

Hot Takes on Open Peer Review

KSU OA Week

Panelist Bios:

Charlotte Roh (she/her pronouns) is a Publications Manager with the California Digital Library, part of the University of California system. She is active in both the Library Publishing Coalition as part of the Ethical Framework Task Force and the Society for Scholarly Publishing as a board member and the liaison to the Coalition for Diversity & Inclusion in Scholarly Communications, otherwise known as C4DISC. Her experience includes publishing with institutions such as the University of San Francisco, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Oxford University Press, and Taylor & Francis / Routledge.

Hilary Baribeau (she/her) is the Scholarly Communications Librarian at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. She is a co-Editor-in-Chief and the Technical Journal Manager of the Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education. Hilary assists faculty and students with navigating the publishing landscape, understanding open access and open practices, and increasing their research impacts. She also manages the College's digital repository platforms and is a rotating teaching subject liaison. Hilary currently serves as the Co-Chair of the Oberlin Group of Libraries Open and Equitable Access to Scholarship Working Group which strives to provide educational and growth opportunities for member libraries and their staff in the areas of open access and Open Educational Resources.

Sajni Lacey (she/her) is the Learning and Curriculum Support Librarian at the University of British Columbia's Okanagan Campus Library. She has a BA in History and Psychology, and a Master's of Library and Information Science both from The University of Western Ontario. She is currently a director at large for the British Columbia Library Association, and the past chair of the British Columbia Academic Libraries professional section. She is currently working on a MA in Education focusing on culturally responsive pedagogies and practices at the higher education level.

Panelist Headshots:



Charlotte Roh



Sajni Lacey



Hilary Baribeau (Bear-a-BOW)

Panelist Questions

Introductions: Name, position, institution, and very, very brief experience with open peer review and/or traditional peer review.

1. (7 min) Charlotte, I'd like to start with you and a topic that you bring up in the article that you wrote for College and Research Libraries News earlier this year, titled "Owning the peer review process: If we have to do this work, we should own it." In your article, you state: "We teach scholars that being a good member of the scholarly community means participating in peer review, but people are unpaid, untrained, and unappreciated for it." I think that many of us have been in a position where we have been asked to volunteer our time and effort to review scholarship in our fields--whether we felt qualified or not, we certainly felt obligated--, so this quote from your article feels rather on the nose. Tell us more about the problems surrounding peer review as unpaid labor and the effect you see this having on the scholarly ecosystem. What path forward do you see for the scholarly community in terms of improving the peer review mechanism?
(<https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/25362/33246>)
 - a. Would any of our other panelists like to weigh in?
2. (7 min) Hilary, I'd like you to start us off on this next discussion question. You have been involved with facilitating open peer review for the last year with the Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education, which is a new journal set to publish its first issue this Wednesday! One of the primary criticisms of open peer review is that authors and reviewers knowing each others' identities can lessen the rigor of the peer review process due to the open nature. Based on your experiences with this process, and your thoughts on open peer review in general, how can we go about ensuring that open peer review is held to the same standards that we consider essential for traditional blind peer review? Or should we even be operating on the same standards for the two versions of this process?
 - a. Would any of our other panelists like to weigh in?
3. (7 min) Sajni, you have recently been an open peer reviewer and have had an article open peer reviewed (and full disclosure for those here today, it was my article that Sajni was an open peer reviewer on). Another hesitation about open peer review in the academic community is the potential for bias and error because of the known identities of author and reviewer. Granted, it's almost impossible to remove bias and error completely from the peer review process, because at its core it is a human process and humans are biased and we make mistakes. Do you see value in open peer review as a mechanism to help reduce bias and error? What were your experiences like participating in open peer review as both an author and a reviewer, and do you see open peer review as a viable and rigorous validation of scholarly work?
 - a. Would any of our other panelists like to weigh in?

4. (6 min) This last question is for all the panelists. This panel is titled “Hot Takes on Open Peer Review,” so, I’d like to know what your hottest take on open peer review is, and why you think it’s a hot take.
 - a. Hilary, let’s start with you.
 - b. Sajni, what’s your hottest take?
 - c. And Charlotte, what hot take would you like to share?

Amy Hofer:

I’m curious if any panelists have experience working with textbook manuscript review (as opposed to journal articles). Open peer review for open textbooks - pros and cons?

- (Charlotte, worked on textbooks for 5 years) Textbooks don’t go through a peer review process because they’re typically not original research (which is why they also don’t typically count towards the tenure process). They go through a review process for accuracy and/or usability, and with traditional publishers the reviewers are paid consultants. However, in the OER space, I’ve seen this kind of review pushed out to the OER community, who simply offer feedback if they see errors. If they want something different, they can always edit an open textbook to their own use.
- (Hilary) My experience with OER review has been an open and collaborative experience that has used a variety of review techniques from open comments to more formalized assessments on the contribution and relevance to the field. I think its biggest benefit has been to connect community members to each other, but I do think, at least in the OER space, a larger conversation about how to grow the field and OER materials is needed and our traditional publishing systems may not be the best way to do that– I don’t know!
- (Sajni) I have not! I am in the process of co-writing a foundational information literacy textbook for my campus, the goal is to have some open peer-review when we get to that stage.

Heather Hankins:

Do you think ongoing or post-publication open peer review could reduce the negative result publication bias? Where studies that cannot be confirmed or replicated after publication, but the articles that address that failure struggle to get published so the flawed study continues to receive attention.

- (Charlotte) Ongoing/post-publication review already exists as a part of the scholarly conversation! I’m not sure if I see research that addresses “flawed” studies struggle to get published... if that’s the case, the publisher/editor is not doing a good job of furthering the conversation. What we typically see, or want to see, is an expansion of a topic or field. Sometimes the big splashy study that’s first on deck keeps getting cited because follow-up studies (that might be correctives) just don’t get attention.

Julia Rodriguez

I have experience with both open and anonymous peer-review process. I think Librarians, especially in the last 5 years, are more likely than other fields to mentor each other over cutting each other down. I wonder if open peer review would disadvantage some authors in some fields?

- (Hilary) While I think there is a strong tradition of mentorship in Librarianship, the field is just as likely to tear down authors and demonstrate bias as in any other field. (+1 Charlotte +1 Sajni) The success of open review, in my opinion, has less to do with the specific field, and more to do with the expectation set by the journal, the buy-in from the reviewers, and the management of the process by the editors and the editorial office. The process can be aided by setting clear expectations and critically engaging with the values (expectations?) of tenure, promotion, and scholarship.
- (Charlotte) Agree with Hilary, and I'll add that it's not just systems (like peer review) but people (editors, authors, reviewers) that are building each other up or cutting each other down. If authors are going to be disadvantaged by open peer review, that signals, as was said in the panel by both Hilary and Sajni, that it's not a safe space in general.