



It matters how we  
open knowledge:

The PLOS approach  
to building equity  
into scholarly  
communications

25 Oct 2021

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# Breaking boundaries. Empowering researchers. Opening Science.

PLOS is a nonprofit, Open Access publisher empowering researchers to accelerate progress in science and medicine by leading a transformation in research communication.

About PLOS



PLOS Biology

**Accepts:**

Magazine, Methods article, Registered report, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Climate

**Accepts:**

Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Computational Biology

**Accepts:**

Magazine, Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Digital Health

**Accepts:**

Clinical trial, Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Genetics

**Accepts:**

Magazine, Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Global Public Health

**Accepts:**

Clinical trial, Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Medicine

**Accepts:**

Clinical trial, Magazine, Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases

**Accepts:**

Clinical trial, Magazine, Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS ONE

**Accepts:**

Clinical trial, Methods article, Protocol, Registered report, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Pathogens

**Accepts:**

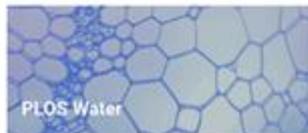
Clinical trial, Magazine, Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Sustainability and Transformation

**Accepts:**

Magazine, Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis



PLOS Water

**Accepts:**

Methods article, Research article, Systematic reviews & meta-analysis

## Highest standards of rigorous peer review and research ethics

Everything we publish is:

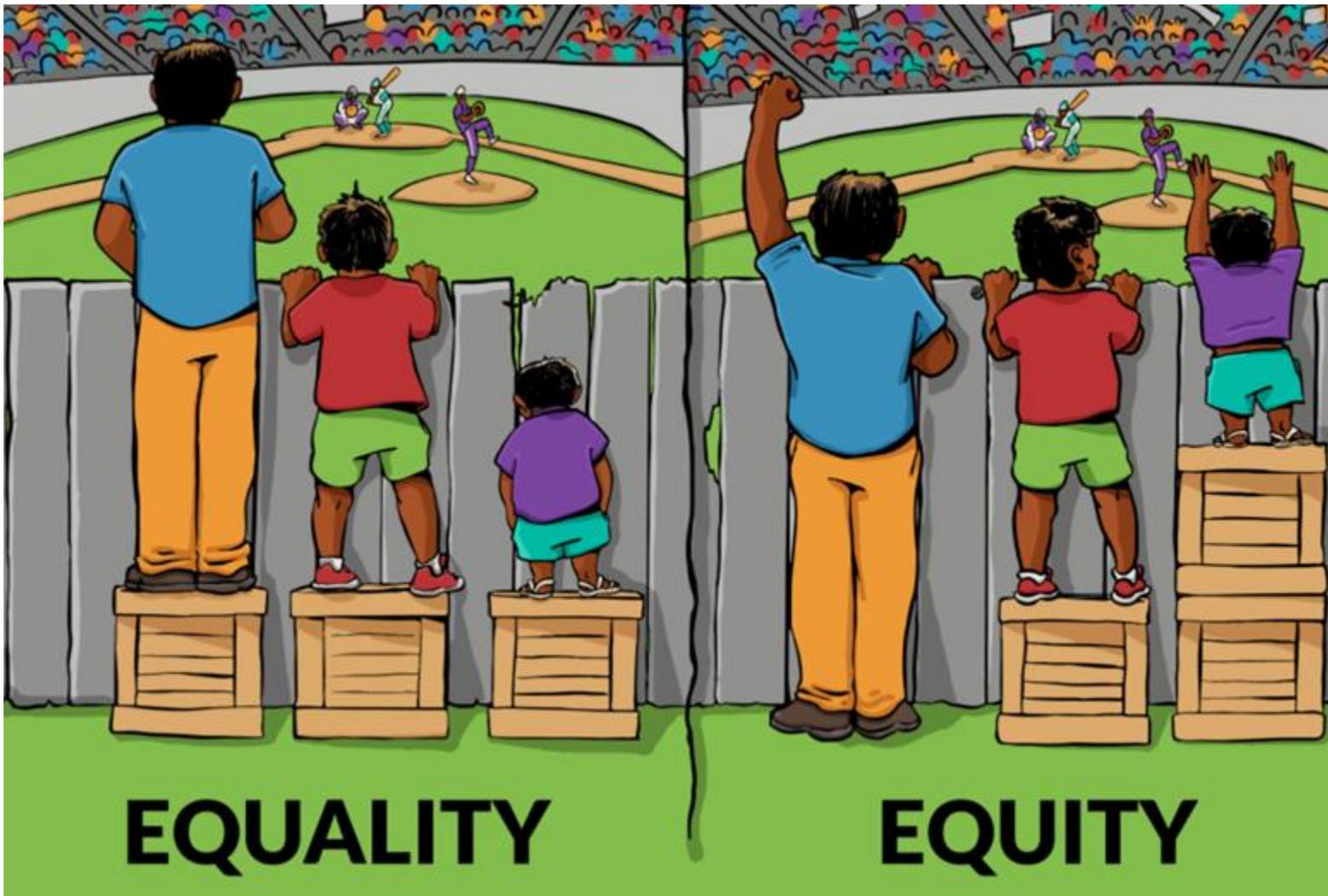
- ✓ Open Access
- ✓ Plan S compliant
- ✓ Open Data compliant

