



DIAMAS

Developing Institutional Open Access
Publishing Models to Advance
Scholarly Communication

Developing an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) strategy for open scholarly publishing

Getting started guide

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Acronyms

DIAMAS	Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication
EDIB	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging
IPSP	Institutional Publishing Service Providers
LGBTQ2S+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit
SAGER	Sex and Gender Equity in Research

Introduction

Society is evolving. Practices that may have been considered acceptable in the past are now being called into question. Social justice movements and the broader efforts to de-colonialize different aspects of our lives (e.g., educational systems, libraries) are also relevant to the scholarly publishing industry. A key part of increasing fair treatment and encouraging full participation within the scholarly publishing industry involves developing an equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) strategy.

What is equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB)?

Equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) is a conceptual framework to support the fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially in the workplace, including populations who have historically been under-represented or subject to discrimination because of their background, identity, disability, etc.¹

- **Equity:** Removing systemic barriers and biases to enable everyone to have equal opportunities.
- **Diversity:** Ensuring that people of different sexes, genders, abilities, career stages, races, ethnicities, geographic and institutional locations, and linguistic and cultural backgrounds are represented in the community.
- **Inclusion:** Ensuring that all individuals are visible, heard, and considered.
- **Belonging:** Treating everyone as a full member of the community and helping them to thrive.

In the context of scholarly publishing, several types of disparities have emerged, including those related to language, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, institutional affiliation, geographic location, and ability.²³⁴ These disparities can surface at different times and places as part of the scholarly publishing process, such as in the

¹ Interdepartmental Terminology Committee on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. 2024. "Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology", Government of Canada: https://www.noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/equite-diversite-inclusion-equity-diversity-inclusion-eng?view_mode=bilingual

² Amano, T., Ramírez-Castañeda, V., Berdejo-Espinola, V., Borokini, I., Chowdhury, S., Golivets, M., et al. 2023. "The manifold costs of being a non-native English speaker in science." *PLoS Biology* 21(7): e3002184. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3002184>

³ Sebo P. and Schwarz, J. 2023 "The level of the gender gap in academic publishing varies by country and region of affiliation: A cross-sectional study of articles published in general medical journals". *PLoS ONE* 18(9): e0291837. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0291837>

⁴ Salazar, J. W., Claytor, J. D., Habib, A. R., Guduguntla, V., and Redberg, R. F. 2021. "Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation of Editors at Leading Medical and Scientific Journals: A Cross-sectional Survey". *JAMA Internal Medicine* 181(9): 1248–1251. <https://doi.org.10.1001/jamainternmed.2021.2363>

- reporting on research participants in a study;
- review and acceptance of articles for publication;
- citation of scholarly works;
- choice of editorial board members or editors;
- hiring of staff;
- communications of various types (e.g., journal website, peer review feedback, calls for papers);
- policies that have been developed without taking EDIB into account.

Addressing EDIB can be complicated. One challenging factor is known as *intersectionality*, which refers to the cumulative way that the effects of different forms of discrimination (e.g., linguistic, gender, geographical, racial and socioeconomic discrimination) combine, overlap, or intersect, particularly in the case of people who are marginalized. For instance, in some disciplines, both women scholars and non-white scholars may be under-represented, meaning that these two disparities intersect for women of colour, leaving them doubly marginalized. EDIB efforts are further complicated by the fact that different cultures have different views on EDIB-related efforts (e.g., rights of women or LGBTQ2S+ individuals), which may result in different priorities being established in different parts of the world. In addition, legal requirements, such as those regarding accessibility, may differ from one country to the next.

Why is EDIB important for open scholarly publishing?

As noted in the opening paragraph, scholarly publishers operate within society, and to be successful, they must take into consideration the values that are important to that society. Beyond this general consideration, there are also some industry-specific reasons for developing an EDIB strategy for a journal or institutional publisher or service provider (IPSP). This is especially true in the context of *open* scholarly publishing, where the spirit of openness covers a set of principles and practices that aim to make scientific research from all fields accessible to everyone for the benefit of society as a whole. This includes ensuring that the processes for knowledge creation, evaluation, communication and access are equitable, diverse and inclusive in multiple ways. This means taking into consideration issues such as gender and linguistic diversity, as well as ensuring that journal platforms can work with accessibility software, and so on.

We all share the same planet, and increasingly, the most pressing problems that need to be solved (e.g., climate change, cancer, food insecurity) can affect everyone. To solve these and many other issues, we need input from all corners of the world. It is only through having a diversity of voices that we can ensure the inclusion of all relevant research topics, that we can understand these issues from multiple perspectives, and that we can make research results useful to the widest possible audience. If we unnecessarily restrict who can participate in research and dissemination – such as by having non-inclusive membership on editorial boards, lack of diversity in citations, or biased peer reviews – then critical research topics or useful methods may be overlooked, findings may not be generalizable to wider populations, and people with the potential to contribute to research may be excluded.

