



Beszámoló az Egyetemi Folyóirat-fejlesztési Munkacsoport
„Open Science Trends, Challenges, and Solutions” konferencia
„Diamond Open Access Journals at EDUC Universities”
panelprogramján való részvételéről

Moderator

- Jiri Marek – Head of Department, ICS Management and Secretariat, Institute of Computer Science, Masaryk University

Participants

- Róbert Tésits – Associate professor, Editor in Chief of Modern Geográfia, Leader of the University Journal Development Working Group, University of Pécs
- Dávid Lovász – Research Support Librarian, Publishing and Research Support Department of the University Library and Knowledge Centre at the University of Pécs
- Jiri Marek – Head of Department, ICS Management and Secretariat, Institute of Computer Science, Masaryk University
- Martina Dvořáková – Editor, Masaryk University Press, Association of European University Presses

The moderator invites participants to briefly introduce their activities and contributions to journal development.

Dávid Lovász:

Our library has been a driving force behind Open Science at our university, much like similar institutions worldwide. We are strong advocates for open access and have developed a comprehensive range of services to support it—whether through green, gold, or diamond open access models.

Achieving this cultural shift is challenging, but we believe it is profoundly beneficial for the university as a whole. Our goal is to ensure that both the University of Pécs and its authors recognize the immense value of Open Science. To this end, we have worked diligently to integrate Open Science principles into the university’s strategy. Encouragingly, we are witnessing a growing willingness to embrace these changes, with initiatives like EDUC playing a significant role in driving this progress. Events like today’s further strengthen this momentum.

No cultural change is ever easy. It is a process of transformation, and we cannot achieve it alone. Collaboration is essential. It is crucial that everyone understands the practical benefits of Open Science, and equally important that we provide the necessary services, resources, and support to enable its implementation. At our library, we are deeply committed to the Open Science movement and the university’s academic excellence. For us, these two priorities are inseparable—they truly go hand in hand. Over the past eight years, I have had the privilege of working closely with the editors of UPECS to elevate our journals. During this time, I have collaborated with more than 35 editorial offices across six faculties.

During this period, the university's diamond open access support has undergone a significant evolution. What began as a digital content service has expanded into a comprehensive portfolio of tools and resources. Today, we not only provide platforms like the OJS framework and technical expertise but also help journals meet international standards for diamond open access publishing. We create tailored development plans for each journal to enhance their global visibility and impact.

We have observed that expectations for academic journals have changed dramatically. Many now aspire to compete on the international stage and gain inclusion in leading databases like Scopus and Web of Science. Achieving these goals requires substantial (financial and human) resources, which is why we established the University Journal Support Fund in collaboration with university leadership. This fund

provides financial backing for our most ambitious journals, complementing the professional support we already offer.

We are working to make the library a true hub for journal development. Open Science thrives on collaboration, and we are fostering this spirit by creating opportunities for dialogue and sharing best practices among editors. The University Journal Development Working Group, led by Robert Tésits, is one such initiative, bringing together editors and library experts to drive progress.

Looking ahead, I am confident that EDUC will enable us to make a significant impact. It provides a fantastic opportunity to build valuable networks among editorial teams and journal development professionals across partner universities. I believe today marks the beginning of something substantial, and I am excited to see where it leads.

Róbert Tésits:

Today, I am here in two capacities: firstly, as Editor-in-Chief, and secondly, as the leader of the University Journal Development Working Group. I would like to divide my thoughts along this perspective.

Our journal *Modern Geográfia* was founded 18 years ago. Initially, the goal was to provide publication opportunities for researchers from Hungary and neighboring countries, especially Hungarian researchers beyond the borders. At that time, doctoral schools were being established in Hungary, which created a significant demand for publication platforms that were then fewer in number. The initiative itself was innovative from the start, as we launched as an Open Access journal and, in an online format. (it was not a common or usual phenomenon) This increased accessibility and visibility, while minimizing publication costs.

The turning point was in 2020, we began to take a different, more strategic perspective on the journal. We saw that with a great deal of effort and consistency, it was possible to achieve international visibility. This, of course, is not primarily about the journal's success; rather, it's about the fact that scientometric standards were increasingly imposing higher criteria on our authors) We wanted to meet these standards, thereby retaining our authors and expanding their network. Ensuring stability was important: (a) filling the issues with sufficient number of articles and (b) maintaining a timely publication schedule. We had to establish quality standards, a publication model, and journal policy, and making these accessible, to ensure transparency.