Eligible for open science best practice:

- ✓ Published Peer Review
- ✓ Preprints
- ✓ CRediT/ORCID
- ✓ Sharing Protocols/Code
- ✓ Pre-registration



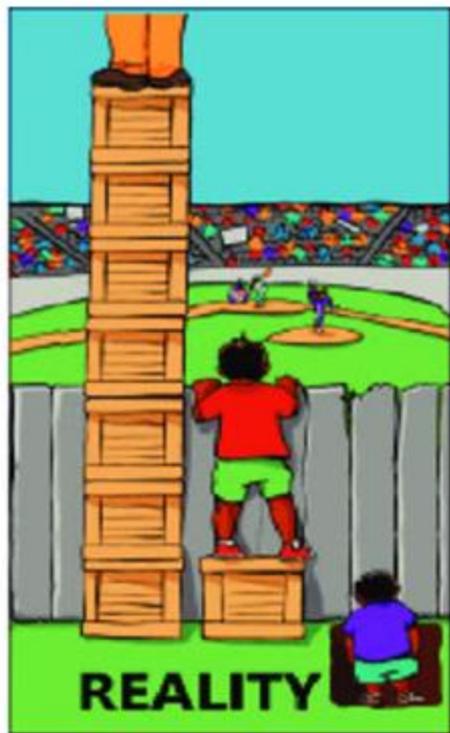
What is equity?



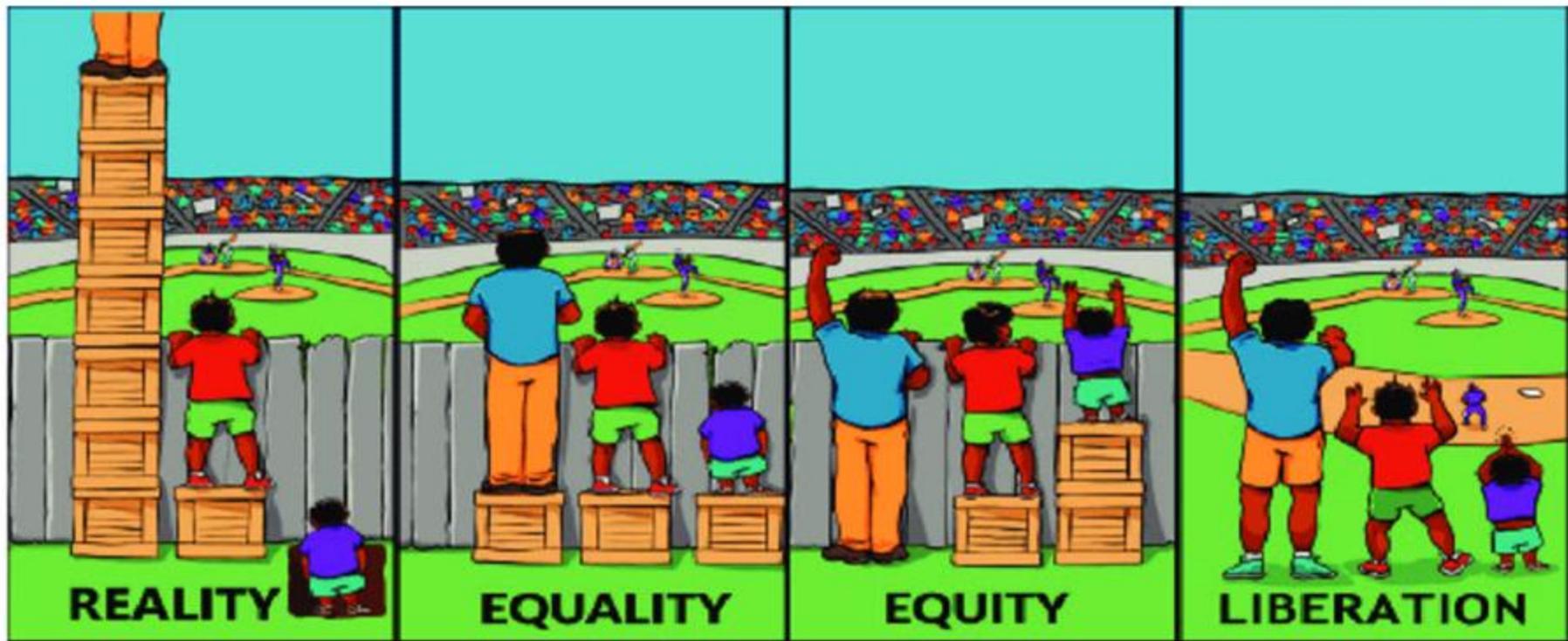
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for Social Change |  
Artist: Angus Maguire





