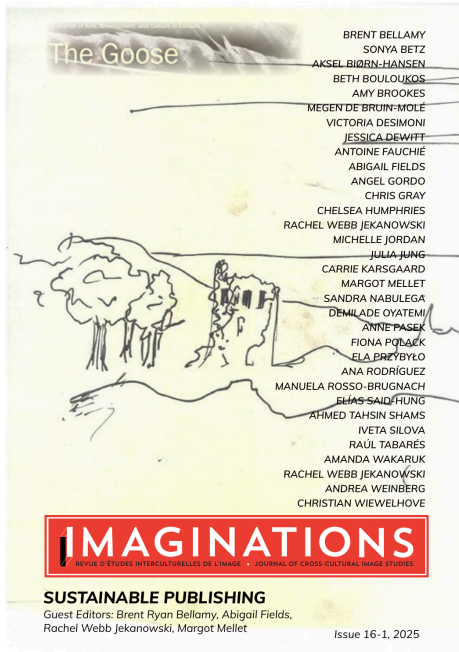


# IMAGINATIONS

REVUE D'ÉTUDES INTERCULTURELLES DE L'IMAGE • JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES



IMAGINATIONS:

JOURNAL OF CROSS-CULTURAL IMAGE STUDIES |  
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RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE OPEN PUBLISHING: Q&A  
WITH CANADA'S LARGEST LIBRARY-BASED OPEN  
PUBLISHER

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**T**he University of Alberta Library partners with Canadian organizations, editorial boards, and researchers to publish more than 70 fully open access scholarly journals.

**Question:** What is library-based open publishing?

**Answer:** An increasing number of academic libraries are providing digital publishing platforms and services that enable academics to produce a range of journals, monographs, and textbooks. If these programs are operated without direct cost to authors or readers, they are considered to be “open publishers.” These publishers help authors comply with the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications.

**Question:** How is library-based open publishing more environmentally sustainable than similar publishing services offered by commercial operators?

**Answer:** Academic libraries are based in organizations whose missions usually include knowledge production, dissemination, and stewardship. Economies of scale related to resource usage and cultural uptake of relatively environmentally-friendly decision making is more likely in a nonprofit, higher education setting. Additionally, solving the climate crisis requires free and [unfettered global access](#) to research, and library-based open publishing helps ensure that

scholarly contributions are more easily found and cited. Sustainable knowledge systems, more broadly, are those that are openly available, used, and shared. Many library publishers also have a preservation program in place, helping to ensure that articles are found and read in perpetuity.

Library-based and other non-profit publishing models can also support and sustain scholarly communities that have been excluded from commercial publishing systems. With a [values-based and community-centred](#) approach to publishing, libraries can be viable publishing venues that support languages other than English, on topics of interest to local or regional or specialized communities, and by authors who face systemic barriers to publication.

**Question:** What about labour practices? Higher education has been criticized for exploiting graduate students and adjunct faculty, among others, and many of these people provide free labour as part of running open journals.

**Answer:** Journals' reliance on precarious volunteer labour is certainly problematic, both for the volunteers and for the sustainability of the journal itself. Without predictable revenue sources such as subscription fees or article processing charges, library-based journals face significant challenges in funding their production, especially for tasks such as layout and copyediting. In Canada, significant progress has been made in developing shared funding models and granting programs that can help pay for the labour needed to produce a journal issue. These include the [Partnership for Open Access](#) (collective funding contributed by academic libraries and distributed directly to journals), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council [Aid to Scholarly Journals grant](#), and the Fonds de recherche du Québec [soutien aux revues scientifiques en français grant](#). Compare that to commercial publishers which, in general, do not pay for author manuscripts or related peer review activities and then make profits off this free labour. Some of the largest for-profit academic journal publishers are currently facing [a class-action antitrust lawsuit](#) that is bringing these issues into sharp relief.

**Question:** What is the current scope and governance model of library-based open publishing?

**Answer:** There are nearly [400 open scholarly journals supported by more than 30 library-based publishing programs across Canada](#). Most of these journals have editorial boards that work in partnership with libraries to ensure that their authors reach readers around the globe. While there is significant variation with governance across these programs, journals typically retain autonomy over their editorial decision making, submission and peer review processes, as well as the structure of their editorial teams and boards. Libraries provide a wide range of services to the journals they support, including access to publishing and peer review platforms, guidance and training in editorial practices, support for indexing, guidance on copyright and licensing, and infrastructure that enables broad dissemination and long-term preservation of content. Most libraries provide these services free of charge, often with criteria for participation that encourage or require journals to adopt author-processing-charges-free and open-access publishing models.

**Question:** How can academic communities support open, scholar-run, non-profit journals?

**Answer:** Although libraries are one of the major supporters of non-commercial, no-fee, open access journals, there are other organizations working with similar models, including [scholarly associations](#), non-profit publishing organizations like [Érudit](#), and [university-based publishers](#). In Canada, there is also a significant collaborative momentum to develop shared infrastructure for non-profit scholarly publishing through the [Coalition Publica](#) project. All of these organizations rely on precarious sources of funding such as granting programs, university budgets, and library contributions. Raising awareness of the value of these journals, and the organizations which support them, is critical to their ongoing survival and sustainability. As a member of an academic community, you can:

- Seek out publishers that prioritize equitable and open access to published research, eliminate barriers to authors to publish (financial and otherwise), and contribute to social and environ-

mental sustainability. Consider the publisher's values when making decisions about where to publish and where to commit your labour in reviewing and validating others research.

- Advocate for recognition and concrete supports for editors on your own campus who are contributing volunteer labour to open journals.
- Consider how conversations around tenure and promotion criteria can recognize and reward publication in non-profit, open access journals. Encourage your institution to commit to the principles of the [Declaration on Research Assessment](#).
- Vocally support libraries' [national efforts](#) to reduce their collective investments in exploitative commercial publishers and increase their investment in non-profit, open access publishers.
- Talk to your colleagues about these ideas and actions.