Who is this resource for?

EDIB cannot be the responsibility of any one individual; it requires a collective effort. This Getting Started Guide is aimed primarily at IPSPs, as well as journal editors, who subscribe to the Diamond Open Access model. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that each publisher and journal is embedded in a particular context, and the cultural values, regulatory requirements, and economic resources may differ from one context to the next. Therefore, while this resource tries to raise EDIB-related issues that are *worthy of consideration* by all those involved in open scholarly publishing, each IPSP or journal editor may identify different priorities or face varying levels of feasibility with regard to implementation.

What's in this resource?

Even though it can be challenging to implement, EDIB is an important consideration for scholarly publishing, and the purpose of this Getting Started Guide is to provide some practical tips for IPSPs or journal editors who want to begin developing an EDIB strategy. Currently, there is a lack of tailor-made resources for the Diamond Open Access community, so some examples contained in this Getting Started Guide have been borrowed from publishers operating under different governance models. However, the specific practices that are described here are compatible with the Diamond model.

While it is not a comprehensive resource, this Getting Started Guide seeks to introduce key elements that can help an IPSP or journal editor who wants to implement EDIB but is struggling to know where to begin. It may help to think of a strategy as a sort of roadmap for EDIB efforts. If you don't have a clear map, then it will be challenging to bring about meaningful change.

As mentioned, not every IPSP or journal editor is operating in the same circumstances. Therefore, each one may take a slightly different journey, beginning and ending in different places, and making different stops along the way. Nevertheless, in each case, it will help to have a map. This resource is intended to provide you with different building blocks that you can use to assemble a map that is meaningful for your own IPSP or journal. Remember that EDIB is challenging, and you will likely run into some roadblocks or need to make some detours. But don't give up! Even if you are not able to implement all the suggestions presented in this resource – or at least not all at once – persevere and work on the areas that you can address. Each step taken towards creating a more equitable, diverse and inclusive scholarly publishing system is a step in the right direction.

Four pillars of an EDIB strategy

To get started with the process of developing an EDIB strategy, there are four key pillars to take into consideration. The following sections introduce these four pillars and provide examples that may be used to inspire your own efforts.

4 pillars of an EDIB strategy



Pillar 1: Make EDIB part of your core values

To be successful, EDIB initiatives cannot be approached as an afterthought or as standalone items. EDIB cuts across many aspects of scholarly publishing and should ideally be integrated into your overall strategy. Moreover, to be successful, your EDIB-related efforts need to be visible. Are you familiar with the expression “out of sight, out of mind”? It means that if something is not visible or present, then you will probably stop thinking about it. Therefore, a critical first step in developing an EDIB strategy is to give it visibility.

If your organization or journal already has a mission, vision and values statement, consider expanding it to explicitly include EDIB-related values, or create a specific EDIB statement. An EDIB statement is a transparent way of demonstrating your commitment and desire to improve EDIB-related practices in your IPSP or journal. By making it publicly known that you provide a welcoming and inclusive space, you will be taking the first step towards increasing engagement and participation from a wider community. EDIB statements are most effective when they are specific to your organization or journal and when they propose action. It also makes sense to develop them in consultation or collaboration with your stakeholders. The Wiley network has developed a guide on “How to create a journal diversity, equity and inclusion statement”⁵ that involves three main steps:

1. Assess the needs of your research community and journal

⁵ The Wiley network “How to create a journal diversity, equity and inclusion statement”:
<https://www.wiley.com/en-us/network/publishing/research-publishing/editors/how-to-create-a-journal-diversity-equity-inclusion-statement>

- Look at the representation of ethnicities, races, colors, religions, gender identities, national origins, institutional affiliations, languages disabilities, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds in your research community, journal, and the research it publishes.
- Consider the specific measures needed to improve diversity and inclusion (e.g., diversifying peer review pools, editorial boards, or staff).

2. Identify priorities

- From among the issues identified, which are they key issues? Which will you focus on first? Remember that it may not be possible to do everything at once!
- Depending on your situation, you may decide to foster inclusive language, improve diversity of invited reviewers, encourage authors to adopt more diverse citation practices, etc.

3. Acknowledge that addressing EDIB is an ongoing process

- Make it clear in your statement that addressing EDIB is an ongoing process, and incorporate active and aspirational statements rather than passive or static ones.
- Remember that making a statement is not enough: the statement must be accompanied by goals, priorities and targets, and progress should be tracked (see next section).

For more details, as well as a selection of examples of EDIB statements, consult the Wiley “How to” guide. Once you have crafted your EDIB statement, be sure to share it in a visible place, such as on your organization’s website or in the journal documentation. Also remember to revisit the EDIB statement regularly in order to update it as your journey continues.