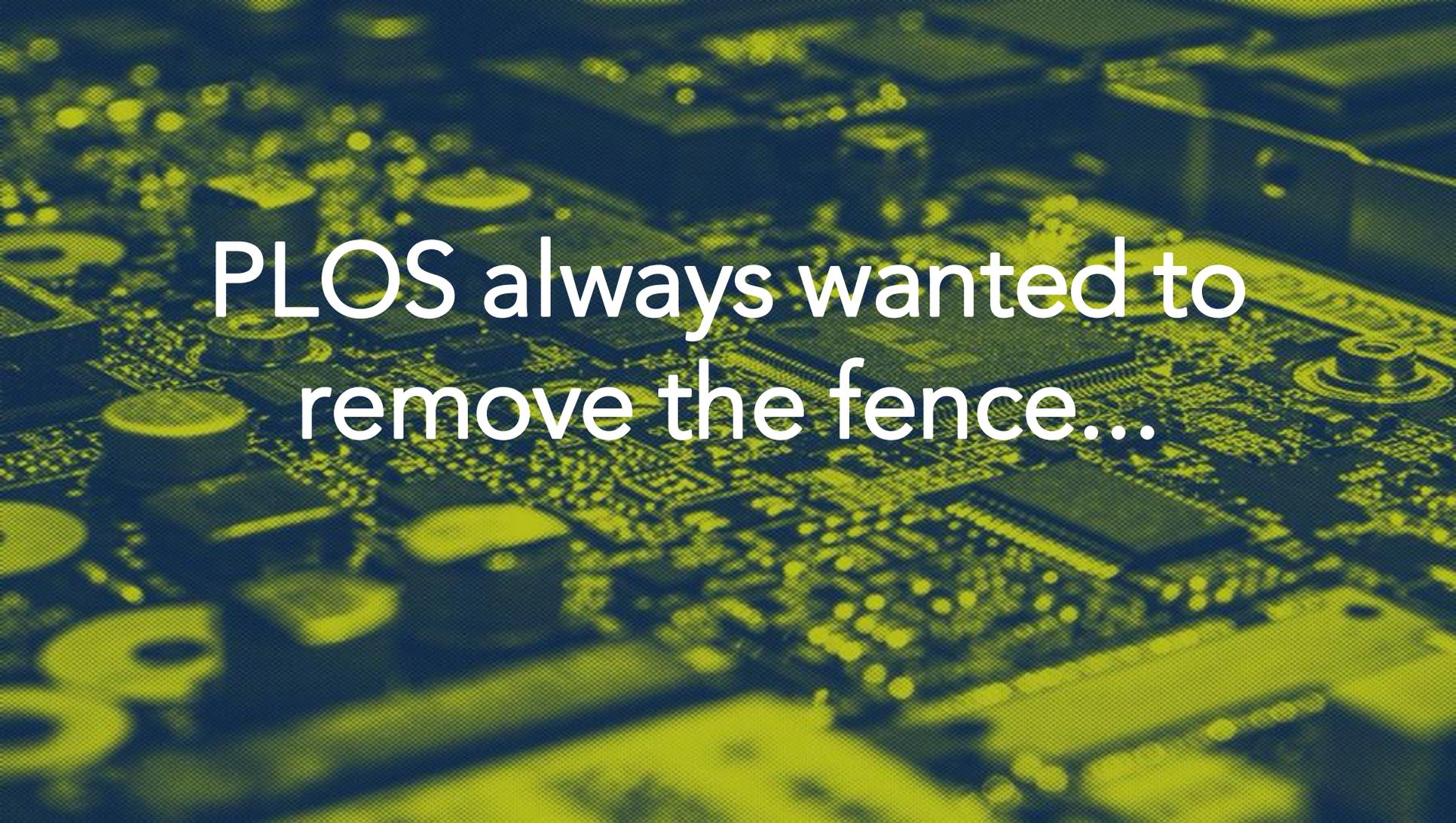


The difference between the terms equality, equity, and liberation, illustrated; © Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire



