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Fostering Epistemic Equality with Library-Based Publishing in the Global South

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WELCOME

Good afternoon, everyone--I'm Monica Berger. I work at New York City College of Technology, City University of New York, located in Brooklyn. Please join me in acknowledging and paying respect to the traditional custodians of the land we are on today, the Lenape Delaware people.

OVERVIEW

This talk will consider the marginalization of scholars and other stakeholders in the Global South and how local publishing infrastructure is critical to recalibrating imbalances. The Latin American ethos and practice of bibliodiversity, or scholarly self-determination, is a precondition for the decolonialization of knowledge. Accordingly, predatory publishing is minimal in Latin America which has its own publishing infrastructures. Library publishing, which supports bibliodiversity, represents an important path towards much needed free to authors or diamond open access. Librarians play a critical role in educating editors and fostering publishing best practices.

UNBALANCED LANDSCAPE

Scholars from the South have been marginalized and can be described as positioned on the periphery.¹ We can start with thinking about how research agendas and **knowledge production** continue to be created and owned by the North, as demonstrated by this map.² Looking at bibliometrics is a shortcut to understanding how scholarly communications excludes Southern voices. For example, the top 50 journals in Scopus are all English language.³ In Web of Science, non-English journals are either excluded or shunted off to the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI).⁴ In August 2022, Clarivate finally assigned Journal Impact Factors to *some* periodicals included in ESCI, proudly announcing that 5% more journals from the Global South will now have Journal Impact Factors.⁵

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

This situation is the result of epistemic injustice. Epistemology probes "what does it mean to know something and by what means are we able to have knowledge?"⁶ Miranda Fricker, the key philosopher on epistemic injustice, discusses two concepts relevant to today's talk.

Testimonial injustice delegitimizes the speaker as having insufficient credibility or, conversely, favors a speaker, with unwarranted credibility.⁷ Testimonial injustice has profoundly informed the North-South

scholarly divide.⁸ We can also easily see how it applies to scholarly communications and the discourse on predatory publishing.

Hermeneutical injustice is “when a gap in collective interpretative resources puts someone at an unfair advantage when it comes to making sense of their social experience.”⁹ Hermeneutical injustice is twofold: a silencing or erasure *and* a misapprehension.

Fricker doesn't believe *anyone* is to blame for these structural problems. Although this often is the case, we need to reconsider these injustices in terms of **responsibility**—whether societal/institutional or individual.¹⁰ *Complicity in systems* that perpetuate epistemic injustice (most stakeholders) and *control of resources for creating knowledge* (publishers and others) undergird scholarly epistemic injustice. Next, I'll consider epistemic injustice's sibling, epistemic coloniality.

EPISTEMIC COLONIALITY

Many of us are familiar with the notion of the colonial as persisting long after independence. Colonialism lingers in structures and mindsets *including those of the South*. A recent article, published by Latin American ornithologists on the “systemic exclusion”¹¹ of scholars from the Global South, demonstrates epistemic coloniality in practice. Although about one-third of the world's bird species are based in Latin America, they've not been adequately studied. The research almost exclusively comes from the North¹²--Latin American scientists' research is “missing” from definitive international sources.¹³

Policy copying is a manifestation of epistemic coloniality. Southern universities embrace Northern university rankings and bibliometrics.¹⁴ As a result, Southern scholars are pressured to avoid local topics and instead are encouraged to publish in international journals and/or be on international research teams.¹⁵ Epistemic coloniality is also expressed as follows:

- a. Northern scholars provide almost three times as many peer reviews per paper than those in the South. Only four percent of journal editors are based in the South.¹⁶
- b. English continues to dominate as the lingua franca of scholarly publishing.¹⁷
- c. Ever increasing publishing expectations also affect Southern institutions, many of which are teaching-focused and without adequate resources.¹⁸
- d. Access to the literature, one of *many* obstacles to Southern knowledge creation and dissemination, continues to be an issue.¹⁹ More concerningly, it is ironic how open access itself has become an impediment to Southern knowledge creation.

