



A new model for scientific publications: A Managing Editor's view

OÑATI SOCIO-LEGAL SERIES VOLUME 10, ISSUE 1 (2020), 220-245: THE POLICY OF CULTURAL RIGHTS: STATE REGULATION, SOCIAL CONTESTATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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Abstract

In this essay, we will first set out the context in which *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* was created. We will then aim to offer a non-exhaustive view of what an open access journal is and what it implies for scholars and for publishers, and the, sometimes, stark differences in each one's view. From here, we will move on to draw a succinct description of the implications of the mainstream journal publishing scheme, with a stress on the commercial and economic implications. We will then narrow the focus and zero in on the case of *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*. Drawing on the case of this journal, we will argue why it is possible to expand a 100% free Open Access journal model, with no charges whatsoever on the authors, and why it is necessary for the scientific community.

Key words

Open Access; *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*; journals; IISL

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Resumen

En este artículo, primeramente dibujaremos el contexto en el que se creó *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*. A continuación, nos proponemos ofrecer una visión general de lo que constituye el acceso abierto y de sus implicaciones para académicos y editoriales, y las diferencias, a veces enormes, entre ambas perspectivas. Después, describiremos brevemente las implicaciones del escenario dominante en la publicación de revistas científicas, poniendo el acento en las implicaciones comerciales y económicas. Estrecharemos luego el ámbito y nos centraremos en el caso de *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*. Sirviéndonos del ejemplo de esa revista, argumentaremos por qué es posible expandir un modelo 100% de acceso abierto, sin imposición de cobros a los autores, y por qué un modelo así es necesario para la comunidad científica.

Palabras clave

Acceso abierto; *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*; revistas científicas; IISJ

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1. Background: the birth of *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* at the Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law

Oñati Socio-Legal Series (hereinafter, “OSLS” or “the journal”) is a law and society journal founded in 2011 in the context of the Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law (hereinafter, “IISL” or “the Institute”). The Institute had been founded in 1989 as the most visible result of the joint venture between the Research Committee on Sociology of Law (RCSL), a relevant branch of the International Sociological Association, and the Basque Government. Since its birth, the IISL had been thriving, in its geographical position in Oñati, an 11,000-inhabitant town in the Basque Country (Spain), as an attracting center for sociological and legal research. Its yearly programme had two pivotal series of activities: the International Master’s programme on sociology of law, for which it counted on the involvement and teaching of members of the RCSL; and the workshop programme, running roughly from April to July (sometimes September), whereby groups of academics from all over the world held two-day meetings on any selected topic.

All this activity meant that the Institute was brimming with new research and emerging scholarship, which naturally required publishing venues. During its first long decade of existence, the IISL was able to offer publication in a collection named *Oñati Proceedings*, where the workshop papers were collected and published as-is. Later on, the Institute signed contracts with two publishing houses: Dykinson (contract signed in 1999) and Hart (contract signed in 2001), and a book series was started up by each publishing house: *Oñati Derecho y Sociedad* (in Spanish, by Dykinson) and *Oñati International Series in Law and Society* (in English, by Hart, later Bloomsbury-Hart).

Up until 2011, the Proceedings series and the two book series were the main publication venues that the IISL offered to its workshop participants and to its visitors. The book series overlapped and eventually took over from where the *Proceedings* series – and other publishing ventures – had left off. The *Proceedings* series naturally ended in 1995. Other publication series included the the *Oñati Working Papers* (1994 to 1995), the *Oñati Papers* (1997 to 1999), and a previous but short-lived book series published with Ashgate, spanning from 1996 to 2000 and producing seven titles.

After the two book series had been established and deep-seated as reliable, long-standing, and reputable publishing options for the Oñati visitors and scholars, still, a scientific journal was perceived as needed, because the academia increasingly needed the fast turnaround that only an on-line platform could provide.

The project was birthed by a small group of scholars who were all closely involved with the IISL. The group included Sol Picciotto, who was at the time the Scientific Director of the Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law; and other members of the RCSL such as Carlos Lista, Anne Boigeol, Ulrike Schultz, Joxerramon Bengoetxea and Luigi Cominelli; and, among the IISL staff, Cristina Ruiz López, who was the Publications officer at the time, and José Antonio Goyenaga, the Administrative Director of the IISL, who gave full support. These scholars, technical experts, and administrators, were endeavoring to create a practical publishing tool to serve the needs of the groups of scholars that chose the IISL for their scientific workshops, which ran yearly at the IISL

from March or April to July.¹ They outlined the basic traits of the publication early on: it had to be Open Access, and it would use the repository SSRN to spread the papers worldwide; the papers would stem from the workshops and *bilkuras*; while English, Spanish, Basque, and French would be its official languages, it would accept contributions in any language; and the review method would be double blind peer review. The agreement on those basic identity signs was tight, and this opened the path to a quick launching of the new publication.

At the time, the pressure already existed on academics to publish their papers and divulge knowledge and research findings, and usually had either of two choices: to prepare and submit a book proposal to a publishing house – either Hart, the house that to this day still collaborates with the Institute to produce the Institute’s own book series, or a publishing house chosen and negotiated with by the workshop organizers on their own accord –, or to publish their papers in a journal of their choice. In 2011, as is still true today, most journals had a pay-per-read policy, in the form of reader subscriptions (usually paid for by the libraries) and/or relied on what is now called Article Publishing Costs (APC), a system that has gradually gained popularity and has been established as the default, whereby the author, or the group of authors collectively, pay some fees in order to have their papers published. As the publishing scheme has gradually become one of concentration of journals and titles in very few, very large publishers with a corporative and, therefore, profit-driven rather than knowledge- or academic-driven logic, the prices that the authors have to pay have stabilized –on the top end of the scale. This reality, albeit not so starkly, was already of application in 2011.