Pillar 2: Set goals and monitor progress

While crafting an EDIB statement is a good start, it is also important to establish concrete goals and to monitor progress towards meeting these goals. By setting specific targets and reporting on your progress, you demonstrate a readiness to “practice what you preach” and a willingness to be accountable for your EDIB efforts.

Ongoing monitoring of EDIB can be implemented through EDIB audits. The aim of an EDIB audit is to identify areas where your organization or journal is excelling, as well as areas where there is a need to improve. EDIB audits can be used to ascertain various types of diversity and inclusion in scholarly publishing, such as diversity of:

- research topics;
- authors;
- peer reviewers;
- editors and editorial boards;
- readers.

As an example, the editor-in-chief of the journal *The Clinical Neuropsychologist* wrote up a case study describing the efforts of this journal to increase diversity on the editorial board⁶. Their strategy included five main steps:

- 1. Start thinking about diversity in your field**
 - The first step towards solving a problem is recognizing that it exists!
- 2. Compare your editorial board with the research community**
 - For instance, how many women work in your field, and how does this percentage compare to the number of women on your editorial board?
- 3. Implement steps to improve the situation**
 - Set up a subcommittee to identify potential qualified board members, invite them to join the board, and offer any necessary support to these under-represented groups
- 4. Measure the impact of your actions**
 - Calculate whether there have been improvements (e.g., in the number of women on the board).
- 5. Don't stop at the first sign of improvement**
 - Successful EDIB initiatives require a sustained effort.

Develop a schedule for how often you want to conduct an EDIB audit – such as yearly or once every three years – and consider posting the results in some kind of dashboard on your organization's or journal's website. Remember that being transparent about your goals and your progress helps to improve accountability. Remember that there is no expectation that you should solve all issues immediately – the important thing is to make progress.

Pillar 3: Challenge bias

We all have unconscious biases, but IPSPs and journal editors can take steps to challenge or mitigate them. In the first instance, this could mean simply raising awareness about the existence of unconscious bias, and pointing authors, peer reviewers, editorial board members and staff towards existing resources, such as the toolkit “Unconscious bias” prepared by Elsevier⁷. For instance, the Elsevier resource points out that unconscious bias can manifest itself in scholarly publishing in several ways, with potentially harmful effects, such as:

- rating a report from a reviewer with a similar name to ours more highly than someone else's;
- downgrading the advice of a fellow editor if they subscribe to a different religious or political outlook;
- tending to appoint more editorial board members whose social backgrounds match our own;
- accepting more articles authored by people of a particular gender;

⁶ “Increasing diversity on your editorial board: A success story by the Editor-in-Chief of *The Clinical Neuropsychologist*”:

<https://editorresources.taylorandfrancis.com/the-editors-role/managing-editorial-boards/598-2/>

⁷ Elsevier's toolkit on “Unconscious bias”:

<https://www.elsevier.com/about/open-science/science-and-society/unconscious-bias>

- refusing to acknowledge the validity of an alternative perspective if put forward by someone with a different educational level;
- working in an all-male editorial team.

Some of the simple tips that the Elsevier resource includes for helping individuals to recognize and start to overcome their unconscious biases include:

- Make a conscious effort to slow down your decision making and asking yourself whether you are looking at the widest group of possible variables or the broadest choice of candidates.
- Be open and alert for unconscious bias in yourself and in colleagues.
- Be prepared to tackle unconscious bias by pointing out how it may be creeping into a process.

At a future stage, your organization or journal might consider developing their own resources that can be customized to address specific types of unconscious bias training that are most relevant within your community (e.g., see an example describing a webinar that the Nature Reviews journals organized for their journal editors⁸). Don't forget to issue regular reminders about unconscious bias to your stakeholders to help keep this issue top of mind!

Beyond awareness raising and training activities, other ways to challenge bias include establishing clear criteria for decision-making (e.g., by reviewers and editors). For instance, this might include instructing peer reviewers to distinguish between stylistic issues and content issues during evaluation, and to give less weight to the former and more to the latter. Offering some kind of recognition or reward (e.g., award for high-quality reviews) can also be used to challenge bias by reinforcing good practices. Finally, another way of challenging bias could be to expand author guidelines to foster the use of inclusive language and to encourage citation diversity. For example, the editors of the journal *Nature Reviews in Bioengineering* actively encourage authors to include a citation diversity statement as part of their review⁹:

To make a first step towards addressing disparities in citation practices, we encourage our authors to reference relevant papers in a manner that is equitable in terms of racial, ethnic, gender and geographical representation. We believe that by including a citation diversity statement, our authors will thoughtfully pick their references, taking the time to survey the entire field, rather than citing the same authors or institutions repeatedly. This way, our authors can improve their citation balance and make others aware of citation imbalances. Importantly, this will improve our Review articles as the discussion will truly outline the current state, challenges and innovations of a field.

