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Co-building Open Science: Portrait of the University Library as a Publisher

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Abstract:

Located in Lyon, France, the Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University is home to 30 000 students in law, management and humanities, around 600 academic staff and 18 research units. A dedicated research support team has been implemented within the University library in 2015, to promote open access to research results.

In 2017, answering to requests expressed by researchers to be helped in their online publishing, the library has launched an in-house incubator for open access journals in social sciences and humanities. Researchers and staff from the research units were provided with an open access standard-compliant publishing platform, technical and editorial assistance and training for current publications.

The incubator raison d'être is to allow the University's research to be available on an open access basis, to reinforce good publishing practices among research units and to improve the overall visibility of the research produced by Jean Moulin Lyon 3 researchers. The project quickly gathered momentum: two other HEI have approached the library to see if they could publish on the platform, thus expanding its role beyond the limits of its parent institution.

The Lyon 3 incubator team has been instrumental in forming, in late 2018, a network of French incubators and publishing platforms in social sciences and humanities. Named REPÈRES, the network promotes sharing good practices among public-funded open access publishers.

In a publishing landscape where the announced demise of the big deals' risks paving the way for the unchecked rise of APCs, the Jean Moulin Lyon 3 library project is a contribution to bibliodiversity in that it supports an open access model and the use of vernacular languages (French in the case at hand). It also reinforces the intertwining of academic and library staff for the common goal of scientific publishing, thus placing the library in the position of co-building science.

Keywords: Open access journals, library as a publisher, co-building science with researchers, bibliodiversity, editorial quality.

Introduction

Located in Lyon, France, the Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University is home to 30 000 students in law, management and humanities, around 600 academic staff and 18 research units. A dedicated research support team has been implemented within the Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University library in 2015, one of its aims being to promote open access to research results.

In 2017, answering to requests expressed by researchers to be helped in their online publishing, the library has launched an in-house incubator for open access journals in social sciences and humanities. Researchers and staff from the research units were provided with an open access standard-compliant publishing platform, technical and editorial assistance and training for current publications and a program to have the backlog of issues addressed – all tailored to meet the needs of each research team.

The incubator *raison d'être* is to allow the University's research to be available on an open access basis, to reinforce good publishing practices among research units and to improve the overall visibility of the research produced by Jean Moulin Lyon 3 researchers. The incubator technical platform and procedures strictly adhere to those set forth by OpenEdition, the French national open access platform for books and journals in social sciences and humanities – the idea being that once mature enough, Lyon 3 journals could migrate onto the national platform and reap further benefits in editorial professionalism and academic visibility.

The project quickly gathered momentum and it now hosts nine Lyon 3 journals with two more in the pipeline. Two other HEI have approached the library to see if they could publish on the platform, thus expanding its role beyond the limits of its parent institution.

Its success was confirmed when it became the first official incubator for OpenEdition in 2018. This rapid development took hold in a context of rising support for open science and open access models from authorities and funding bodies: the French HE Minister announced a comprehensive plan for the development and funding of open science during the Lille LIBER conference in July 2018 and the French research funding agency (ANR) is committed to implement Plan S.

The Lyon 3 incubator team has been instrumental in forming, in late 2018, a network of French incubators and publishing platforms in social sciences and humanities. Named REPÈRES, the network promotes sharing good practices among public-funded open access publishers.

Developed within the university libraries of Lyon 3, the journal incubator defends bibliodiversity and quality editorial practices in open access.

It has long been recognized that the unprecedented concentration in the academic publishing world has considerably weakened and impoverished the editorial ecosystem, particularly in science, technology and medicine (STM). The situation is different in the human and social sciences (SHS), particularly in France where the 2,000 scientific journals produced in these disciplines are still published by a multitude of structures with very different statuses: commercial or university publishers, associations, laboratories, etc.

The ecosystem is therefore still quite diversified, but it is in full evolution, particularly due to the massive switchover to digital: in 2008, 55% of SHS French journals were still only in paper format, compared to only 10 to 15% today[i]. This very rapid evolution, which can destabilize already fragile previous balances, must be accompanied if we want to foster the emergence of an "editorial environment[...] obeying the principles of open and ethical access" that the National Open Science Plan calls for.

Birth and development of the nursery

It is in this spirit that the Lyon 3 Libraries created, at the end of 2016, a portal of scientific journals in open access [ii]. This project was born in 2015 within the newly created Research Support Service at the library. This service had gradually become aware that the journals carried by the university's research units, 13 out of 18 laboratories, were facing real difficulties: in 2016, eight of them were still only in paper format and suffered from very low visibility; others, which had gone digital, relied on technical solutions that were ill-adapted to the distribution of academic publications. Only two journals had joined OpenEdition [iii] and therefore had a professionalized editorial framework. The others were carried by researchers who were not very familiar with publishing issues and who did not have contacts within the university to develop their journals digitally under satisfactory conditions.

The creation of an open access journal incubator implied a major change in the positioning of the library within the Lyon 3 University, because publishing does not fall within the traditional remit of library expertise. But this evolution was already in the early stages of the activity developed within the newly created department. By taking over the administration of the university's open access archive (HAL portal) or the digital distribution of theses and research master's dissertations, the University library was increasingly ensuring the open access distribution of digital scientific productions. Up until now, these have been produced within the institution and previously kept relatively confidential. The creation of a journal incubator was only the culmination of a process, largely encouraged by the development of open science, in which the library is involved in the entire process of producing, disseminating, promoting and preserving the scientific knowledge produced by its institution.