The “publish-or-perish” logic was in full force back then, too, so academics were left with a non-choice choice: to publish in a closed online environment – such as their institutional repository, which may or may not agreeably host their academic work produced under the auspice of another institution – or in a universal, well-established and very reputable, but increasingly onerous or even, for some, prohibitive journal. To publish in a conventional book format was another option, but one which was already showing some signs of exhaustion and obsolescence –for one, even if electronic books were already being offered, single chapters were not always offered as a separate, and individually citable item

This team’s bet was on completely free dissemination of knowledge, and this aim materialized in the journal *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*.² With this journal, academics had a safe, reliable, and accessible platform that served its purpose: to simply offer a free venue to have the articulated knowledge out there and to help it reach its audience. In compliance with its all-inclusive spirit, at the time OSLS implemented a personalized version of the usual guidelines for scientific journals – eg it offered more options for reviewers to accept or recommend revisions for the reviewed paper rather than decline its publication, because the aim was to offer an opportunity to all scholars, especially to

¹ The workshops are a scientific event where anywhere from five to fifteen scholarly papers on socio-legal topics were presented, discussed, and enriched with contributions, every week, which easily resulted in a minimum of 50 presentations or papers per year.

² The model was not completely new within the IISL, as it had been preceded by a journal titled *Sortuz* (“creating”, in Basque), specifically aimed at nascent scholars, preferably the alumni/alumnae from the IISL’s International Master’s Programme for the Sociology of Law. *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* originated with a much broader scope than *Sortuz*.

those who did not have a straightforward access to other publication venues. Though it must be noted that the more lenient policy did not apply to review methods, as double-blind peer review has always been OSLS's review system.

The journal was already set up to become a rarity in the already well-populated scenario of academic journals, even in the relatively reduced field of law and society: a journal that was a strong proponent of the fully open access model, one whose aim was to provide universal access both to authors/editors and to readers/users to knowledge. The knowledge articulated and delivered through OSLS would be mostly written in English, the lingua franca of science, including social science and law – and this, despite the geographical location of the IISL (Spain) and the fact that it was located on the perimeter of the English-speaking sphere of influence, both physically and metaphorically.³

With all of its peculiarities, OSLS was already a Gold Open Access journal, according to most of the categorizations in use today (and it went even further, as we will soon explain): a journal where the accepted, proofread, copy-edited article was freely accessible from the moment it is put online (Burtle 2019).

Furthermore, OSLS made a conscious effort to offer authors and the general public a freshly edited version of the paper, by means of its association with the repository Social Science Research Network (SSRN), through a paid membership that the IISL signed up for despite its already modest financial resources. The functioning was such that, as soon as an accepted paper was worked through by the technical editor of OSLS together with the author, appropriately copy-edited to fit OSLS's style guidelines, and proofread for minor errors, was put on SSRN, making it fully citable and ready to be shared from the get-go. OSLS actively publicized the paper and encouraged its sharing through posting information about it, and its link, on the Institute's social media. To date, the IISL's user profile on SSRN is still up, though it ceased to be updated in April 2019.

2. Toward a definition of Open Access: the market vs. the academia

Before moving any further, let's take a look at the vast field of Open Access, what it means for academics, what it means for big publishers, and where OSLS positions itself in it.

There have been many attempts to reach a universal and long-standing definition of Open Access. A comprehensive summary can be found in Suber (n.d.). He makes a point that open Access is "compatible with copyright, peer review, revenue (even profit), print, preservation, prestige, quality, career-advancement, indexing, and other features and supportive services associated with conventional scholarly literature" (Suber n.d.)

Several reputed databases and sources rely on the definition given by the Budapest Open Access Initiative:

By 'open access' to this literature, 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

³ It is located in the Basque Country, north of Spain, near the border with France –its academic founders had been scholars from the Research Committee on Sociology of Law of the International Sociological Association, who had been mostly of French, Italian, and Spanish origins and traditions.

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.

The definition says nothing about the accessibility of entry, ie the firewall for the author to have his or her work published in open access.

However, there are also different kinds of Open Access. The types or “flavors” most used and talked about are Green OA, Gold OA, and hybrid. Again, there is not one hard-and-fast rule to know what each label comprises. The following definition provided by scholar Daniel Mietchen is quite appropriate and descriptive of what real practice is:

Gold stands for publications available directly from the publisher, whereas Green means that a version is available somewhere else (e.g. on an author's institutional website, or in a repository), a practice commonly referred to as "self-archiving". Note that neither of these two terms imply anything about reuse rights or about who shoulders the costs of publishing. (Mietchen 2015)

Then there is Diamond Open Access, which is “a form of Gold Open Access in which there is no author fee (APC)”. So Diamond OA includes all of the Gold OA traits, plus the no-cost advantage (Open Access Academy n.d.)

The biggest contrast between definitions comes from whether it is the academic or the Open Access supporters, or the publishers that propositions them. As Open Access Glossary contributor Jon Tennant (2015) says, the terms and types of Open Access “have been largely ‘hi-jacked’ by publishers to mean different things [from what the open access community means] (...). Gold OA is often equated with an 'author pays' model of access, whereby an article-processing charge (APC) is levied to conform to the definition provided by [Mietchen]. Green OA, on the other hand, is often used to describe an item in a repository subject to an embargo period” (Tennant 2015).

To simplify matters, we could say that, if these terms are defined by the Open Access movement, a large opinion current within the academe, or other critics, Open Access is defined by *how* the final product reaches the general public and what the *conditions* are to be granted access. Whereas if they are defined by the publishing groups, then Open Access is part of a definition of a product offered to the academics, ie one option that they have to have their work published, and which comes with a standard set of conditions, one of which is almost always an APC. In fact, part of the aims of the Open Access movement have gradually shifted: initially, this movement sought free access of contents, and now, on a second stage of the movement, the main concern is about the permissions on these contents (López Borrull, quoted in Subarroca 2019), ie. Data mining, attribution, republication or reproduction, etc. This is furthered by the fact that the most relevant indexing platforms put a primus on interconnection of data and metadata, and on the crescent notion of influence of a scientist, measured by number and impact of publications, number of citations made and received, reviews done, editorial work done, and so on. So, permission to access and to use the data becomes essential, and this is one of the key factors for the rise of open access publications.

The fact that the “Diamond” standard rarely appears on classifications gives us an idea of how depopulated it actually is⁴ (or, arguably, how little interest or trust it entices from the academe). And the main reason seems to be the fact that the logic of zero cost to the publisher vastly dominates the publishing scheme nowadays – so much so that, in fact, Open Access has come to imply a fee that authors have to pay for publishing, because the content always comes at a cost for the publisher that, since it goes unpaid for at the receiving end, has to be covered, then, by the provider of the content –ie the author. This is a such widely accepted equation that the mainstream open access movement does not posit free publication and free access together in the same journal, but rather abolition of the double payment system where journals get paid both for accepting publications and for distributing them to the reader.