OPEN ACCESS

Although Open Journals Systems or OJS has been a game changer for Southern open access publishing, all is not copacetic. Twenty-one years ago, George Soros funded the Budapest Open Access Initiative or BOAI to support development of the South. The BOAI focuses on readers, not knowledge producers.²⁰ This dilemma persists. Open access, as it has evolved, perpetuates if not amplifies, testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. We must call out the harmful domination of open access via the author pays, also known as the article processing charge or APC model²¹ and its extension in transformative agreements which have been accelerated by Plan S, a program that encourages rapid transformation.²²

APCs are increasing in price in a state of “hyperinflation,”²³ introducing additional and significant barriers. Southern authors often pay APCs out of pocket.^{24 25} Researchers found that APC waivers do not work and that authors from the South are “underrepresented in journals charging APCs.”²⁶

It is noteworthy that the 2022 version of the BOAI addresses how open access has become inequitable. It refers to supporting community-based open infrastructures and “inclusive publishing and distribution channels that never exclude authors on economic grounds.”²⁷ Also recognizing these issues, Plan S had a diamond open access summit last September which included key Southern stakeholders²⁸

Predatory publishing, which was conceptualized via a Northern lens,²⁹ utilizes the APC model. These journals are often based in whole or in part in the South. Many authors from the South also choose predatory journals because their institutions want English-language “international” publications. Others seek familiar publishing venues with low bars to entry. Predatory journals are deeply colonialistic in their “mimicry” of Northern journals.³⁰

Scholarship in predatory journals is poorly discoverable and languishes in obscurity resulting in epistemicide for authors. Predatory publishing also harms Southern editors and publishers.³¹ Some so-called predatory journals are just “different.” Others need improvement³²--Journal Publishing and Practices Standards, created by INASP and African Journals Online, addresses these issues.³³ We need more, especially local, diamond open access options for Southern authors and support for existing and new Southern journals. This approach embraces bibliodiversity, a grounding principle.

BIBLIODIVERSITY

Revisiting the ornithology article, the authors discuss and demonstrate Latin America’s ethos of bibliodiversity. Bibliodiversity undergirds the creation of spaces for local languages and knowledge. The authors highlight the repression of Indigenous knowledge in ornithology and provide a Spanish-language abstract as well as a summary for lay readers.³⁴

Latin American open access is overwhelmingly diamond; critically, its infrastructure is self-determined, community created, and community managed.³⁵ Bibliodiversity is also supported by UNESCO’s Open Science recommendations.³⁶ Library publishing, by its service-oriented nature, supports bibliodiversity, and can enable the expansion of high-quality Southern publishing.³⁷ *Significantly, diamond open access is also the default for most library publishing.*

LIBRARY PUBLISHING

Library publishing is formally defined by the Library Publishing Coalition or LPC as publishing led by libraries and library consortia and generally “requires a production process, presents original work not previously made available, and applies a level of certification” whether via peer review or reputation.³⁸ LPC’s FOREST Framework, which helps a publisher identify their values and measure outcomes, is community-focused and bibliodiverse.³⁹ LPC also publishes a detailed directory and offers a curriculum on library publishing.

As I stated previously, librarians play an important role in fostering best practices. For example, many scholar-led journals do not have adequate discovery. Mutual assistance is also an important aspect of library publishing which is meaningful to the efforts of LPC and IFLA's Library Publishing Special Interest Group. This is especially meaningful because scholarly communications librarians are not a given in the South but are needed to advance library publishing.⁴⁰ The IFLA group plans to translate some of LPC's materials.

Little is known about library publishers in the South. Even identifying them has proven problematic. I found a handful of publishers via LPC and IFLA and tried to find more. I retrieved data from a variety of sources including DOAJ, Web of Science, and Scielo and discovered that some library publishers are listed only under the name of their university. I also came to realize that my conception of library publishing may not be as clear and rigorous as LPC's definition when a respondent wrote that their library only hosted content, but they weren't a publisher. Communicating with publishers requires more detail than asking "are you a library publisher?"

