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Advancing Women in Leadership Journal:
Open Access Journalism as a Foundation for Social Justice

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For decades print journals were the most important channel of communication and exchange of knowledge and information. However, in recent years, a major shift has occurred as access to this knowledge and information through print journals has become more limited because of spiraling subscription prices, internet, and electronic journals.

According to Mattaini (2004), worldwide journal prices have been rising much faster than inflation and library budgets as commercial journal publishers have monopolized the market through mergers resulting in increased subscription prices. For example, the American Library Association (2003) reported that “In North America, research libraries spent 227% more on journals in 2002 than in 1986. These increases have led to continued journal cancellations with fewer journals being purchased by libraries. While a growing number of journals are now available online, this access often comes at an extra cost” (¶ 6, 8, 9). Between 2002-2006 journal prices continued to rise. EBSCO (n.d.) reported that the total costs of college and university journal titles increased by 38.50%. As a result, many universities and colleges, especially those with few financial resources and in underdeveloped countries, are no longer able to afford broad-based journal access for faculty, staff, and students. High subscription prices limit access to intellectual resources which should be shared among human beings all over the world. As a consequence, scholarly communications are thwarted, crucial responses to important issues are delayed or lost (Mattaini), and views and voices from the vulnerable are silenced or excluded.

The Internet and electronic journals have (a) addressed concerns about limited accessibility of print journals on research and learning, (b) brought about a new way of dissemination of information, and (c) provided a valuable and international forum of academic research and

publication for scholars as they began to publish in and consult online journals (Burbules, 1997; Creamer, 1998). However, Suber (2007a) pointed out that although many scholarly journals have been available online, few of them are provided as free, open access publications.

Open Access Movement – A Commitment of Social Justice

Politicians, academics, and librarians concerned about access to scholarly research have called for free online access to publicly-funded scientific and scholarly research literature (Brown & Irby, 2002). Several initiatives and events have advanced the open access movement across the world. For example, the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) in 2002 was the first and foremost international statement on open access (BOAI, 2002). The BOAI indicated:

By “open access” to this literature [i.e., peer-reviewed journal articles and unreviewed preprints], we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited. (p. 1)

The purpose of the Initiative was “to accelerate progress in the international effort to make research articles in all academic fields freely available on the internet” (BOAI, p.1).

The BOAI was followed by two further statements: the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing in June 2003 (Bethesda Statement, 2003) and the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities in October 2003 (Berlin Declaration,

2003). In addition, the U. N. World Summit on the Information Society approved a Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action in 2003 and endorsed open access to findings of scientific research and open access journals (Suber, 2007b). Also, the Indian Academy of Science in India has taken an initiative to make all their journals freely available on the Internet (Ekbal, 2008).

In the United States, the open access movement has also been embraced. The American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Special Interest Group (SIG) Communication of Research in 2007 endorsed the BOAI and urged e-journals to support the initiative, stating that "to the best of our ability to discern, we have included only links to electronic journals that are scholarly, peer-reviewed, full text and accessible without cost.... we hope to do what little we can to promote free access world wide to scholarship in education" (AERA SIG Communication of Research, 2007, p.1). According to Suber (2008), two-thirds of all journals have given authors permission to make their articles freely available after publication. Additionally, academic institutions and universities have joined the open access movement. For example, Harvard University made the decision in 2008 that "every scholarly article that is to be published by a professor must also be submitted to the Provost's office with a non-exclusive license unless the faculty-member specifically asks for a waiver" (Editorial Board, 2008, p.1). After a period of time, all of these articles will be approved freely available online through Harvard's library.

The open access movement represents a commitment to social justice as open access (a) removes price barriers (subscriptions, licensing fees, pay-per-view fees) and permission barriers (most copyright and licensing restrictions) (Suber, 2007a), (b) provides citizens worldwide equal access to intellectual resources, and (c) promotes equal opportunities for conversations between the rich and the poor. As the signatories of the BOAI (2002) stated:

The new technology is the internet. The public good they make possible is the world-wide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds. Removing access barriers to this literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge.

(p.1)

Open Access Journal - Advancing Women in Leadership

Advancing Women in Leadership Journal (AWL), as one of the earliest free online peer-reviewed journals, has been a significant part of the open access movement. AWL was created as a peer-reviewed free open access international journal to promote equity and social justice. In the following sections, we present the purpose, history, and accomplishments of AWL as it relates to the open access movement and social justice.