The second step, in 2021, was to involve new actors. The editorial board was expanded with international members who could leverage (use) their personal networks. We had to clarify the thematic profile (Aims & Scope), emphasizing a complex perspective of interest to an international readership. It was necessary to apply to aggregating databases, initially for those assessing *journal policies*, and in a second round, for those evaluating *journal quality*. This led us to a more coordinated effort, which is no longer just about us, but reflects the entire university.

What was the background, what were the preliminary steps leading to the coordinated university-level development? When we created the Journal Development Working Group, there were a few key points that needed outlining. As university researchers, we already knew that journals contribute significantly to the success of doctoral programs, increasing publication activity among colleagues, and, as indicated in the Financing Agreement of the University Foundation, in addition to university rankings, the publication and citation index are key indicators in the performance-based funding model.

Certainly, there were prior coordination efforts (primarily led by the Knowledge Center), however these were only informal, bilateral collaborations. But, we saw that efficiency and coordination could be further improved. By expanding points of connection, the scientific discourse between different journals could be enhanced. From a practical perspective the primary question was: How can you convince anyone of the necessity of this?

Primarily with economic arguments. Our University recently became a *foundation-based* university, entering into a funding agreement with the Maintainer (the Hungarian State). This agreement outlines specific indicators, including goals to increase the number of Q1 and Q2 publications, as well as to improve ranking positions. To achieve these objectives, we presented this proposal.

However, professional arguments are also necessary: Several editorial offices at the university operated independently, in ways that were not transparent to the leadership. To ensure that editorial offices operate at the highest level, aligned with the institution's goals and interests, I proposed the creation of a Journal Development Working Group.

So the reasons, first: editorial teams often worked independently, uncoordinated, and without organized collaboration, missing out on potential synergies. We observed all the resources and efforts mobilized at other Hungarian universities to develop their journals (Budapest, Debrecen, and Szeged). We cannot fall behind them, even though we know that this is not a competition. And last: The operations of the editorials were not visible to university leadership.

Martina Dvořáková:

With 57 printed and electronic journals published annually including some released under Open Access licence, Masaryk University is one of the largest publishers of academic and scientific journals in the Czech Republic. Many journals are indexed in major international citation databases such as SCOPUS and ERIH as well as in the List of non-impact peer-reviewed journals published in the Czech Republic. In 2011, Masaryk University was the first Czech university to join CrossRef, a worldwide scientific database. Since then, editors of the journals have been utilizing the DOI system to make the content available to a wider audience and to further facilitate the dissemination of academic knowledge.

The portal Journals.muni.cz was created to simplify the orientation of the readers in journals published by Masaryk University. It uses the university-wide publishing and management system (OJS) to facilitate the work of editors, authors, and reviewers.

Masaryk University was the first Czech university to sign the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2010). Additionally, we have an Open Science Strategy (2022) with one chapter dedicated to Open Access. Our university supports Diamond Open Access journals & books with: recognition, production, presentation and dissemination. The aim and vision of MU Open Science Strategy 2022–2028 is to ensure that Open Science principles become an integral part of the research process and service infrastructure of Masaryk University at the level comparable with the world's leading research institutions. This process will help the university enhance the quality of research, develop an advanced form of research support services and promote the systemic change that is currently taking place throughout the science sector in the developed world.

All scholarly journals published by Masaryk University, university departments or bodies gathered under one umbrella of Masaryk University Press. Masaryk University Press actively promotes Diamond Open Access on national and international level through alliances and associations (AVUNI = Association of Czech Research Universities, AEUP = Association of European University Presses, OPERAS = Open Scholarly Communication in the European Research Area for Social Sciences and Humanities)

Masaryk University plays an active role in shaping the future of Diamond Open Access by participating in the CRAFT-OA project (technical development, journal editors' education and training, Diamond OA communication & promotion)

What are the key challenges faced by Diamond Open Access journals, and how can a university environment help to address them?