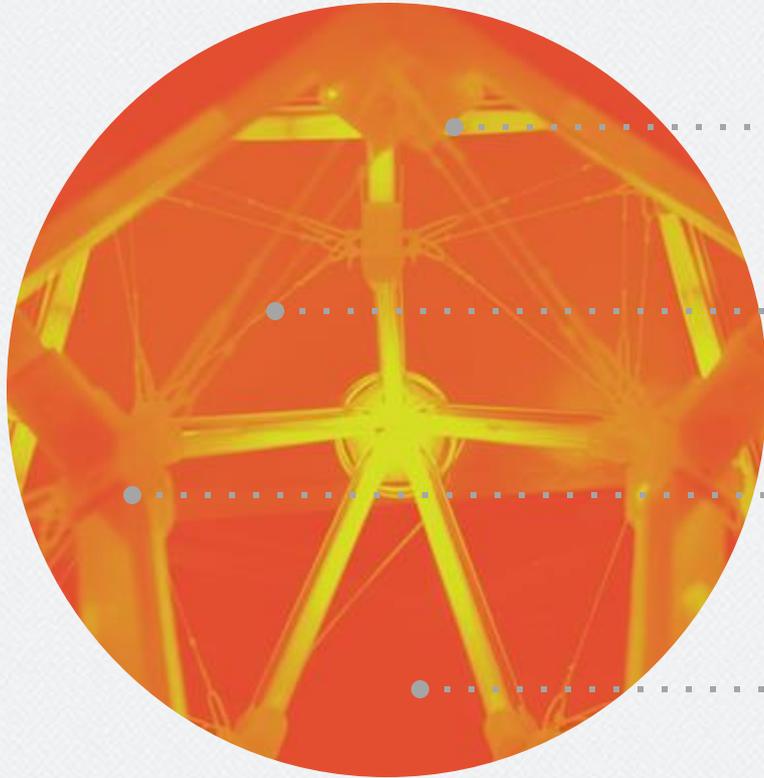
The difference between the terms equality, equity, and liberation, illustrated; © Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire

PLOS' goal: *Remove the fence.*



PLOS always wanted to  
remove the fence...

# When PLOS started...we wanted



**1**

Anyone to be able to access -  
no fees to read

**2**

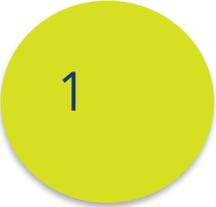
Authors to retain rights - CCBY

**3**

Anything that was  
rigorous/ethically produced could  
be published - PLOS ONE

**4**

But we had blind spots...



1

We didn't understand how successful APCs would be



2

We didn't appreciate the pressure to publish could yield predators.



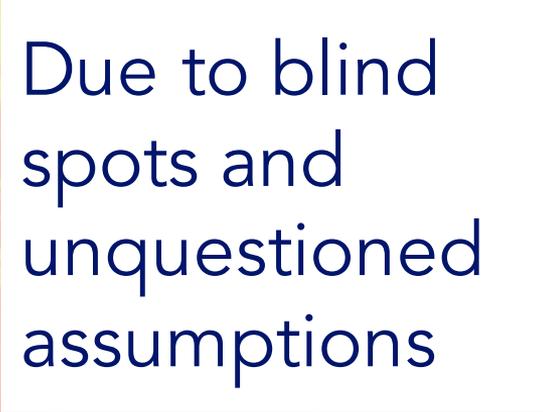
3

We didn't appreciate how much money was in the system.

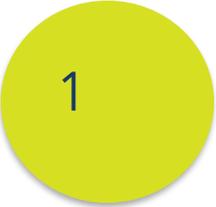


4

We didn't think past well-funded authors from wealthy countries.