Creating an Open Access Journal - AWL

As early as in the mid-1990s, many women had encountered significant barriers when trying to publish their research on women's or gender issues (Brown & Irby, 2007). In fact, Brown and Irby's (2007) review of scholarly articles published between 1986-1996 supported that assertion. Within that decade, only 38 such articles based on qualitative research on women's or gender issues were published in professional publications listed on WilsonWeb. This dearth of publishing on women's and gender issues was disconcerting, particularly if women's opportunities for publishing on women's issues were to ultimately affect their tenure and promotion.

By 1996, the Internet had begun to gain traction as a creditable forum for academic research and publication. Yet few journals provided free, online access, and no professional e-journals were dedicated solely to sponsoring women's academic work (Brown & Irby, 2002). The Internet, as a low-cost alternative to paper sources that was gaining credibility, provided an excellent opportunity for academics seeking to publish their work worldwide.

In order to offer equal opportunities for women to publish research on women's issues, AWL was conceived. To avoid any hindrance caused by a lack of financial resources, AWL was to become freely available online as the founders believed this was the optimal way to establish an open access forum of scholarly research for women.

Thus, in the Spring of 1997, with the collaboration of Gretchen Glasscock, publisher of the award-winning Advancing Women Web site, the first free open access online refereed professional journal for women, AWL was launched. The journal features manuscripts that report, synthesize, review, or analyze scholarly inquiry and that focus on women's leadership, girls' equity issues, or other social justice issues from around the world. Additionally, international reviewers and contributors are represented in the journal. Languages other than English may be published in the journal.

Advancing Women in Leadership for a Decade and Beyond

Glasscock (2007) forecasted that AWL "would fuse the power of the Internet as a communications, networking, and information tool, enabling women to advance their personal and professional goals." Further, Odlyzko (1998) predicted that scholarly work would eventually appear primarily in electronic journals. This prediction has realized over the past 10 years with 245 peer-reviewed open-access scholarly journals from 35 countries now listed on the AERA SIG Communication of Research Web site (AERA SIG Communication of Research, 2007).

Specifically, *AWL* has opened access to women writers and readers with 208 female authors from eight countries in 23 issues over the past 10 years. According to Brown and Irby (2007), the *AWL* authors have addressed more than 20 general themes related to women's issues and social justice which might not otherwise have reached a broad audience, including (a) tenure for faculty of color and white women; (b) the effect of gender on realtors' careers; (c) how culture shapes adolescent girls' body images; (d) the role of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in education; (e) women's contributions to math and science; and (f) mentoring programs for women and people of color.

AWL has (a) provided an open access forum for publication and research and (b) offered women scholars equal opportunities to network within and across fields; thus, their careers have directly benefited from publication in *AWL*. Several contributors have pointed out that they would not have attained tenure without the opportunity to initiate their scholarly publication in *AWL*. Other contributors have spoken of professional networks they developed through the journal. For example, one author wrote that her article prompted other female engineers to contact her and discuss collaborative research agendas (Brown & Irby, 2007).

The benefits of open access extend beyond contributors to an expansive audience. According to Glasscock (2007), the *AWL* site received 60,000 page views in 2006. As Glasscock elaborated, "Many consider the journal to be an extremely valuable resource, and it has certainly succeeded in drawing a large, loyal audience." As is the case with *AWL* contributors, *AWL*'s audience represents a diverse group, with readers from Dubai, Singapore, and China. Further, *AWL* is one of the top Web sites in India. Glasscock indicated that *AWL* has established a sense of community and empowerment among women globally and has provided important resources to assist women in their work for equity and social justice.

Conclusion

AWL, as one of the leaders in the open access movement, “opened up access to knowledge and resources to those with less power” (Lee & Mckerrow, 2005, p.1). As Lee and Mckerrow (2005) expressed in the preface of a special social justice edition of AWL:

Individual leaders for social justice seek to change political, economic and social structures that privilege some and disadvantage others. They challenge unequal power relationships based on gender, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, language, and other systems of oppression” (p. 1).

AWL has provided equity and social justice to women in their publications and academic research. However, despite tremendous gains toward open access of scholarly research literature in the past several years since the open access movement, the AWL Journal remains the only refereed free online professional journal for women leaders.

According to Lee and Mckerrow (2005), social justice “is defined not only by what it is but also by what it is not, namely injustice. By seeking justice, we anticipate the ideal. By questioning injustice we approach it. Integrating both, we achieve it.” It is one thing to recognize injustice; it is another to confront it. Confronting injustice necessitates courage. Thus, “social justice requires interactions among a well-developed theoretical/historical viewpoint, a penchant for activism, the choice to meld the two and the courage to do it” (Lee & McKerrow). Because open access journalism is a foundation of social justice, it is our hope that other editors and publishers will take courage to act upon the open access movement and that additional journals will become freely accessible to more expanded audiences, especially the vulnerable and the poor.

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