Dávid Lovász:

Diamond open access is a crucial step toward a fairer publishing system, but it comes with challenges that require solutions both globally and at the institutional level. From my perspective, the core issues these journals face are not unique to individual institutions. While local factors—such as whether a university has an on-campus publisher—may play a role, most challenges are shared across the board. Fortunately, they can often be addressed locally.

The most significant challenge is funding. The diamond model is founded on the principle that neither authors nor readers should bear the cost of publishing or accessing research—a wonderful philosophy. However, the question remains: how can these journals sustain themselves, especially in an international context, without reliable funding?

The reality is that most diamond open access journals are managed by dedicated scientific communities working tirelessly to maintain high standards. Yet, these editorial teams often lack the financial and human

resources necessary to achieve their goals. Editors frequently juggle journal work alongside other university responsibilities, often on a volunteer basis. This puts them at a significant disadvantage compared to Gold Open Access journals, which can afford to hire full-time staff and invest in quality-enhancing services. Without income from article processing charges (APCs), diamond journals also struggle to pay for essential services like professional editing and advanced publishing tools, which are crucial for improving their quality and competitiveness.

Despite these obstacles, the international importance of diamond open access is growing. However, there is no widely adopted global business model to sustainably support their operations at a high level. Local solutions are emerging, and I'd like to share some of the approaches we've implemented.

At the same time, there is increasing pressure from authors and funding bodies for journals to enhance their international visibility. They expect inclusion in high-impact databases like Web of Science and Scopus, which are critical for university rankings and researchers' career advancement. Balancing sustainability with these expectations is a complex challenge.

So, how have we addressed these challenges? At our university, we recognized the need for targeted support. In addition to using the OJS system, we established a university journal support fund. Now in its second year, this fund provides financial backing to 12 university editorial boards committed to achieving true international recognition. These journals are actively working toward submitting applications to major databases like Scopus and Web of Science.

We are also exploring ways to make high-quality—and often expensive—English language editing services accessible through university resources. This would directly address a critical barrier to internationalization.

Another important step has been incorporating journal editorial work into the university's performance evaluation system. It is vital that this effort is institutionally recognized, and Robi, perhaps you can share more about the progress we've made in this area.

Lastly, collaboration and knowledge-sharing are indispensable. By communicating best practices, connecting editorial boards with peers who have overcome similar obstacles, and fostering dialogue, we can help journals move closer to their goals. At the same time, we need to work toward securing more international resources to support diamond open access journals.

One additional challenge we face is the absence of a university publisher. Without one, much of the responsibility for quality assurance falls on the library. While we are doing our best to integrate these safeguards into the system, it does add to the workload of editorial teams.

In conclusion, while diamond open access faces significant challenges, institutions like ours can play a key role in addressing them. By providing financial support, offering practical solutions, and fostering collaboration, we can ensure that these journals not only survive but thrive on the international stage.

Róbert Tésits:

The challenges align with our goals at both journal- and institutional-level. But these are not really Open Access-specific challenges. Open Access has only one, truly noteworthy drawback, but more on that, a little bit later. So what were the defined goals to be achieved?

The Working Group's envisioned goals, proposed tasks involved creating an institutional journal registry, evaluating it, initiating support projects, monitoring the results, and advising-on leadership: methods/ways to enhance the international visibility and reputation of university-related publications.

We also aimed to discuss collaboration opportunities, exchange experiences, and thereby support ongoing development. This included sharing *best practices*, *quality standards*, *publication models*, and journal policies. Additionally, our goal was to make the work and development efforts of journal editors more visible at the institutional level. This involved creating meeting minutes, reports for each session and preparing a professional summary for the University Leadership based on these.

The long-term goal was to enter the global elite. We aimed to prepare journals for the process of being accepted into major databases (Scopus, Web of Science). As for the supportive environment, here the Working Group is our community that supports us.

How can you encourage university journals to adopt the Diamond Open Access model, and what kind of support do they need to get started?