Due to blind spots and unquestioned assumptions



1

Open access would = APCs



2

Evolution of predatory publishing



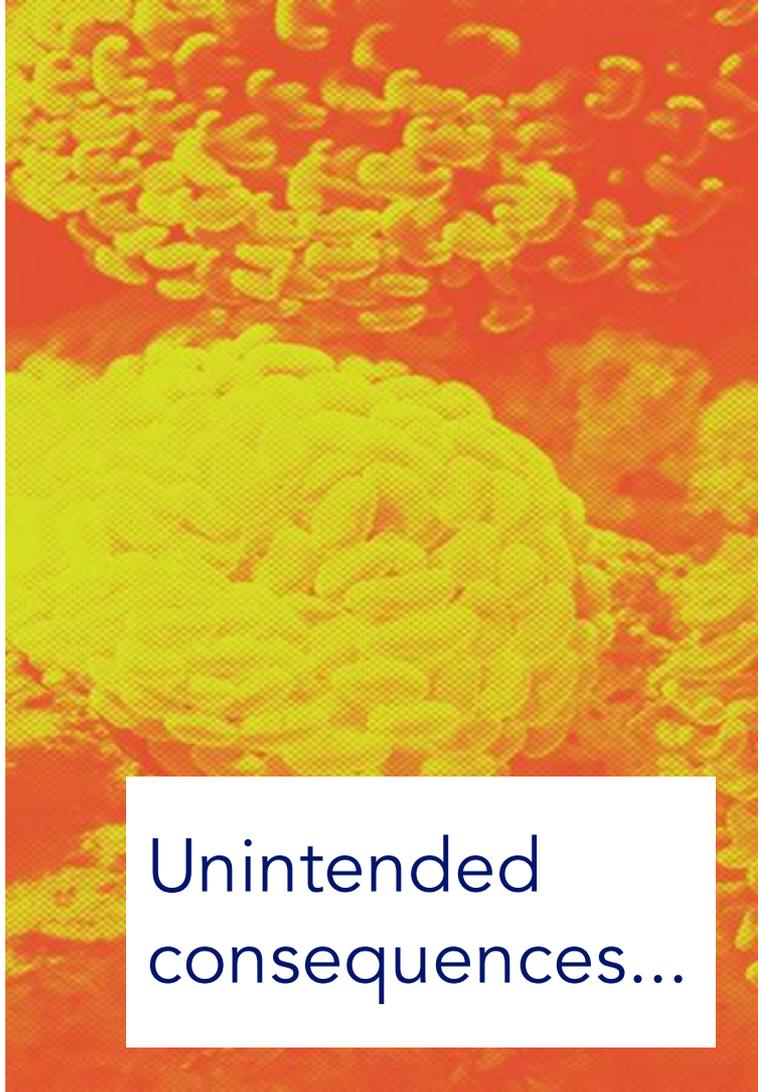
3

The co-optation of APCs by subscription publishers



4

APCs themselves would be a barrier



Unintended consequences...



How are we  
deconstructing the  
fence?

# The realms of equity in publishing: PLOS' take



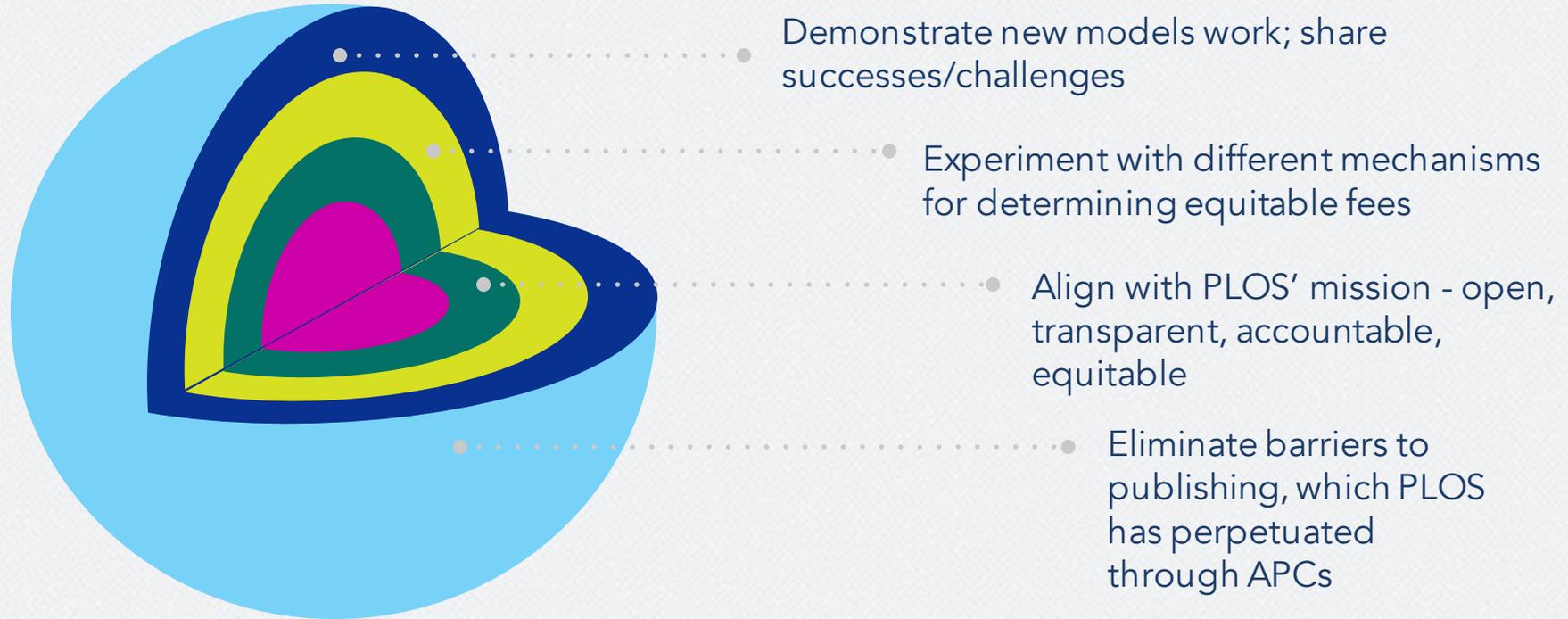
## Ensuring accountability: <https://plos.org/dei/#goals>

1. **Goal:** Increasing the number of historically underrepresented external contributors (e.g. authors, editors, reviewers) and strategic partners.
2. **Goal:** Developing editorial processes that recognize and minimize bias in the publication process, along high ethical standards.
3. **Goal:** Increasing the number of historically underrepresented employees at PLOS, with an emphasis on managerial employee roles.
4. **Goal:** Increasing the quantifiable signals of an inclusive work environment that values divergent perspectives, encourages critical inquiry, and ensures equitable advancement and reward
5. **Goal:** Increasing the publication of research that studies inequalities, racism, and inequities facing minority and/or marginalized populations (within the scope of each of our journals).