As hinted right above, however, Diamond Open Access journals seem to still not be considered reliable enough by many. Part of the debate is reflected in a 2017 article by Robert Harington on *The Scholarly Kitchen*, where he argues that “[t]here is a big barrier to entry for a Diamond OA journal program in that it requires a large investment, perhaps greater than investments needed for starting a journal program from scratch”.

In a comment to the cited article, another contributor, David Crotty, points out that “the majority of journals in DOAJ are Diamond, but they produce a minority of OA articles (...), because [w]hen one is relying on volunteer labor, as Diamond OA journals often do, there are limits to the quantities one can process”. David Mainwaring, of Cambridge University Press, correctly noted, in a 2016 paper, that “there exists at present a disparity between the quantity of OA political science publications and their impact on the field”, something that was true of law and society and other social science fields, too. He added that the 2013 JCR for political science and international relations included only three English-language OA journals ranked in DOAJ. Furthermore, he noted a lack of “high-profile, scholar-driven projects” in the field (Mainwaring 2016).

As a result of all of this, perhaps, Open Access is now, by default, a paid-for model, and this seems to be a standard that is universally accepted both by publishers and by academics (Boucherie 2018).

It is interesting to note that the technical concepts for accessibility of the work, ie Open Access versus Subscription-based, go attached, in the minds of academics, with a whole host of notions about costs, ease or difficulty of access, work processes and routines, technical requirements, and others (Esrafilzadeh, quoted in Sakellaropoulou 2019). It also seems safe to say that part of those associations was that which equaled subscription-based journals with – up to now – higher reputation, but this is beginning to change. Another very strong assumption is that of Open Access with APCs, and this produces requests to the publishing groups to “more transparency around costs” (Esrafilzadeh, quoted in Sakellaropoulou 2019).

⁴ In many contexts, “Diamond OA” is not even part of the taxonomy. E.g., Web of Science has the following categorization of indexed Open Access Journals and items: DOAJ Gold (journals on the Directory of Open Access list), Other Gold (hybrid items and journals not on DOAJ), Bronze (traditional journal, but free-to-read at publisher's discretion), Green Published (final published version, deposited in a repository) and Green Accepted (in a repository, accepted for publication, peer reviewed, but not yet published).

So we find now that it is the publishers, not the academia, the part that has successfully managed to expand their definition of what open access constitutes, so much that it has been largely internalized by the academia.⁵ To sum up the logic on which publishers operate, they almost always charge authors for publishing in open access, whereas publishing in subscription-based journals can be free of costs, as it's the receiving end that is paying for the costs of producing the contents as a readable and usable product.

This is true, too, when the item published is a book. For example, Palgrave provides the following list of prices:

TABLE 1

Type	Pounds	Dollars
Monograph / Edited collection	11,000	17,000
Pivot (mid-length format)	7,500	12,000
Chapter	1,600	2,600

Table 1. Cost of publication with Palgrave.
(Prepared by author with data from Palgrave.com.)

In this case, the open Access publication charge (called “Book processing charge” or “Chapter processing charge”) covers “all the costs of commissioning, copyediting and proofreading, production, dissemination and promotion” of the authors’ work, “including online hosting and indexing”.

Oñati Socio-Legal Series, as we will see, constitutes a prime example of the Diamond standard, therefore (a) defying the mainstream logic on which publishers, authors, and libraries operate, and, more importantly, (b) proving that it is not only feasible to bet on its model of free, open access publication, but that it can constitute an example of academic success.

3. Academic publishing as market

We have explained why the Diamond standard is rarely claimed and, even, a marginal label. It is because it exists in contrast to the all-permeating logic and offer from the publishing market, which, according to many, is increasingly distanced from the needs, wishes, aspirations, and basic foundations of academic writing; and, perhaps ironically, because it seems to be distrusted as a solid venue for publication by the same group that it aims to contribute to.

Actually, the Diamond standard is not so rare. In October 2019, the DOAJ website hosts 13,892 journals, most of which (10,084) do not have APCs (this can be checked by running a search on the site). There are a variety of Creative Commons licenses represented, with most (3,689) claiming a CC-BY license, which grants universal authorization to copy, distribute, display and perform the work and make derivative works and remixes based on it only if they give the author or licensor the credits (attribution) in the manner specified by these. This would mean that these journals are all Diamond OA. OSLS has the CC-BY-NC-ND license, which gives full permission to

⁵ Even in formal statements that reflect the many criticisms from a large part of the academic community to today’s domineering publishing scheme, the wording reveals this internalization. See the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, recommendation #9, available from: <https://sfdora.org/read/>

all the actions listed in the CC-BY license, while at the same time protecting the author from a third party gaining any benefit from illegitimate use of his or her work.

This would account for a largely populated Diamond OA modality; however, it must be noted that, according to DOAJ itself, fewer than half of the 12,582 journals that were listed in DOAJ in January 2019 were included in either Scopus or Web of Science (DOAJ 2019), which does not necessarily mean that they are of lesser quality than the ones that are included, but it does make them less attractive, at first glance, to any scholar wishing to publish his or her work.

Publishing the results or the proceedings of a scientific research is reported to have originated back in 1665, and has always been associated with increased prestige, creating “a sense of competition among scientists to be the first to publish a new scientific finding (...). If the journal is a prominent one, publication endows the author with an extra measure of prestige” (National Research Council 2003, ch. 2). It is worth noting that the inception of scientific publishing and the increasing competition brought along the need for Journals to position themselves as high as possible in a quality and reputability ranking.

Soon afterwards came another consequence: the number, frequency and quality (today measured by impact factors, and number and origin of citations, among others) of any given author’s publications became a relevant criterion to measure his or her quality as a scientist or researcher and, consequently, as a member of an organization, a University or any other institution, with the consequential effect on job prospects, ability to escalate in the academic hierarchy, ability to land fruitful collaborations, and, ultimately, probability of financial and commercial prospects (Siegel, cited in NRC 2003, chap. 2).

This scheme has continued and even strengthened until today, and publishing is, more than ever, an essential marker to the survival and thriving of any academic’s career, because “publishing (...) is a requirement – a key performance indicator – at many universities” and publishing rates “can play a role in determining who will be granted tenure” (Scribendi n.d.).