Dávid Lovász:

I firmly believe that journal support professionals—like those of us in the library—play a crucial role in guiding university editors along this path. Over the years, we’ve supported many editors in transitioning to Diamond Open Access and have learned what it takes to succeed. Adopting Diamond Open Access is more than just deciding not to charge authors or readers; it’s about meeting clear standards, such as those set by the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

For new journals, we’ve found that discussing the initial steps and offering reassurance can significantly reduce stress and tension. Our role is to alleviate much of the administrative and technical burden from their shoulders. For instance, we provide training on open systems like OJS (Open Journal Systems), which is a tremendous asset. Since OJS already offers extensive online training resources, we focus on making these materials easily accessible to editors, saving them time and effort.

Another crucial aspect is helping editors understand the expectations of Diamond Open Access. We emphasize that transparency and a well-structured journal make it more attractive to potential authors. Developing a DOAJ-compliant journal is not about limiting scientific autonomy; it is about creating a framework that promotes transparency and benefits all stakeholders.

Our primary role is to listen to the goals of the editors and tailor our support to help them achieve those objectives. We simplify complex criteria for database inclusion or meeting scientific standards into manageable steps and milestones. Additionally, we connect editors with others who are further along the same journey, fostering a network of shared experiences and mutual support.

Ultimately, our goal is to demonstrate to editors that they are not alone in this process. With the right tools, clear guidance, and strong collaboration, they can transition to Diamond Open Access successfully and set a high standard for openness and excellence in academic publishing.

What opportunities does EDUC offer for editors and journal development professionals at partner universities? How can universities support academic journals striving for inclusion in Scopus or Web of Science, especially when they operate on minimal or no budgets?

Dávid Lovász:

EDUC provides a wealth of opportunities for collaboration and internationalization, many of which remain untapped. It has the potential to become a natural platform for connecting and elevating academic journals across partner institutions.

One idea is to host virtual forums where editors from different universities can connect, perhaps organized by discipline. These forums could serve as spaces to share experiences, discuss challenges, and even develop frameworks for future collaboration. Such initiatives could also extend to journal development professionals, allowing us to exchange best practices and innovative strategies.

Beyond virtual meetings, EDUC could support networking through platforms like OpenUp. Journals could register there, find others in their field, and share opportunities such as calls for papers. This would foster collaboration and visibility across disciplines.

Of course, we shouldn’t limit these connections to online spaces. EDUC also offers opportunities for face-to-face meetings, which can be invaluable for building deeper relationships and exploring partnerships.

Another important step is ensuring that the journals from EDUC partner universities are visible and attractive to academic authors. Editors could circulate each other’s calls for papers and create more opportunities for authors to engage with and contribute to these journals. This would help position EDUC journals as part of a vibrant, international academic network.

We already have examples of good practices within this framework. For instance, our journal *African Studies* recently invited a prominent scholar from the University of Cagliari, one of EDUC’s partner

universities, to serve as guest editor for an upcoming issue. This kind of collaboration demonstrates the potential for meaningful partnerships and the value of sharing expertise within EDUC.

By embracing these opportunities, we can not only strengthen individual journals but also build a thriving, interconnected academic community across the EDUC network.

In Hungary, there is growing pressure from funders, institutions, and authors for journals to gain indexing in Scopus or Web of Science. However, for many journals with limited or no funding, this can feel like an extreme challenge. So, what can universities do to help, and how can editorial boards overcome these barriers?

At the University of Pécs, we've taken significant steps toward reforming research assessment by joining CoARA. This reflects our commitment to Open Science and a broader perspective on academic value. While I believe rankings should not be the sole measure of a journal's worth, we also recognize the practical importance of Scopus and Web of Science. These databases represent collections of high-quality journals and serve as valuable resources for authors and researchers. As such, they remain relevant for universities navigating today's research and funding landscapes, especially in Hungary, where rankings still hold considerable weight.

For Diamond Open Access journals—where neither authors nor readers pay—the support of the parent institution is critical. At our university, we've introduced the University Journal Support Fund, now in its second year. This initiative has been transformative, providing financial support to journals committed to applying to Scopus or Web of Science in the future. Even journals earlier in their journey, not yet ready to apply, can receive smaller grants to help them work toward longer-term goals.

In addition to financial support, professional backing is equally important. At the University of Pécs, this support is provided by the library. We host the Open Journal Systems (OJS) platform, ensuring a polished and professional interface for journals. We also manage essential technical requirements, such as assigning DOIs and guiding editorial teams to align their work with international standards.

