoiding fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism (FFP) to encompass a broader ecosystem of ethical practices. For contemporary journals, integrity is no longer merely about policing misconduct but about proactively cultivating an ethical culture and designing systems that make responsible conduct the default.

5.1 The Expanding Horizon of Integrity Issues

While FFP remains the core of severe misconduct, digital scholarship introduces new, complex ethical frontiers:

- Data Transparency and Reproducibility: The inability to replicate published findings across many fields constitutes a "reproducibility crisis" that undermines science's self-correcting mechanism [43]. Journals are pivotal in addressing this by mandating data availability statements, requiring deposition of data in trusted repositories, and promoting FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data principles [44]. Integrity now means providing the means for verification.
- Authorship and Contributor Roles: Hyper-authorship in large collaborations and issues of ghost/gift authorship persist. The CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy) system offers a standardized way to detail contributions (conceptualization, methodology, software, formal analysis, etc.), moving beyond alphabetical or "first/last" author conventions to transparently acknowledge all contributions [45].
- Ethics of Algorithmic and AI-Assisted Research: With the rise of AI in research, from data analysis to manuscript generation, new questions emerge. Journals must develop policies on the disclosure of AI use, the auditability of algorithmic methods, and the prevention of AI-generated text plagiarism or "paper mills" [46]. The integrity of the research process itself is at stake.
- Dual-Use Research and Societal Harm: Journals must consider the potential for published research to be misapplied in ways that cause harm (e.g., in biosecurity, surveillance technology). While not advocating for censorship, responsible stewardship involves ethical review processes that weigh benefits against risks of misuse [47].

5.2 The Journal as an Ethical System Architect

A journal's commitment to integrity is embedded in its systems and workflows, not just its stated policies. This involves:

- Pre-Screening Safeguards: Utilizing plagiarism-checking software (e.g., iThenticate) and image forensics tools to screen submissions proactively.
- ransparent Corrections Workflow: Having a clear, publicized policy for handling post-publication corrections (corrigenda), errata, expressions of concern, and retractions, aligned with COPE guidelines. This treats the scholarly record as a living, correctable entity [48].
- Managing Conflicts of Interest (COI): Requiring explicit declarations of financial, personal, professional, or intellectual conflicts from authors, reviewers, and editors, and making these public where relevant.
- Whistleblower Protections: Providing a secure, confidential channel for individuals to report suspected misconduct without fear of reprisal.

5.3 Fostering an Integrity Culture: Education and Incentives

Ultimately, enforcement is insufficient. Journals, particularly in consortium with societies and institutions, must foster a culture of integrity. This can involve:

- Publishing educational editorials on emerging ethical issues.
- Recognizing and rewarding exemplary ethical practices (e.g., prizes for transparent research).
- Requiring training in publication ethics for editorial board members.
- Framing peer review as a mentorship opportunity for early-career researchers, instilling ethical norms.

Ethical stewardship, therefore, is a proactive, systemic endeavor. It requires journals to be technologically adept, procedurally rigorous, and culturally attuned to the evolving moral landscape of digital research. They become not just publishers of record, but guardians of trustworthy science.

6. The Political Economy of Digital Publishing: Confronting Sustainability and Power

The ideals of open science collide with the material realities of cost, labor, and institutional power. A sustainable and equitable future for scholarly communication cannot be designed without a clear-eyed analysis of its political economy, who pays, who profits, who labors, and who governs.

6.1 The Cost Structures and Funding Models

Publishing is not free, even if access is. Costs include platform development and maintenance, editorial management, production (XML typesetting, metadata), marketing, and preservation. The central debate is how to cover these costs fairly.

The APC (Article Processing Charge) Model: Dominant in "Gold OA." Criticized for creating inequitable author-side barriers and potentially inflating profits for large publishers. It can also incentivize volume over selectivity.

- The Subscribe-to-Open (S2O) Model: A transformative approach where subscription fees from libraries are used to flip a journal to OA, making all content open for that year. It leverages existing library budgets without new author fees [49].
- The Diamond/Platinum OA Model: Journals that charge no fees to authors or readers. This is the most equitable model but relies on subsidies from universities, societies, governments, or philanthropic grants, raising questions about long-term, scalable sustainability [50].

- Collaborative Community Funding: Models like SCOSS (The Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services) pool contributions from multiple institutions to

support essential, non-commercial OA infrastructure (e.g., DOAJ, arXiv), distributing costs and governance [51].

6.2 The Labor Question: The Hidden Subsidy of Academia

The scholarly publishing system rests on a vast foundation of unpaid or underpaid academic labor. Researchers provide the content (articles), perform quality control (peer review), and often provide editorial leadership, largely without direct monetary compensation from publishers. This labor is subsidized by universities through researchers' salaries and is driven by academic capital (reputation, CV-building). This "gift economy" is both a strength (ensuring expert-driven quality) and a vulnerability (exploitable, unsustainable for overburdened academics) [52]. Ethical models must seek to recognize, credit, and where possible, financially support this essential labor.

6.3 Governance and Infrastructural Control

The most profound political-economic issue is control. Who owns and governs the essential infrastructure of scholarly communication, the platforms, the standards, the archives?

- Commercial Enclosure: Dominance by a handful of for-profit corporations (Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley, etc.) creates a system where a public good (knowledge) is managed for private shareholder profit. It can lead to high prices, bundling practices that lock in libraries, and control over innovation pathways [53].
- The Community-Governed Alternative: The goal of a true scholarly commons requires investing in and scaling up non-profit, community-governed infrastructure. Examples include the Public Knowledge Project's Open Journal Systems (OJS) software, used by thousands of journals globally; Crossref for persistent identifiers; and OpenAIRE for European OA infrastructure. These systems prioritize interoperability, longevity, and mission-alignment over profit [54].