What it all comes down to is simply that academics need to publish, not only for reputation, but because it can derive very practical consequences for them and their career prospects. This need (demand) from a large group of people was ultimately the age-old call for a commercial answer, therefore developing into a large niche of academic publishing within the publishing market, which provides, as market does, an answer to an existing demand with the aim of a financial counterpart.

But academics can’t always choose where they send their articles, so they are likely to “supply the articles without monetary reward” (The Guardian 2019).

The Guardian, in its 4 March editorial, decries the “disastrous capitalism” that academic publishing has come to reflect, and highlights the contrast between the scholar who gains no benefit from publishing his or her paper (or often even has to make payments) and the scientific publisher, who “routinely report profit margins approaching 40% on their operations”. The Guardian goes on to denounce that Elsevier, one of the major academic publishing conglomerates today, agglutinating products such as Scopus or Mendeley, claiming to publish “one way or another 25% of the scientific papers” in the world, “made profits of more than £900m [in 2018], while UK universities alone spent

more than £210m in 2016 to enable researchers to access *their own publicly funded research*; both figures seem to rise inexorably despite increasingly desperate efforts to change them” (The Guardian 2019; emphasis my own).

Concerns have arisen from members of academia themselves, denouncing that academic journals and conferences “prey on” the academics’ necessity, “draining money and thousands of hours of free labor” from the academics (Price 2018).

And, reasonably, what corporation would be remiss to get ahold of the scientific publishing market? This is a market that apparently functions in a very similar way to other kinds of publishing – conventional printed books, news outreaches, etc. – but is actually very different, and with unthinkable profit potential. The scenario has quickly mimetized with the general publishing market logic, reproducing the concentration patterns, so much that, according to a research work carried out by Larivière and colleagues (2015), an analysis of the – then – 45 million documents indexed in the Web of Science reveals that Reed-Elsevier, Springer, Wiley-Blackwell, Taylor & Francis and Sage published more than half of all academic papers in the peer-reviewed literature in 2013. Joshua Krisch (2015), an author who refers to this very research work, states that “[i]n 1973, the five largest publishing houses controlled only 20 percent of scientific papers published. By 2006, that number had already risen to 50 percent. That means about half of the science that comes out this year will be behind a paywall, where only universities and individuals who pay for the science will get to see it”.

Stephen Buranyi manages to sum it up in a couple of paragraphs – one could replace “Elsevier” with “Thompson Reuters” and – in these days – very few other names, and it would still be exactly the same:

Elsevier’s business model seemed a truly puzzling thing. In order to make money, a traditional publisher – say, a magazine – first has to cover a multitude of costs: it pays writers for the articles; it employs editors to commission, shape and check the articles; and it pays to distribute the finished product to subscribers and retailers. All of this is expensive, and successful magazines typically make profits of around 12-15%.

The way to make money from a scientific article looks very similar, except that scientific publishers manage to duck most of the actual costs. Scientists create work under their own direction – funded largely by governments – and give it to publishers for free⁶; the publisher pays scientific editors who judge whether the work is worth publishing and check its grammar, but the bulk of the editorial burden – checking the scientific validity and evaluating the experiments, a process known as peer review – is done by working scientists on a volunteer basis. (Buranyi 2017)

The knack is in the final part, ie the one that explains where the profit comes from for Elsevier or any other big publisher:

The publishers then **sell the product back** to government-funded institutional and university libraries, to be read by scientists – who, in a collective sense, created the product in the first place. (Buranyi 2017; bold in original text)

⁶ In fact, it is even worse than that: authors more often than not have to pay bulky fees – frequently footed by public or private institutions, governments, universities, etc., but not always – in exchange of having their original work published.

Elsevier and other big publishing corporations derive their huge profit, then, indirectly, from the taxpayers, who provide the public financing without having a say on what it should be spent on. Furthermore, most of the journals with a pay-per-publishing policy also enforce a pay-per-access policy, whereby the public has to pay in order to access the content, which remains secured by a paywall, so the general public is often unaware of such contents, let alone able to access them.

Universities and public libraries then pay considerable amounts in the form of subscriptions, to access a content that they have *already paid for producing*, to some capacity or other –adding much more value to it, at any rate, than the publishing house, which, according to some academics, such as Samuel Gershman, a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, adds “very little value”, because the publishing house “does not add text and references to research papers – academics do” (Gershman 2014).

Others have already claimed for the need of a change of the values at play. Academic Icy Lee, in a paper published in the journal *Language Teaching*, set out to “challenge the assumption that knowledge contribution should be solely or mainly gauged on the basis of the venue of publications” (Lee 2014). Ironically, this claim was made in a paper whose content was protected by a paywall and was part of the Cambridge University core journal collection.

Most publishing groups, to some extent or another, participate in having generated or maintaining this statu quo. This has prompted boycott movements, such as The Cost of Knowledge, started in 2012 and alive to this day; as well as counter-movements both from publishers and from academia. What this debate shows is that there is at least a considerable group of academics and institutions, mostly university libraries, that are very critical of the mainstream publishing scenario, and that many wish for, or are actively working toward an alternative model.

3.1. Some examples of publication fee policies

Wiley

TABLE 2

Journal title	Full APC (Article Publication Charge) (in Euros)
Review of European, Comparative & International Environmental Law	2,083
European Law Journal ⁷	2,500
Journal of Law and Society	2,083
Law & Policy	2,100
Law & Society Review	2,100

Table 2. Wiley APCs.
(Data from 10 January 2019.)

⁷ On 31 January 2020, the Editorial and Advisory Boards of the *European Law Journal* resigned *en masse* from their positions, and they signed a letter where they explained the reasons for this decision, in what seems to be another expression of the increasing clash between publishers’ and academics’ priorities (Mendes and Schepel 2020).

Remarkably, Wiley has an APC applicable even for OnlineOpen, which is an option to make a paper immediately freely available to anyone, including non-subscribers.

It is of note that *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* offers an equal option, First Online, whose charge for the authors is zero.

Oxford academic journals

Oxford also applies charges for an open Access publication, which they call Oxford Open Initiative. The charges vary from £1000 to £2500.

Cambridge academic journals

Interestingly, Cambridge warns potentially interested authors that “many gold [Open Access] Journals charge no fees, though it is notable that the larger Gold OA Journals (...) typically do impose an Article Processing Charge (APC)”. In the case of Cambridge, in early 2019 they were charging £1695 / \$2700 for OA in hybrid journals and fees ranging between no charge and £600 / \$900 in the full OA journals.