⁸ Hoving, S. 2024. "What does putting DEI into practice at the Nature Reviews journals really look like?", Springer Nature blog: <https://www.springernature.com/gp/librarians/the-link/journals-blogpost/putting-dei-into-practice-at-nature-reviews/27507772>

⁹ Nature editorial on "Citation diversity statement." *Nature Reviews Bioengineering* 1, 227 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44222-023-00061-5>

Another way that Nature Reviews editors are challenging bias is by giving authors from cultures that use different scripts the option to have their name presented in their own alphabet for languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Persian and Russian¹⁰.

Pillar 4: Develop meaningful EDIB processes and policies

Encouraging good practices related to EDIB is helpful, but sometimes it may be beneficial to go a step further by developing processes and policies that set clear expectations for EDIB and outline consequences for engaging in non-inclusive or non-equitable practices. In some cases, these processes and policies may emerge as a result of some of the activities related to pillars 1, 2 and 3, which can help to identify gaps or provide evidence that certain actions can bring about desired outcomes.

One example of a process intended to reduce bias during peer review is the double-anonymized peer review process, where the reviewers do not know the author's identity and the authors do not know the reviewer's identity. The *Journal of Bacteriology* is one journal that is currently piloting a double-anonymized peer review process as part of an investigation to determine if this will support fair and unbiased evaluation of manuscripts more successfully than the single-anonymized process that is currently in place¹¹.

An example of a policy intended to improve an EDIB-related issue in scholarly publishing can be seen in Springer's requirement for authors to follow the "Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER) Guidelines"¹², which includes instructions such as:

- Authors should use the terms sex (biological attribute) and gender (shaped by social and cultural circumstances) carefully in order to avoid confusing both terms.
- Article titles and/or abstracts should indicate clearly what sex(es) the study applies to.
- Authors should describe in the background, whether sex and/or gender differences may be expected; report how sex and/or gender were accounted for in the design of the study; provide disaggregated data by sex and/or gender, where appropriate; and discuss respective results.
- Authors should provide a rationale in the Discussion if a sex and/or gender analysis was not conducted.

Finally, it is important to regularly assess and improve processes and policies in order to ensure that they reflect the evolving EDIB-related issues in the scholarly publishing community. For example, the *Science* family of journals initially took a very restrictive stance on the use of AI tools for preparing manuscripts

¹⁰ Hoving, S. 2024. "What does putting DEI into practice at the Nature Reviews journals really look like?", Springer Nature blog: <https://www.springernature.com/gp/librarians/the-link/journals-blogpost/putting-dei-into-practice-at-nature-reviews/27507772>

¹¹ The Journal of Bacteriology's description of their "Double-anonymized peer review pilot": <https://journals.asm.org/journal/jb/double-anonymized-peer-review>

¹² Springer's editorial policy on "Sex and Gender in Research (SAGER Guidelines)": <https://www.springer.com/gp/editorial-policies/sex-and-gender-in-research-sager-guidelines>

for publication¹³. However, researchers pointed out that such tools can help to improve equity in scholarly publishing by alleviating linguistic disparities for authors who are writing in a non-dominant language – which is the case for the vast majority of researchers who are required to publish in English¹⁴. After due consideration, the editors decided to modify the policy to make it clear that while AI tools may not be (co-)authors, they can be used as aids in the writing or presentation of the manuscripts as long as this is clearly acknowledged and the author accepts full accountability for the accuracy of the work¹⁵. In a related example, Mohamad L. Seghier (2023), the editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Imaging Systems*, notes that his own position as editor incorporate the following two points: a call to embrace current AI-assisted technologies to remove any language barriers in research dissemination, but at the same time a request to adhere to good practice guidelines regarding the use of AI tools like ChatGPT¹⁶.

Next steps

This Getting Started Guide has provided food for thought as well as some suggestions for how to begin developing an EDIB strategy for your organization or journal. When you are ready to take some practical next steps, you can find more detailed information within the specialized topics covered in DIAMAS resources such as the toolsuite articles and guidelines: <https://toolsuite.diamas.org/>

¹³ Thorp, H. H. 2023, January 23. “ChatGPT is fun, but not an author.” *Science* 379(6630):

<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adg7879>

¹⁴ Berdejo-Espinola, V. and Amano, T. 2023, March 9. “AI tools can improve equity in science. *Science* 379(6636):

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¹⁵ Thorp, H. H. and Vinson, V. 2023, November 16. “Editor’s blog”, *Science*:

<https://www.science.org/content/blog-post/change-policy-use-generative-ai-and-large-language-models>

¹⁶ Seghier, M. L. 2023, April 26. Editorial: “Using ChatGPT and other AI-assisted tools to improve manuscripts readability and language.” *International Journal of Imaging Systems* 33: 773-775.

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