Here is a summary of my research in progress examining publishers' sites. Most publishers are based in Asia. Over half are single journal publishers and over half use OJS. Only 6 publishers point to external organizations related to quality. Next, I'll talk briefly about two Southern library publishers. One is well-known and the other is a solo journal.

TWO PUBLISHERS: UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN AND *BUFFALO BULLETIN*

University of Cape Town or UCT is a mature diamond open access operation under Reggie Raju and Jill Claassen. UCT's library, a leader in African open access, publishes 6 journals and have published 23 monographs including open textbooks. UCT uses OJS, Open Monographs Press, and DSpace. They have a clearly articulated mission and are networked into LPC and IFLA. UCT's Continental Platform helps other African countries develop their own diamond open access journal and monographic publishing. UCT provides training and support. This is mutual assistance,⁴¹ as framed by Dave Ghamandi, par excellence.

Kasetsart University's library in Thailand publishes *Buffalo Bulletin*. It is diamond open access. Like many of the library publishers I examined, they use OJS. You can see their website is bare bones visually. This is a long-lived journal with an impact factor. Editors are based at prominent universities. *Buffalo Bulletin* is not networked into the open access community. It is not included in DOAJ or LPC's directories and it is not a member of the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association.

CONCLUSION

There are two additional initiatives that support bibliodiversity and diamond open access that I want to highlight. First, Educopia's values and community-based Next Gen Library Publishing Project⁴² provides end-to-end workflows for library publishers that play well with existing infrastructure. Now that the initial development phase is complete, Next Gen is piloting different platform use cases. Next Gen will allow us to take back control of infrastructure from corporate players. The second initiative, FORCE11's Open, Multilingual and Global Scholarly Communication working group⁴³ expands this organization's reach to international and non-English language stakeholders.

Supporting diamond open access, which includes library publishing, is surely one of the best solutions for mitigating predatory publishing and rebalancing an unbalanced and unjust landscape that marginalizes Southern knowledge. To conclude, library publishing is a natural fit for our skills and, more importantly, our values. As we develop relationships of mutual assistance linking North and South, we have opportunities to learn from each other and model thoughtful, equitable, and sustainable scholarly publishing.

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³ Adam Huttner-Koros, "Hidden Bias of Science's Universal Language," *The Atlantic*, August 21, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/08/english-universal-language-science-research/400919/>.

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⁶ Ian Buchanan, "Epistemology," in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198794790.001.0001/acref-9780198794790-e-225>.

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⁸ Marcel Knöchelmann, "The Democratisation Myth: Open Access and the Solidification of Epistemic Injustices," *Science & Technology Studies* 34, no. 2 (June 9, 2020): 75–76, <https://doi.org/10.23987/sts.94964>.

⁹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001>. Quoted in José Medina, "Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice," in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, ed. Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., First paperback edition, Routledge Handbooks in Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2019), 41–42.

¹⁰ Medina, "Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice," 42–43.

¹¹ Leticia Soares et al., "Neotropical Ornithology: Reckoning with Historical Assumptions, Removing Systemic Barriers, and Reimagining the Future," *Ornithological Applications*, February 7, 2023, 3, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ornithapp/duac046>.

¹² Soares et al., "Neotropical Ornithology."

¹³ Soares et al.

¹⁴ David Mills, "Decolonial Perspectives on Global Higher Education: Disassembling Data Infrastructures, Reassembling the Field," *Oxford Review of Education* 48, no. 4 (July 4, 2022): 474–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2022.2072285>.

¹⁵ Mohsen Rezaeian, "Disadvantages of Publishing Biomedical Research Articles in English for Non-Native Speakers of English," *Epidemiology and Health* 37 (May 1, 2015): e2015021, <https://doi.org/10.4178/epih/e2015021> [doi].

¹⁶ Inga Vesper, "Peer Reviewers Unmasked: Largest Global Survey Reveals Trends," *Nature News*, September 7, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-018-06602-y>.

¹⁷ Mary Jane Curry and Theresa Lillis, "The Dangers of English as Lingua Franca of Journals," *Inside Higher Ed* (blog), March 13, 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/03/13/dominance-english-language-journal-publishing-hurting-scholarship-many-countries>.

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