CUP’s website offered a comparison between charges applied by several major publishers, which are summed up in the following table:

TABLE 3

Publisher	APC range
Cambridge University Press	\$600-4,500
Elsevier	\$100-5,000
PLOS	\$1,600-3,000
SAGE	\$400-3,000
Springer	\$3,000
Taylor & Francis	\$500-2,950
Wiley	\$1,300-5,200

Table 3. APC charges applied by several publishers.

Of the listed publishers and APC ranges, Cambridge’s, Elsevier’s, Sage’s, Springer’s, and Wiley’s were hybrid Journals, and PLOS’s and Taylor & Francis’s were open Access Journals, even though the ranges were all very similar.

Brill

Brill has both open Access and subscription journals. Within subscription Journals, there is the option to publish in open Access, and APCs are 1,950 euros. Brill states that for open Access publication in open Access Journals, “sometimes fees also apply”.

Springer

Springer has Journals that cover 24 fields of knowledge. Law and social sciences are represented, too, though not largely.

In their website, Springer reminds that “publishing is not without cost” and that APCs are “a way to recoup those costs”. Springer applies an APC in open Access Journals, and none in subscription-based Journals, as the costs are covered by the subscriptions. An overview of their open Access journal portfolio and the fees listed reveals fee brackets that are very similar to those we have just seen in other big publishers (Springer Nature 2019).

Elsevier

Elsevier also applies an upfront payment, or APC, for open Access publication. Prices are set on a per journal basis, ranging from \$150 to \$6,000 excluding tax.

Now, what does an APC cover?

As well as permanent, immediate, and worldwide access to the full article text, the APC usually covers:

- **Editorial work:** peer review, administrative support, commissioning content, journal development.
- **Technical infrastructure and innovation:** development, maintenance and operation of online journal system and websites.
- **Production of articles:** formatting and mark-up of articles and inclusion in indexing services
- **Marketing of journal and content:** making sure readers and authors know about the work published in the title
- **Customer service:** responding to authors and readers

This description is from Elsevier's pricing policy webpage, but the same or extremely similar concepts apply for all or most big publishers. The core concept here is that publication means work, which means a cost, which is then covered by extracting an APC from the author (or the institution behind him or her).

4. *Oñati Socio-Legal Series's* model

Oñati Socio-Legal Series works on a completely different logic:

- It is 100% non-profit, deriving no financial benefit nor imposing fees to either of the parties: public and authors. In fact, it is a product by the Oñati International Institute for the Sociology of Law Foundation, which is, by definition and as stated in its Statutes (Gobierno Vasco n.d.), a not-for-profit institution, which reverts any revenue it may ever have from any channel to sustaining its mission.
- Adds value to the product, by offering rigorous guidelines and policies, among which some non-essential policies are flexible (within reason) in order to accommodate legit and reasonable preferences by authors and editors, for example, when it comes to language(s) used in the papers, extension, or submission deadline; a very timely review and edition process; a First Online publication service; an orderly and standardized layout of spelling, grammar, and referencing;⁸ a very readable layout and appearance;⁹ and a Digital Object Identifier (DOI), which is usually not in the hand of individual authors

⁸ In 2018, OSLS launched its own Grammar and Spelling guidelines, and it has its own referencing style, based on APA / Harvard style but stretching it just enough to ensure that authors from both Sociology and Law – its two main areas of interest, which usually overlap but to different degrees – feel comfortable with it. The Grammar and Spelling guidelines consist on a basic and easy-to-follow rules that can be negotiated with individual authors in a justified way, within reason.

⁹ These underwent renewal and update, and OSLS came out with a fresh layout and website design in February 2020.

or editors to supply and thus is not something that any individual self-publishing author could add to a paper.

Oñati Socio-Legal Series gets its modest financing from the same general source that the IISL gets it from: the yearly budget that the Basque Government, one of the founders of the IISL, allocates for it. The budget is always dependent on the ability and criteria of the Basque Government rather than on the objective needs, projects, and plans that the Institute may present or express.

It is not that OSLS is cost-free and, much less so, that it puts out a sub-par product. The opposite is true: OSLS is a high-quality journal *despite* its exceedingly modest budget and its complete lack of APCs. The reality is that, as is true of any existing entity, OSLS is a product of its circumstances.

OSLS model is not cost-free; in fact, as long as it is financed by a government, it is supported by the taxpayers, who then have to foot all of the management and publication costs. And, as far as this is so, it is only obvious that it will never have the financing that other journals have, because no public financing system can afford a journal that imposes a 1,000-euro fee for each article that it publishes.

OSLS does not have, and has never had a direct, nominal financing source, because its budget is part of the Institute's general budget, whose funds are decided upon, and provided by the Labour and Justice branch of the Basque Government, who is attentive to the Institute's needs, but ultimately has full competence on administration of resources. It is the Institute that has to adapt to the financing that it gets every year. OSLS's particular needs are just one more item on a list, and the financing that the Institute gets is undivided. Along with Europe's financial crisis starting in 2008, the financing that the Institute has been nurturing off has diminished, so that it is now roughly half of what it used to be in the pre-crisis years. Likewise, the Institute has its own management, and the Publications section –just like the rest of the departments and sections that the Institute is compartmentalized into– does not get a steady or nominal budget for its need.

As of 2019 – and, in fact, since the very beginnings of the Institute –, the Publications service is managed and offered by one staff member only, who, together with supervision and policy enforcement from the Scientific Director of the IISL and his/her Chief Editor team and of OSLS's Editorial Board, carries out all the daily and effective tasks to ensure the ongoing existence of OSLS, and is endowed with a reasonable and bona fide freedom of decision to ensure professional and appropriate governance of the journal, always having the best interest of the journal and of the Institute as compass. The gross amount of any given financing quota is not affected by that specific year's (or semester's) workload, changes in production, or any other circumstance of the existence and management of OSLS. Nor is it by the fact that OSLS's technical editor has other duties too, in her quality of IISL's publication officer.

We can go as far as to say that OSLS does not have a financing of its own. Its needs are covered as part of a larger project such as the IISL.

So we see that OSLS has been running since 2011 as a professional journal, managed by employees of the Oñati IISL, and it has never been an amateur journal done in someone's free time. It is quite simply a journal that, because of the particular nature and

circumstances of the academic body that publishes it –the Oñati IISL–, has been severely limited to adopt any APCs, and is, as a result, offering a product and a service that are severely underrated and whereby authors and editors get many benefits for a very modest price, if at all.

