



Dr. Martha Radice
President of CASCA and Associate Professor
Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology
Dalhousie University
6135 University Avenue
PO Box 15000
Halifax NS B3H 4R2
martha.radice@dal.ca 902-494-6747

The Honourable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science
Ted Hewitt, President, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Dominique Bérubé, Vice-President Research Programs, SSHRC
Tim Wilson, Executive Director, Research Grants and Partnerships, SSHRC
Lorraine Anderson, Manager, Research Grants and Partnerships, SSHRC

30 January, 2018

Dear Dr. Duncan, Dr. Hewitt, Dr. Bérubé, Dr. Wilson, and Dr. Anderson:

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Canadian Anthropology Society/Société canadienne d'anthropologie (CASCA), I am writing to express our grave concern regarding the **proposed changes to the Aid to Scholarly Journals (ASJ) program** currently under review at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). We are given to understand that the proposed changes to the ASJ entail that recipients of funding must transition to 'gold' open access within one year of receiving the award, and that the maximum amount of the award going to journals' operations will be reduced to \$25,000 from the current \$30,000.

Although CASCA and its membership applaud the overall aim to achieve full open access publishing for research supported by public funding, the current proposal will have a severe negative impact on our Society's bilingual scholarly journal *Anthropologica*, and ultimately on Canadian anthropological researchers. We take this to be contrary to the intended aims of a revised ASJ program. For the sake of brevity we will express our main concerns in two broad domains – resources and time – leaving aside the many details for the moment.

First, the proposed reduction of support from \$30,000 to \$25,000 is exceptionally disappointing. The production work that needs to be done to maintain high standards and high quality does not diminish with open access journals. Printing and mailing paper copies of the journal represents only a very small proportion of total cost at present; open access articles still need to be copyedited and put into proper layout, which is skilled work that must be properly remunerated. Our budgets need to be increased, not decreased. At the same time, the eligibility requirement of opening access to all content, whether or not it has been publicly funded, presents a threat to journal income that is earned through closed access activities. In our specific circumstance at CASCA and *Anthropologica*, we derive approximately 40% of our journal revenues from licensing agreements, 40% from ASJ, and 20% from subscriptions. Under the current proposal we are in effect being asked which 40% revenue stream to lose, without sufficient time to explore and understand alternatives, but also with no diminution of production costs.

Second, the proposed transitional timeline of one year is simply too fast for the CASCA Executive Committee, the *Anthropologica* Editorial Board, and especially the *Anthropologica* Editors to transition successfully. Like many Canadian scholarly societies and their publications, we are largely run by volunteers who, despite our passion for our field and the advancement of knowledge in general, need time to make the necessary adjustments to our organizational structures. Moreover, we, like many others, currently hold contracts with publishers that cannot simply be terminated at short notice. Even if contracts are terminated without penalty, there are no supports in place to make a transition beyond the \$5000 incentive offered to switch publishing platforms to Érudit (the only platform which fits the proposed criteria). Skilled personnel to facilitate the changeover, as well as additional significant ongoing support to replace lost revenues are needed. We respectfully ask the Minister and the SSHRC President to consider a model similar to the one in The Netherlands, where a ten-year transition period to gold access, with clear benchmarks, is under way (2014-2024).

Without exaggeration we can say the consequences of the current ASJ proposal are dire. Without sufficient time, support personnel, or resources, *Anthropologica* and CASCA will have to make not only difficult and possibly unsustainable decisions. If the current ASJ proposal becomes a reality in 2018 we are left with the following choices:

- a) Raise the subscription rates. There is no guarantee current subscribers will accept what will have to be a very large increase. We have consistently maintained quite modest subscription rates to ensure our journal is affordable to our members and to institutions, particularly within Canada. Raising institutional subscription rates would present challenges to libraries, which are operating with limited resources. A pricing increase is unlikely to be well received, in which case our subscription base will dwindle to the point of unsustainability.
- b) Reduce the quality of the publication. This is against the stated aims of all actors involved and will have a correspondingly negative impact on the prestige and reputation of the Ministry, SSHRC, and CASCA/*Anthropologica*. Canadian anthropologists would in turn be more likely to seek non-Canadian outlets for their

research findings, and international scholars would be less likely to seek out *Anthropologica*.

- c) Refuse to apply for ASJ and seek more profitable revenue sharing arrangements. This will contravene all actors' commitments to principles of gold (or even green) open access, though it will largely be the prestige and reputation of CASCA/*Anthropologica* that will suffer in this scenario.
- d) Move to implement Author Processing Charges (APCs) to replace subscription and royalty revenue. This is unsustainable under current models and practices of funding anthropological research in Canada. Few scholars incorporate APCs into their research funding budgets. Moreover, given the long life cycle of anthropological research projects, many anthropologists publish work in between research grants – if they receive external funding at all. Most anthropologists in Canada are not able to access alternative sources to cover APCs (e.g. internal university funds). Obviously, APCs are all but out of reach for junior or adjunct scholars or those researchers working outside of the academy (who might include indigenous leaders or community members involved in participatory research). We note that in 2017, only 8% of articles published in *Anthropologica* were supported by research grants. Implementing APCs to sustain our operations would have a negative impact on Canadian anthropologists, who would be more likely to seek non-Canadian outlets for their research findings.

By way of closing, I would like to reiterate that the Executive Committee of CASCA is solidly in favour of the principles of gold open access. Indeed, we have struck an Open Access Working Group jointly with *Anthropologica's* editorial board to investigate this matter. Our concerns are not with the goal of the current ASJ proposal. Our concerns are with having adequate time and means to make the transition in a manner consistent with the anticipated effects of gold open access. Gold open access has much to offer the Canadian scholarly anthropological community as well as the public at large, but it should not be implemented in a manner that will damage the very communities it is supposed to serve.

Sincerely,



Martha Radice
President, CASCA
On behalf of the Executive Committee of CASCA

Cc Jasmin Habib, Editor-in-Chief, *Anthropologica*
Antonia Pop, University of Toronto Press (publishers of *Anthropologica*)
Guy Laforest, President, Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences
Ken Clavette, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Learned Journals