The path forward requires a deliberate re-allocation of funds from legacy subscription budgets toward building and sustaining this open, community-controlled infrastructure. It requires libraries, funders, and consortia to act not just as customers, but as strategic investors in the public knowledge ecosystem.

7. A Principled Framework for Ethical Digital Publishing: The Four Pillars

Synthesizing the historical, normative, and economic analyses above, we propose a framework to guide journals, publishers, funders, and scholars in constructing a more ethical future. This framework is built on four interdependent pillars.

Pillar 1: Radical Accessibility

Accessibility must be understood in its fullest sense:

- Economic: Removing all price barriers for readers and minimizing or eliminating cost barriers for authors. Prioritizing Diamond OA models and equitable funding mechanisms.
- Legal: Applying liberal open licenses (e.g., CC BY) to enable reuse, not just reading.
- Technical: Ensuring content is machine-readable, interoperable, and compliant with accessibility standards for people with disabilities (WCAG guidelines).
- Linguistic: Supporting multilingualism through translation of abstracts, keywords, and encouraging submissions in multiple languages to combat Anglophone dominance.

Pillar 2: Principled Proceduralism

The journal's core procedures must be transparent, fair, and aimed at improving scholarship:

- Peer Review: Be explicit about the model used (blind, open, etc.), its rationale, and the criteria for evaluation. Provide training and recognition for reviewers. Explore innovative models like Registered Reports.
- Editorial Independence: Formalize and publicly state policies guarding editorial decisions from commercial or political interference from owners, advertisers, or sponsors.
- Research Integrity: Implement robust, transparent workflows for screening, correcting, and if necessary, retracting published work. Mandate open data and materials where ethically feasible.
- Turnaround and Communication: Manage author expectations with clear timelines and provide constructive, timely feedback at all stages.

Pillar 3: Infrastructural Stewardship

A journal is a temporary custodian of a permanent scholarly record. Stewardship requires:

- Digital Preservation: Commit to and invest in long-term preservation through partnerships with certified digital archives (e.g., CLOCKSS, Portico, LOCKSS).
- Persistent Identifiers: Use and mandate PIDs (DOIs for articles, ORCID iDs for authors, ROR IDs for institutions) to ensure perpetual, unambiguous linking.
- Platform Responsibility: Choose publishing platforms that prioritize open standards (OAI-PMH, JATS XML), user privacy, and long-term stability over proprietary lock-in.
- Meta-Stewardship: Contribute to the sustainability of the broader open infrastructure (e.g., by contributing to SCOSS or using community-developed software).

Pillar 4: Communitarian Governance

The journal should be accountable to the scholarly community it serves:

- Participatory Governance: Involve researchers, librarians, and readers in editorial boards and advisory councils. For society journals, this is inherent; for others, it must be designed.
- Financial Transparency: Be transparent about revenue sources, cost structures, and profit margins (if any). This builds trust and accountability.
- Mission Alignment: Ensure the journal's operational decisions (on pricing, partnerships, platform) are consistently evaluated against its stated mission to advance and disseminate knowledge for the public good.
- Global Equity: Actively work to include editors, reviewers, and authors from underrepresented regions and groups. Waive fees based on need, not just geography.

This framework is not a prescriptive checklist but a set of interlocking commitments. A journal strong in "Radical Accessibility" but weak in "Infrastructural Stewardship" risks creating fragile, ephemeral knowledge. One strong in "Principled Proceduralism" but lacking "Communitarian Governance" may be rigorous yet elitist or unaccountable. The pillars must be built together.

8. Conclusion: The Journal as a Facilitator of the Scholarly Commons

The digital era has not rendered the academic journal obsolete; it has made its social function more complex and its ethical responsibilities more profound. This article has argued that we are at a critical juncture, where technological capability must be guided by a strong normative compass. The transformation from a closed, print-based, commercially-dominated system to an open, digital, community-oriented one is not inevitable, it is a choice that requires deliberate design and collective action.

The journal of the future, we contend, should be re-imagined as a facilitator and curator of a scholarly commons. In this vision:

- It is a platform for rigorous, transparent, and rapid certification of research.
- It is a steward of a permanent, citable, and correctable record of knowledge.
- It is a community that fosters dialogue, mentorship, and equitable participation across borders.
- It is a node in a distributed, resilient, and open global infrastructure.

This vision will not be realized by any single journal, but by a movement. It requires editors to embrace their role as ethical leaders and system designers. It requires researchers to value and

contribute to community-governed, mission-aligned venues. It requires librarians and funders to strategically shift resources from buying content to building infrastructure. It requires a re-evaluation of incentive structures in academia to reward open, reproducible, and socially engaged scholarship.

The journey is fraught with challenges, sustainability puzzles, entrenched power dynamics, and the sheer inertia of legacy systems. Yet, the imperative is clear. Scholarly communication is the circulatory system of the academic enterprise and, increasingly, of an informed society. By reframing the role of journals around the principles of radical accessibility, principled proceduralism, infrastructural stewardship, and communitarian governance, we can work towards a system that is not only more efficient but also more just, more trustworthy, and more capable of serving humanity's need for reliable knowledge in an uncertain world. The digital era is not the end of the academic journal; it is an invitation to reinvent it for the common good.

Declaration

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