Such a 100% free journal would naturally appeal to many scholars as an appropriate venue for publication of their papers. While it is true that *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* was not competing – nor intending to compete – in the top league of socio-legal journals, its publications were still perfectly valid and respectable – it was and has always been a serious journal created by a reputed scientific institution backed by a well-known body such as the RCSL – and they constituted official journal publications, therefore apt to be included in any academic résumé or annual activity report.

And appeal it did, as shown by its frantic publishing activity from years 2012 to 2018, which can be traced with a look at the Archived issues from those years, always on display on the official site (<http://opo.iisj.net/index.php/osls/issue/archive>). Being largely dependent on the Institute's workshop activity, *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* did not have a stable periodicity or a given number of paper output among its priorities – the priority was always to provide a means of publication for the Institute's users and stakeholders, and so its output largely varied from one year to another, with five issues one year, seven another, then six, and sometimes even nine. Within each issue, the number of papers was also unrestricted: anywhere from five papers on, plus an introduction, was acceptable as long as the papers reached a minimum threshold of quality. Some years, publication frequency was extremely irregular, with as many as three or four issues being published in December.

This unique panorama was the direct result of OSLS's founding vocation and willingness to provide to all that maintained a minimum level of quality in their writing, in the name of worldwide dissemination of knowledge and supplying the academia and the general public with free and easy access to that knowledge, enhancing scientific debate, and encouraging continuous improvement of academics and of science itself. As far as these points go, OSLS constituted a story of success, as it was fulfilling the aims that it had been set up against.

Not only that, but it also came to prove that one of the most alarming phenomena in academic publishing nowadays, that of the so-called predatory journals (Evans 2019), could be fought against – simply by leaving the financial profit factor out of the equation.

This was the silver lining. The cloud being this: at more than one single point, OSLS was on the verge of dying of success.

The reason for this is not only what was apparent – a unique journal that would nevertheless resist standardization according to any scientific guideline in use, and therefore be always a maverick by all conventional (and conventionally acceptable) publishing options, norms, or hierarchizations, constituting itself an oddity that nobody could ascertain for how long would survive – but a result of its inner logic and working: with close to 100 papers to manage, find reviewers for, work on back and forth with the authors, lay out, and so on, the shrinking financing and resources that it still survived on, and the one technical manager who had other responsibilities aside from

management of *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* and was therefore never a full-time journal manager, it would seem reasonable to foretell a rapid folding of the whole project.

The revulsive that *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* needed was one of reputation. Because *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*, 100% free and open access as it was, as part of a non-profit organization, still needed the fuel of publishable, quality papers in order to exist. And these papers could not always be relied on to come from the IISL workshops, because not all that material was of publishable quality – many papers were on an initial stage, and many authors, for different reasons, were not able or willing at the moment to keep working on them; other papers were unsuitable for publication for other reasons.

There was an inside debate, among the founding fathers and mothers of OSLS and leaders of the Institute, whether OSLS should be open to contributions and submissions from any and all academics around the world who wrote about law and society; this option was favored by some but not by others, and although the option was in fact opened, publications by academics independent from the IISL and its activity always remained marginal – these articles were, in fact, grouped up in a single issue per year, typically titled “Investigations” and launched in December. So OSLS could not realistically compete with other journals – but, in reality, it still did, because one paper published somewhere else was one paper not published in OSLS, and vice versa.

4.1. 2018: A change of tide

By force of its popularity in the small world of academics in the law and society field, and out of the dedication of the team behind it –leaders as well as technicians–, OSLS had managed to outgrow its modest original berth and target public, and garner attention from scholars in all stages of their career, all over the world.

Year by year, the amount of submissions from scholars independent or never involved with the IISL went up – since 2012, the yearly miscellaneous issue of OSLS devoted to grouping all individual / independent submissions, together with above average theses penned by IISL master’s alums, and book reviews had gone from six items in 2012 and 2013 to around ten in 2015 to 2017, to slightly decrease to six in 2018, however this is not really indicative of a fall in the number of submissions, but rather of a conscious raise on the bar of minimum quality implemented around that date by OSLS, as we will analyze later. At the time that this was first drafted (July 2019), OSLS had published five individual papers, had declined 9, and was managing 10 more, all of which were in review. By October 2019, these amounts had risen to 11, 11, and 10.

As the journal scenario continued to transform, and become even more resembling of what it is today, and the risk of death by success became more and more likely between 2015 and 2018 for OSLS for the reasons explained before, the debate about the present, future, and essence of OSLS continued. As previous leaders and directors of the Institute left and were replaced by others, new opinions and visions started to emerge. As Vincenzo Ferrari (2016-2018) and then Noé Cornago (2018-2020) took over Scientific Direction of the Institute – and therefore the main editorial duty for *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* by becoming the leader of the Chief Editors team –, changes began to be enforced. One hallmark of this was a meeting held by Vincenzo Ferrari, Sol Picciotto, and Leire Kortabarría, in which several initial changes were agreed upon and reflected in a rewriting of the journal policies.

Especially from 2018 on, the following were only the most relevant of many improvements that were approved and gradually implemented on *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*:

- Deep revision, update and completion of the journal policies (under “About the Journal”, <http://opo.iisj.net/index.php/osls/about>), and inclusion of a specific section about “Ethics and Responsibility”, (<http://opo.iisj.net/index.php/osls/about/editorialPolicies#custom1>)
- Update of the Editorial Board, to reflect the diversity of persons and areas of expertise that *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* thrives on and nurtures
- Launching of OSLS’s own Grammar and Spelling guidelines, along with restatement of its preferred referencing and citation style
- Clear statement of the noncommittal spirit of OSLS –it is no longer a mere vehicle for straightforward publication of workshop papers, but a general law and society journal that is open and welcoming to all researchers and authors in the area, from all over the world, and from any other institutions. The yardstick for publication in OSLS would no longer be the academic origin of papers (ie IISL workshops or, to a much lesser degree, IISL master graduates’ tesinas) but their quality –as would be expected from any scientific journal.