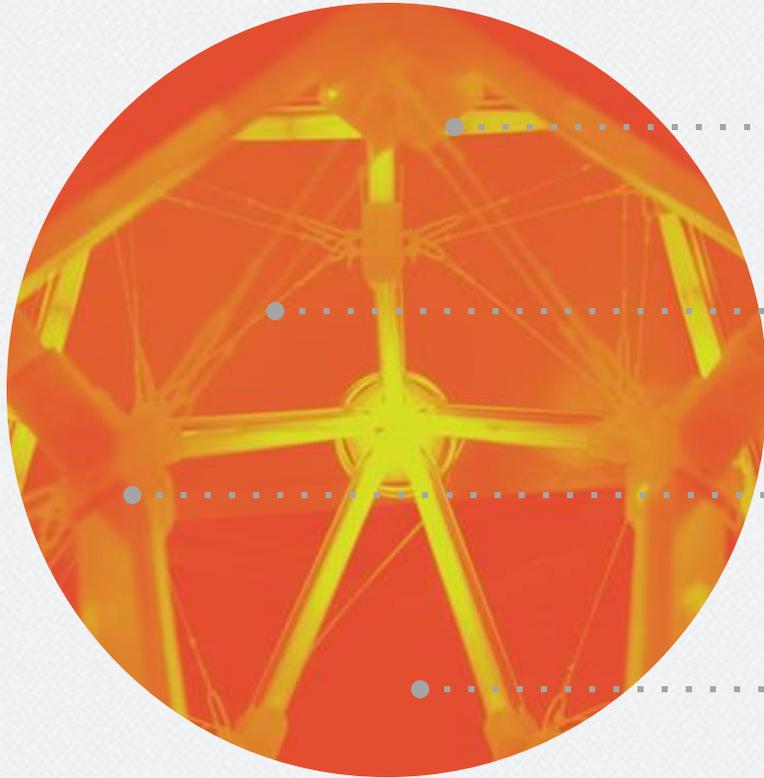
**Access to reading, publishing and reuse:** PLOS content has always been open to read and reuse (including data). Our equity work is currently on **making new business models more inclusive.**



# In launching new models, PLOS aims to



# Multiple models allow us to...



**1**

Responsibly experiment

**2**

Test different equity situations

**3**

Fail/succeed sustainably and transparently

**4**

Build trust with partners

# PLOS current models

1

APC based - authors pay per paper

- Institutions pay per paper monthly

2

Flat fees for the SIX: BUNDLED

*PLOS ONE, Genetics, Pathogens, Computational Biology, Neglected Tropical Diseases, Digital Health*

3

Community Action Publishing:

*PLOS Medicine, Biology, Sustainability and Transformation*

4

Global Equity:

*PLOS Global Public Health, Climate, Water*



# What problems are they solving?

1

APCs: How do we make peer-review researched *free to read*?

2

Flat fees for the SIX: *How do we reduce the administrative burden* of managing APCs for institutions?

3

Community Action Publishing: How do we make *highly selective publishing open access* without high APCs?

4

Global Equity: *How do we address geographic inequities* without waivers?

# Introducing Community Action Publishing



Make highly selective publishing APC-free:

PLOS CAP does that by:

- Identifying and publicly sharing costs and margin we need to cover:  
<https://plos.org/resources/community-action-publishing/>
- Equitably distributing it amongst institutions with a publishing history as affiliated with corresponding *and contributing authors*
- Institutions pay their tier fee annually
- Non-member institutions' authors pay non-member fee
- Read institutions are encouraged to participate - Tier 12 fees

When communities reach their targets, additional revenue is redistributed to members at renewal.

What	Annual Fee For a Three Year Agreement 2021-2023 Medicine	Annual Fee For a Three Year Agreement 2021-2023 Biology
Tier 1	\$39,488	\$38,147
Tier 2	\$24,036	\$28,157
Tier 3	\$19,229	\$24,234
Tier 4	\$12,877	\$20,316
Tier 5	\$8,241	\$14,614
Tier 6	\$5,666	\$10,692
Tier 7	\$4,121	\$8,199
Tier 8	\$2,747	\$5,702
Tier 9	\$1,717	\$3,564
Tier 10	\$1,030	\$2,138
Tier 11	\$687	\$1,426
Tier 12	\$343	

Fees for a one year commitment are available at <https://plos.org/resources/community-action-publishing/>

Research 4 Life countries are **automatic** members!

