



The library's role in evaluating open access publisher agreements

Helping institutions assess transformative agreements with reliable evidence

Customer

Western University

Solution

InCites Benchmarking & Analytics™

Challenge

Western University's Chief Librarian challenged her team to provide quantitative evidence to demonstrate why they should renew their various existing transformative agreements.

Outcome

Using InCites Benchmarking & Analytics, Western University was able to generate data-driven analyses to inform decision making at the local and national consortium levels.

Western University (Western), located in London, Ontario, and comprising 12 Faculties and over 40,000 students, ranks as one of Canada's top research-intensive universities.

From fundamental to applied discovery and other scholarly activities, its scholars advance knowledge that provides tangible benefits for the economic, social, health and cultural development of citizens in Canada and around the world.

Western Libraries Open Access Standing Committee is a cross-functional team comprised of members from the Collections & Content Strategies and Research & Scholarly Communications teams.

The Committee has broad accountability for open access and uses its own budget to advance open advocacy and education to the Western community and beyond. One of their primary responsibilities is managing institutional open access investments and memberships with publishers. The Committee recently designed a new assessment framework for transformative agreements, and they needed a reliable tool to provide data-driven analysis before journal renewals.

"When it comes to assessing open access memberships, it's not an apples to-apples situation — it's more of a fruit salad; no two memberships are the same and it proves very challenging"

Courtney Waugh

Research and Scholarly Communication Librarian at Western Libraries

Value vs. values

Most of Western's transformative agreements are negotiated through their national consortium, the Canadian Research Knowledge Network, and Western can make recommendations about what they'd like the consortium deal to include.

Western's Open Access Committee revised their open access membership selection criteria to establish more of a values-based framework for assessing open access investments — adding accessibility, privacy and equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization to their original framework. They wanted to retrospectively apply these criteria to existing memberships to see how they were doing and identify any gaps, especially ahead of journal renewals.

But the values-based approach had to be supported by a quantitative outlook — something more comprehensive than just journal usage. Encouraged by their Chief Librarian, the Committee's team started to look for a tool that would provide the data they needed to back-up their renewal decisions. They found out that the Research Office already had a subscription to InCites, and thought there was a lot more it could be used for.

They were particularly interested in looking not just at Western's output, but at publications more broadly, starting with the number of open access publications per publisher. Using InCites, the committee was able to examine the research landscape from different angles, including which subjects and journals their authors publish in and cite, and could identify open access trends per discipline using InCites classification and normalized metrics such as Category Normalized Citation Impact (CNCI).

"These additional metrics can give an indication of the potential impact of a new open access agreement and provide insight into author publishing trends for current deals. The number of citations of Western authored articles shows how often authors are citing Western's published works — the higher the number, the more impact there would be if those Western authored publications were open access" says Shawn Hendrikx, Collections & Content Strategies Librarian, Western University.

**"InCites opened the scope
— instead of just looking at Western's
ROI, it's looking at open access
across the landscape"**

Samuel Cassady

Head, Collections & Content Strategies Librarian, Western University.

Refining the open access strategy

The analysis was a success in getting an outlook of how all transformative agreements compared to one another and enabled some specific data-driven decisions.

For instance, one of the publishers that Western has an agreement with advertises pay-to-publish models as the way in which they are supporting open access, but the data from InCites shows that their new models to fund OA have not resulted in an increase in the proportion of OA content overall. The publisher offers significant savings for Western authors, but a limited commitment to changing the scholarly landscape — an important point for the Committee, as they wanted to analyze their return on investments, but also assess the impact of these investments in shifting the wider open access landscape. This data will influence the Committee's renewal recommendations to the national consortium.

The analysis also showed the Committee which of Western's disciplines or departments were doing well at open access, and which could show improvements. For instance, their Civil Engineering program is one of the five best in the world, but only 6% of the faculty's publications are open access. The Library can use this to inform their communication plans with the faculty. Next steps would be to use InCites to see titles on Civil Engineering that are OA as well as publishers that could help fill gaps with new agreements.

Western is looking forward to using the Alma Collection Report in InCites to see alignments of their authors' activities to their own collections found in their Alma Library Management system. Identifying gaps in their collections and agreements will continue to become more efficient with this new reporting feature in InCites.

"Having evidence helps clarify our perspective and strengthen our position when it comes to articulating the values of open scholarship to campus partners, which also helps us refine our open access messaging and communication strategy"

Courtney Waugh

Research and Scholarly Communication Librarian at Western Libraries

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