That said, gaps remain. For example, we currently lack a university publisher, which would enable more centralized and streamlined publishing processes. Improving access to professional publishing services is a priority, as it would greatly enhance the quality of journal outputs.

Ultimately, while achieving inclusion in Scopus or Web of Science is challenging, it is not impossible with the right institutional support. Financial resources, professional guidance, and a shared commitment to Open Science principles can help journals overcome these barriers. Most importantly, we must remember that the true value of a journal lies in its contribution to its scientific community—not merely its place in the rankings.

Róbert Tésits:

We have taken our objectives seriously, and within a year and a half, we are making substantial progress on each goal. This includes integrating EDUC resources and establishing a more objective journal audit system. Moreover, the experiences and achievements of the working group thus far confirm that sustaining our efforts long-term is essential. This ongoing work will ensure that the University journals not only meet current expectations but are also equipped to handle future challenges, such as changes in evaluation systems and representation in professional forums. At the same time, new university journals continue to emerge and integrate into our efforts.

But all things considered, the primary challenges remained with us. The geographic diversification of the contributors, increasing our citation rate in major databases like Web of Science and Scopus and long-term stable funding. In the first two cases, we aim to rely on EDUC. One way to achieve this could be, for example, by collaborating with the geography institutes of partner universities, creating citation circles, or submitting articles to partner journals, in order to avoid—as stated in the requirements of the Norwegian Register—institutional inbreeding.

Funding is another matter. If a journal aims to embark on the path of international-ization, it must consider that the workload increases tenfold. Retaining staff, under such significantly expanded responsibilities, is extremely challenging. Moreover, if the journal operates as a Diamond Open Access journal, the mission seems almost impossible. In line with our founding principles, we generate no revenue

from either authors or readers. As a result, our language editors, and editorial members, layout designers, and web developers have been working on a voluntary basis for decades.

With such a high volume and growing proportion of international studies, sustaining this without external funding (market-based sponsorship) is becoming increasingly difficult. To tell the truth, there is a great initiative, a university-supported journal development grant, a great fundig program which is designed to support achieving goals, rather than ensuring stability in the global elite.

What can editorial boards do to make their journals truly international?

Dávid Lovász:

In my experience, the most effective university editorial boards are led by an editor-in-chief with both strong management skills and a wide network of professional contacts. These leaders can bring the right people into the journal's operations and mobilize resources effectively. It's also crucial to have someone—whether it's the same person or another—who can handle the day-to-day tasks: communicating with authors, managing the website, and ensuring accurate publication. These roles often require different skill sets, and while they occasionally overlap in one individual, more often, they require a team effort. Face-to-face interactions and meetings—whether informal or at organized conferences—are vital in building these connections and fostering collaboration.

We also believe very strongly in the importance of the role of so-called intermediate databases, which can be targeted long before Scopus and Web of Science. They not only enhance the journal's visibility but also signal its credibility. In addition, scientific social networking platforms like ResearchGate or LinkedIn play an increasingly important role. My advice to editors is to think like researchers: Where are they looking for content? Where do they want their work to appear? This perspective can help attract the right authors and readers.

It's also essential to actively avoid even the perception of being a predatory journal. Authors are becoming more mindful, and it's not enough just to be legitimate—you must appear trustworthy to anyone reviewing your website or submissions process. Building and maintaining that credibility is crucial.

Finally, there's the challenge of competing with high-impact journals, especially for foreign authors aiming to publish in Q1-ranked outlets. While journals without an impact factor or Q1 status may not seem ideal under current evaluation systems—at least in Hungary—they can still attract quality submissions. To do so, they need to position themselves as dynamic, emerging platforms in their field, offering fast editorial processes or even online-first publication models. If you can demonstrate these strengths, you may provide a more attractive alternative to slower, higher-ranked journals.

Róbert Tésits:

At this stage of development database visibility alone is often not enough. Personal scientific connections are more effective. There are 821 journals in Scopus related to "Geography, Planning and Development" category. Why would a foreign author choose us? Therefore, when it comes to internationalization, we must certainly look beyond the opportunities offered by EDUC as well. Hopefully there are several countries in the Global South have researchers less influenced by Scopus or WoS.