The previous point in particular, which was staged in the mentioned internal meeting celebrated in mid-2018 and later decisively developed under the direction of Noé Cornago, has marked OSLS’s own moment of truth, its will to move on up against all odds and dare to step into the stellar league, or stay in its comfort zone, where it was well-known and respected but where it had already hit its own ceiling. It signified the overcoming of the initial focus, opening the journal to an all-encompassing, universal level, and for the first time acknowledging the journal’s and the Institute’s ambition, aspirations, and aims for scientific excellence in all its work areas.

4.2. Improvements

Other more gradual improvements came along too and were a by-product of several factors, including the impetus that this top-level decision had brought, as well as the zeal of the team behind OSLS and the motivation garnered at the sight of the level of acceptance, appreciation and potential that lay behind OSLS.

Because the reality was, after all, that *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*, unbeknownst to most, already had one foot in the major league of journals:

- (1) For one, OSLS had been increasingly cited and referenced in other articles by scholars all over the world – tracing these citations was never easy for the team, because OSLS was not a part of the major indexation platforms or of the big publishers’ portfolios, and did not have easy access to referencing trackers. However, far and between, notices of those references and cites came to the

knowledge of the team behind OSLS, and were properly distributed and reported on the Institute's social media networks.¹⁰

This success is verifiable with data collected by Google Scholar, which, by June 2019, had the following record for *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*:

TABLE 4

Publication	H5-index	H5-median
Law & Society Review	23	31
Journ. Emp. Law St.	22	35
Law & Social Inquiry	20	28
Ann. Rev. of Law & Soc. Sci.	17	27
Social & Legal Studies	16	24
Journal of Law and Society	12	17
Oñati Socio-Legal Series	9	16
Journ. of Leg. Pl. and Unofficial Law	8	12
Déviante et Société	8	9
Droit et Société	7	8
Direito e Praxis	6	7
American Society of International Law	5	8
Diritto e Società	3	7
Droit et Cultures	3	4
Sociologia del Diritto	3	3

Table 4. h5 and h5-median indexes for several law and society journals.
(Source: Own preparation with data from Google Scholar (data from June 2019)).

- (2) Its Open Access license and encouragement for dissemination and republication of the papers had placed it as an exception among journals – and a very attractive one.

As is recorded in the minutes of the IISL Publications Committee discharge meeting, the 2019 volume of OSLS spanned for 1,400 pages and included more than 60 original articles, plus one book review, and an introduction for each monograph. Moreover, between September 2018 and February 2019, six new issues were set up and were in production. For these, more than 40 papers had been received and processed. Other 10 individual papers had been received and managed. For these 50 papers, more than 100 reviewers had been contacted. For each paper, an average of 4 contacts were made before two people had accepted to review, or either after someone had accepted to review but had not completed the task.

With this, the turnover rate of papers had increased (ie the timeframe and deadlines had shortened) by several months, hence having more reviews done and putting out papers

¹⁰ As of May 2019, thanks to its (paid for) association with CrossRef, OSLS has become a participant in CrossRef's "Cited-By" program, whereby OSLS provides all metadata for every paper that is deposited in CrossRef for a DOI assignment, and, in turn, can query for a brief XML report of registered citations of its own papers. Filling in all the metadata fields is not mandatory, but is another token of the added value that OSLS offers to its contributors.

at a more rapid rate than ever before, another quality indicator and another factor of added value for authors.

The difference between this scenario and the one that domineered the history of OSLS up until then was one of internal policies and the difference that the new policies were making; where OSLS had been struggling to process and publish most of the submissions back then, with the consequences already described that placed it bordering risk of extinction, it was now doing a much-needed pre-selective work, where, on the one hand, it was formally requesting of issue editors to work as gatekeepers and pre-reviewers, and, on the other, it relied on an increased editorial work of its own editors in chief, a team that was strengthened in 2019 with the inclusion of two more members. To complete this, where review results had recommended major revisions and had signaled fundamental weaknesses of any given paper, OSLS had usually leaned toward facilitating publication, wherever possible, whereas now every case was assessed and, if the final result was that the paper needed more work than could reasonably be done within a reasonable deadline, it was politely declined.

Later on, in October 2019, another quality and rigour landmark was formally set: the commitment of OSLS to publishing no fewer than 6 and no more than 8 papers per issue, and no fewer than 6 issues per volume (ie per year), with occasional exceptions for special issues, ie thematic issues proposed by academics not directly involved with the Institute at the time of the proposal, but judged of publication merit for quality of the proposal, and opportunity or low frequency of the main topic in the records of OSLS.

In parallel to this, the OSLS team made a conscious effort to raise the bar in the review department, by endeavoring to enroll experts previously unrelated to the IISL as reviewers. This way, a three-fold goal was fulfilled: first, the review was always unbiased by the person's previous experience or knowledge of OSLS and its previous policy and philosophy; second, a new person heard about OSLS; and, third, as a result of the former, one new potential author, returning reviewer, workshop candidate, or visiting professor to the IISL was earned.

Due to its well-established and respected status, OSLS has succeeded at garnering interest in academics from all over the world who are willing and keen to review for us, therefore establishing a large roster of reviewers who, all together, cover all areas of Sociology of Law and contribute to keep up the quality of our publications. OSLS can now attest to an international, diverse and inclusive pool of reviewers from several countries in all continents and continues to appoint or accept new qualified reviewers. Throughout its history since 2011, OSLS has received reviews from 1,200 scholars and, from May 2018 to May 2019, papers reviewed by 170 scholars were published.

As is reflected in an inside report prepared by the OSLS managing editor and IISL Publications officer, Leire Kortabarria, in September 2019, *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* had enrolled 180 new academics as reviewers, between January 2018 and September 2019; an average of eight new reviewers per month. Of these, 45% had been referred by workshop chairs (ie guest editors of the issues), 32,5% had been found through a search on specialized and reliable online sources (Google Scholar, Publons, and, later, Web of Science) by the technical editor; and 20,5% had been referred by the Scientific Director, Noé Cornago.

As far as geographical origin goes, a very similar proportion of them (between 23% and 26%) came from South and Central America, the US and Canada, Spain and the Basque Country, and the rest of Europe, with only 4% coming from Australia (which, surprisingly or not, is the place of origin of relatively many workshop and visiting scholar program participants).

In May 2019, *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* associated with CrossRef, and started to assign a unique DOI to every published article, right from the moment they get published on First Online.