# PLOS CAP gets a new title!

## *PLOS Sustainability and Transformation*



EiC, Lian Pin Koh, National University of Singapore

Tier	2021-2023 Medicine	2021-2023 Biology	2022-2024 S&T	2022-2024 S&T + 50% discount
Tier 1	\$39,488	\$38,147	\$15,563	\$7,782
Tier 2	\$24,036	\$28,157	\$11,651	\$5,826
Tier 3	\$19,229	\$24,234	\$10,185	\$5,092
Tier 4	\$12,877	\$20,316	\$9,011	\$4,506
Tier 5	\$8,241	\$14,614	\$7,893	\$3,947
Tier 6	\$5,666	\$10,692	\$6,189	\$3,094
Tier 7	\$4,121	\$8,199	\$4,827	\$2,413
Tier 8	\$2,747	\$5,702	\$3,437	\$1,718
Tier 9	\$1,717	\$3,564	\$2,410	\$1,205
Tier 10	\$1,030	\$2,138	\$1,690	\$845
Tier 11	\$687	\$1,426	\$950	\$475
Tier 12	\$343	\$713	\$500	\$250
Read	\$343	\$713	\$500	\$250
R4L	Automatic participation	Automatic participation	Automatic participation	Automatic participation

Same mechanisms for tiering as other CAP titles

50% discount on fees for duration of the pilot period (2022-2024)

Non-member fees held to \$3000 USD annually



# PLOS Global Equity Titles

Read about why we launched these new titles:

<https://theplosblog.plos.org/2021/04/launching-new-journals-2021/>

Read about why we launched new models:

<https://theplosblog.plos.org/2021/05/open-for-submissions-part-2-models/>

## Climate

EiC **Emma Archer**, Univ of Pretoria



<https://journals.plos.org/climate/>

## Water

EiCs **Jenna Davis**, Stanford University and **Pierre Horwitz**, Edith Cowan University



<https://journals.plos.org/water/>

## Global Public Health

EiCs **Catherine Kyobutungi**, Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa, and **Madhukar Pai**, McGill University



<https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/>

# Feedback from communities...

I am absolutely thrilled to see PLOS Global Public Health come into existence! This journal coming to fruition is another testament to [Prof Pai's] and the other editors-in-chief putting into action one of the steps they've been saying needed to happen to **decolonize global health** and ensure equity.

Global south today is a crossroad. It is changing rapidly: both epidemiologically as well as demographically. **More research focus is required to explore indigenous knowledge**, and find solutions that are cost-effective.

I am excited about the new offering from PLOS, especially as Jenna Davis will be one of the Editors in Chief. Too often this area of work tries to fit in to other journals to ensure a high profile and wide audience. **I particularly like the format of specialist PLOS journals and the ethos behind PLOS** so it is great to hear that this journal is starting up soon.

I am also strongly **in favor of PLOS' scope and publishing principles** as it is the necessary response to the traditional flawed system of publication in the peer-reviewed journal sector.

I am aware of the challenges that researchers in LMICs face and the kind of guidance they would benefit from – particularly from reputed journals such as the PLOS family of journals. **I am also aware of the imbalance in power that exists between researchers in LMICs and those working as gatekeepers** of knowledge in high-income countries (primarily journal editorial boards). I see PLOS Global Public Health as an excellent opportunity to do whatever little I can in order to change this landscape.

I am an advocate of strong research coming from LMIC by LMIC researchers. I **support the high standards of PLOS journals** and their mission to make science openly available.



# Introducing PLOS Global Equity

1

Address the challenge of geographic financial inequity

2

Identify costs we need to cover for each journal; identify institutions that publish in the subject areas; establish a fee structure that is reasonable for new titles

3

Increase or reduce the fees based on World Bank Lending Classification

4

Offer an equity contribution for institutions to support institutions in low and lower-middle income countries

Water

Climate

Global Public Health



# PLOS Global Equity

## Annual flat fee for unlimited publishing

	HIC	UMIC	LIC/LMIC	Optional equity contributions (unlimited)
Tier 1	\$6,000	\$5,400	\$2,100	\$1500
Tier 2	\$4,500	\$4,050	\$1,575	\$1500
Tier 3	\$3,750	\$3,375	\$1,313	\$1500
Tier 4	\$3,000	\$2,700	\$1,050	\$1500
Tier 5	\$2,000	\$1,800	\$700	\$1500
Tier 6	\$1,000	\$900	\$350	\$1500
Read	\$1,000	\$900	\$350	\$1500
R4L	\$0	\$0	\$0	

### Equity Contribution:

Optional additional fee to add to annual fee for unlimited publishing that **REDUCES LIC/LMIC** fees the following year.

Fees are adjusted based on World Bank Lending Class:

<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>





Can libraries  
deconstruct the fence?

# How libraries are changing the landscape...

Move that money around! Cancel, renegotiate, unbundle to free up funds; partner with other libraries to collectively act!