This evolution has a cost, because it forces librarians to venture into unfamiliar territories, publishing or archival professions for academic libraries involved in supporting Open data. It therefore requires the acquisition of new skills, but in return it makes it possible to forge different and often closer links with researchers, as the team that set up the journal incubator was able to experience.

Supporting young shoots

The term "nursery" is not insignificant. From the beginning of the project, the stated objective was to allow journals hosted on the Lyon 3 portal to eventually join OpenEdition. The aim was therefore to create digital journals for laboratories, but also to offer support to editorial teams in order to enable them to increase their skills, improve the quality of their publications and then apply to join this platform with a catalogue of 500 journals, with international visibility, but relatively selective. This led the team to rely on the tools developed by OpenEdition, in particular the open source software Lodel, to create the portal's infrastructure and thus allow journal holders to move from one environment to another without major changes in their practices.

The Lyon 3 journal portal is therefore designed as a temporary distribution space, except for certain publications that are not intended to join OpenEdition. It is a step in the life of the journal during which the nursery team provides assistance in training publication secretaries, clarifying the legal framework of the journal, improving editorial processes... The work carried out with the heads of the *Cahiers Jean Moulin* [iv], from September 2016 to April 2017, made it possible to define the basic elements of the portfolio of services proposed by the Lyon 3 libraries (free services, emphasis on local support, emphasis on open access). The collaboration with the five journals that then joined the nursery has made it possible to refine and enrich it.

Bibliodiversity and good editorial practices

The Lyon 3 portal now hosts 6 journals with open access and will offer, in June 2019, hosting for all publications from Lyon 3 laboratories that were experiencing distribution problems in 2016. The rate of integration is gaining momentum as 6 more journals will join the incubator in 2019, which is also broadening its scope of intervention by starting work with editorial teams, exterior to the Jean Moulin Lyon 3 University.

This last evolution sheds light on the difficulties faced by editorial managers in France in finding an open access distribution space for their publications. A platform such as OpenEdition is still too isolated and, faced with the development of open access, based on publication fees charged to the authors. It is becoming urgent to support a public edition based on upstream financing of platforms, as the "diamond" model tries to promote it.

The emergence of journal incubators run by academic libraries but also by Digital Humanities companies is an embryonic response in this direction. These incubators can provide local support, respond to journals in a relatively short period of time, or even engage in forms of editorial experimentation. They contribute to the rise of a richer ecosystem, with operators of different sizes.

But, to truly defend a virtuous bibliodiversity, these incubators must develop their skill sets and act in consultation with the major players in public scientific publishing. It is in this logic that the Lyon 3 journal portal became, in July 2018, the first official OpenEdition incubator[v] and that the team that runs it organized, in November 2018, with the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme of Dijon[vi], a workshop bringing together eleven journal incubators from France and Belgium, representatives of the research infrastructures Métopes[vii] and OpenEdition, of Médiçi (the network of professionals in public scientific publishing), ADBU (French Academic libraries association) and InSHS (Research Institute in Humanities).

From this meeting, *Repères* (Network of open access scientific journal incubators) was born. One of its goals is to promote, within this network but also beyond, the adoption of good editorial practices.

The stakes are high, because the development of an open access edition must encourage the reintroduction of forms of regulation and transparency into editorial practices and be based on strong ethical requirements. Latindex [viii] or DOAJ [ix], two of this such portals for referencing open access journals, have established editorial quality criteria that today constitute international standards for establishing benchmarks. There are for example, journal policy on Open Access, no moving barrier to access articles, journal policy on Open Archives, submission and publication fees, authors' contracts with non-exclusive assignment of rights, free licenses (Creative Commons) for articles. Moreover, the quality and transparency of the editorial process is based on several criteria such as the composition and recruitment of editorial and/or scientific committees, the form of publication evaluation (type of evaluation, transparency of the process), the regularity of new issue, the time between submission and publication and between dissemination and calls for contributions. Among the criteria for evaluating good practices in scientific publishing, it is necessary to mention scientific integrity as the *a priori* and/or *a posteriori* treatment of ethical problems such as plagiarism, manipulation of sources or quotations. This requires information on the procedures implemented in such cases[x]. Finally, among the good practices in digital scientific publishing, technical aspects cannot be neglected. Data structuring and interoperability, such as the sustainability of product content, guaranteed by permanent archiving and permanent identifiers or referencing, are guarantees of quality.

Conclusion

A pioneer in the environmental protection field coined the motto: "Think global, act local"[xi]. The defense of bibliodiversity also requires this dual approach that the Lyon 3 libraries are trying to implement on their own scale. The journal nursery of the University Jean Moulin Lyon 3 aims to promote bibliodiversity at its level [xii]. Scientific quality also depends on editorial quality and a meaningful ecosystem is based on networks of journals that avoid amateurism and fragmentation. Our experience in Lyon can, I believe, be replicated in many institutions because we use open access tools and mainly qualified human resources to develop the project.

A new mission for University library is emerging, as a publisher, because, in France at least, the University presses had previously not responded to the needs of Humanities researchers.

In a publishing landscape where the announced demise of the big deals' risks paving the way for the unchecked rise of APCs, the Jean Moulin Lyon 3 library project is a contribution to bibliodiversity in that it supports an open access model and the use of vernacular languages (French in the case at hand). It also reinforces the intertwining of academic and library staff for the common goal of scientific publishing, thus placing the library in the position of co-building science.

Moving away from quantitative evaluation models such as the Impact Factor towards a more global quality of scientific publications in reintroducing qualitative evaluations of the editorial process itself seems to be a way for researchers to re-appropriate the ecosystem of scientific publication where librarians have a major role to play.

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