(3) Indexations: As of 2019, *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* is indexed on the following platforms and databases:

- SSRN (though update of this site was halted in April 2019).
- Redib
- ISOC-CSIC
- Latindex
- MIAR
- Google Scholar
- Dialnet
- DOAJ
- Erih Plus
- ANVUR (Italy's National Evaluation Agency for University and Research)
- Qualis

Between January and July 2019, *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* formally applied for indexation on Scopus (maintained by Elsevier) and Web of Science Core Collection (maintained by Clarivate Analytics). And the year ended on news that couldn't possibly have been better, and more confirming of the fact that OSLS was on the right track: Clarivate, producer and provider of Web of Science, the largest scientific reference database in the world (more than 90 million records in October 2019, and counting), had found OSLS to comply with the standards required to be included in the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) of the Web of Science Core Collection. As stated by Clarivate¹¹ Journals are selected for inclusion in the *Web of Science Core Collection* using a single set of twenty eight evaluation criteria Journals, of which Twenty four are quality criteria (designed to select for editorial rigour and best practice at the journal level), and four are of impact. Web of Science considers this collection of 21,000 journals (in November 2019) to be its "gold list" and a reference for scholars and researchers worldwide. Of these, 7,000 are ESCI journals, considered high quality journals.

(4) Openness. In accordance with its proclaimed policy, scope, and aims, OSLS is now more open than ever to special issues proposed and co-edited by independent (ie: not previously involved with the IISL) academics as well as issues that, while being monographic, as is OSLS's tradition, do not stem from

¹¹ <https://publons.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/12000051870-what-is-the-web-of-science-core-collection>

workshops held at the IISL. The chief editors' team assesses each proposal that comes through, and one of the criteria on application is how well the global topic addressed fits the interest of OSLS and the current debates in the (academic) world. Ideally, this will result in an internal and external debate of ideas, theses, and views. For instance, in 2018, OSLS published "Sex Work in the Early 21st Century – Law, Policy and Reality" (<https://doi.org/10.35295/osls.iisl/0000-0000-0000-0990>), which did come as a result of a workshop, and in early 2019, an issue that did not, and which sustained the opposite view as that from the former – the issue was "Pornografía y prostitución en el orden patriarcal: perspectivas abolicionistas" (<https://doi.org/10.35295/osls.iisl/0000-0000-0000-0949>). Therefore, OSLS reflected a current debate about regulation (or absence thereof) of prostitution. And, as of 2019, there are proposals for prospective issues about topics within the fields of human trafficking, especially minors, big data and IA, and indigenous peoples' rights, to name a few.

- (5) Independence. As could be seen from the data and extracts of policies from the largest publishers, the most common scheme is for a journal to be part of a portfolio maintained by a publishing group. OSLS is set apart from this model in that it has always been and remains to be an independent publication, which is published by a non-profit institution. This ensures to the author that no commercial or financial criteria will be used to gauge quality of contributions (Lee 2014) and that no other policy than what is stated on the official journal website will be observed or enforced at any point in the publication process.

4.3. Into the future

The results of all these efforts were verifiable at the time of the first draft of this presentation, as of July 2019. OSLS is a more regular, more rigorous, more rounded-out and, in short, a better journal than it has ever been. And later, in October 2019, this is amply and indisputably confirmed by the endorsement that inclusion in the Web of Science Core Collection signifies.

OSLS has earned the interest and attention from reputed institutions, as well – as an example of that, the University of Tübingen (Germany) contacted the Institute in May 2019 with a formal request to include not only OSLS papers, but all of the IISL's published papers in their repository of the Criminological Information Service and thus disseminate them around their circle of users. The agreement is attested on each of these institutions' websites: <https://krimdok.uni-tuebingen.de/Content/partners#content> and <http://www.iisj.net/en/library/about-library>

The accomplishments of the team past and present behind OSLS boil down to two bullet points: one, being able to bring OSLS to a higher level of quality despite the Institute's modest resources; and, two, to subsist and become even more productive than 10 years ago.

OSLS has proven that a model of 100% open Access journal, which is based on professional handling and Management of the journal –by technical rather than academic personnel, under the auspices and guidance of academic authorities–, is

feasible, sustainable on the long run, and able to meet the most refined demands of academic quality and rigour, as well as technical excellence to satisfy the needs of its sustainers, the members of the academia.

This results in the ultimate ideal of the Open Access dissemination of knowledge: researchers “save time [in access to the contents] and can even avoid doing research on already known subjects (...). This allows them to ask more ambitious questions. There is also an economic saving and the researcher gains visibility, because the impact of the research is more ample” (López Borrull, quoted in Subarroca 2019). We concur with Christopher May that “as an academic community we need to be much clearer that open access publications are a benefit both to the research community but also to the intra-institutional prestige economy”, and that open access work should be cited, and that the academic community should ensure that “what is published in alternative locations is of the highest quality and we draw our peers' attention to it” (May 2019, 13-14).

As to the more ample impact, it is widely acknowledged and accepted that publishing in Open Access has a direct favourable effect on a journal's Impact Factor, as proved by Web of Science Group itself and verifiable by any registered user of their InCites resource. Open Access publications receive more citations than subscription publications. “We can conclude than open access publications improve the impact [of a publisher], they attract more citations” (Rachel Mangan, personal communication, webinar *Información de acceso abierto de Web of Science: todo lo que necesita saber*, 21 November 2019).

Back to our case example, *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*, as a concluding remark, we can now say that OSLS's near-future challenges can be ciphered in but one predicament: To be **considered** on the same level as any other journal in socio-legal studies... because facts have proven that it has earned that place.

In all its modesty, OSLS can rightfully claim to embody a model of academic publishing that puts a premium on the free dissemination of knowledge, on the advancement of its scientific field, and on the benefit that the whole world of academia can reap from its contribution, regardless of their financial potency, rather than on the business part of publishing. Disregarded in the past as an unfeasible business model, OSLS continues to prove sceptics wrong by reinforcing its tenets and guiding principles with each issue that it makes available on the Internet.

An aggravating circumstance still weighs on the perceived value and merit of the journal: the fact that no payment being required for publishing still is generally equaled with a lesser value or lesser academic weight. In order to counteract this perception, there are formulas that OSLS can explore and implement in the near future, such as enforcing an APC waiver for authors, thus informing them of the value of the management and production work of a publishable paper, and highlighting that OSLS still favours a 100% open access model by enabling them to waiver these fees. Zero cost does not equal zero value, quite the opposite; the value of OSLS lies on its non-business business model rather than on the financial gain it could claim.

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