Remember libraries operate from a position of strength!  
*Demand transparency.*

Tough internal convos about which publishers to support and when; consider adopting negotiating principles

Understand OA publishing footprint, authors' APC spend, waiver requests

ENSURE AUTHORS ARE AWARE OF GREENOA OPTIONS

**BALANCE SHEET**December 31, 2019  
(\$000's)

## ASSETS

**Current Assets**

Cash and cash equivalents	765
Program and accounts receivable, net	1,664
Prepaid expenses and other	741
Total current assets	3,171

**Noncurrent Assets**

Investments	11,761
Restricted investments, long term	146
Loan receivable	62
Property and equipment, net	503
Deposits	8
Total noncurrent assets	12,480
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>15,652</b>

## LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

**Current Liabilities**

Accounts payable	1,275
Accrued liabilities	1,089
Institutional deposits	909
Deferred revenue	410
Total current liabilities	3,624
Deferred rent liability	227
Total liabilities	3,851

**Net Assets**

Without donor restrictions	11,800
With donor restrictions	0
Total net assets	11,800
<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>15,652</b>

**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**For the Year Ended December 31, 2019  
(\$000's)

## REVENUE, GAINS (LOSSES) AND SUPPORT

Public support revenue	
<b>Program revenue</b>	
Publication fees, gross	
Less: Publication fee assistance	
Publication fees, net	
Reprints and sponsorships	
Advertising	
Total program revenue	

Unrealized gains (losses) on investments	
Other income (expense), net	
Interest and dividend income	

**Total revenue, gains, (losses) and support****Expenses**

Publishing program expenses	
-----------------------------	--

**Price Transparency Data 2020**

Since the original pilot<sup>1</sup> the framework has been adjusted and built upon to reflect feedback from publishers, librarians, and funders. The framework invites publishers to provide metrics of publication volume, acceptance rates, and time to decision; these are aimed to be comparable between different publishers. Those completing the framework must also divide their Article Processing Charge, per journal, into eight different services (those who followed along with last years' report will note 'Platform development and support' is a new addition this year). The categories are as follows:

ent, including commissioning content, researching editorial board

ptance

remunerated people, including management of submissions that

ing typesetting, conversation, and production tasks

g ethics checks and queries, usage statistics, long-term

g

t, including systems development

of articles, including marketing campaigns

uding queries about licensing, citations, and author system

<https://www.plos.org/2021/09/our-commitment-to-price-transparency/>

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL LIBRARY AND  
INFORMATION CONSORTIUM – (RF) NPC5 Faure Close  
Diep River  
7800  
Cape TownTelephone: +27 21 206 5427  
Website: [www.sanlic.org.za](http://www.sanlic.org.za)  
Reg. no: 2001/008624/08  
Reg. no: 040-845-NPO  
VAT No: 4560270425

July 2021

For open distribution

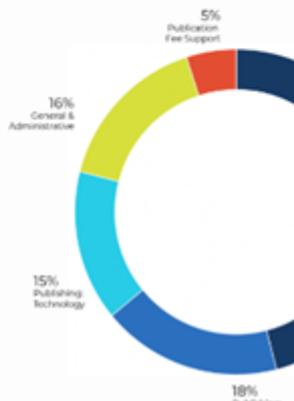
**Framework for Publisher Open Access  
(Transformational) Agreements**

July 2021 – a communiqué for publishers

## Preamble

SANLIC and its members are fully committed to:

- promoting open access (OA) for the advancement of South African research and research production through the increase in access to scholarly information,
- reducing the overall cost of library subscriptions, and
- seeking alternative forums for the distribution of South African scholarship.

**Total Expenses, Inclusive of Co**

# Public partners

Visit the PLOS site and search by journal title to identify PLOS partners:

<https://plos.org/resources/for-institutions/institutional-account-participants/>

## Institutional Partners

Open Access is not truly open without equitable opportunities to publish. To support authors from diverse research communities, funding backgrounds, and institutional requirements, all PLOS journals offer APC alternative business models through institutional partnerships. Our various partnership models—Flat Fee Agreements, Global Equity partnerships, and Community Action Publishing membership—are tailored to the publication needs and regional economies of researchers and institutions in that field.

Institutions listed below have partnered with PLOS in one or more agreements to make Open Access more accessible to their authors.

If you would like to submit to a journal that is not listed for your institution, please let us know the details and we'll contact your librarian.

[Learn more about our models.](#)

[Partner Benefits](#) [How Can We Partner?](#) [Institutional Partners](#) [Contact PLOS](#)

[Search for your institution](#)

PLOS offers several, diverse partnership models for institutions to contribute to or eliminate Open Access publication fees at PLOS journals. To see if your institution already provides publication support at your preferred journal, and to view any eligibility restrictions, search for your institution's name below, or filter by journal title.

For more information about our partnership programs and author benefits, please see our [Author FAQs](#).

If you're a librarian and have questions about your institutional account or partnership opportunities at PLOS, please see our [Institutional Resources hub](#) or contact PLOS directly at [InstitutionalAccounts@plos.org](mailto:InstitutionalAccounts@plos.org).

**Institutions are listed by country:**  
A-D E-J K-N O-T UK US V-Z

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### Australia

**Victoria**  
All journals  
Melbourne  
Open Access

[FILTER INSTITUTIONS](#)

**PLOS JOURNALS**  
PLOS Biology

**SEARCH PARTNERS**

[Go](#)



# Thank you!

Please reach out: Sara Rouhi, Director of Strategic Partnerships, [srouhi@plos.org](mailto:srouhi@plos.org)

Twitter: RouhiRoo