



Two Years of Partnership: Navigating Change in Scholarly Publishing

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At the end of 2025, the Chemical Society of Japan (CSJ) and Oxford University Press (OUP) marked two years of working together to publish *Bulletin of the Chemical Society of Japan* (BCSJ) and *Chemistry Letters* (CL). In reality, our working relationship started much earlier — in the summer of 2022, when the CSJ first contacted OUP (and other publishers) to invite us to consider bidding to become the publisher of the journals. At OUP we were excited by the prospect of working together with the CSJ, and were delighted when ultimately the CSJ chose us as the journals' new publisher. Now, two years into our cooperation, this feels like a good time to reflect on the journals publishing landscape and the challenges and opportunities it provides.

Journals publishing is in a state of tremendous flux. Over the last twenty years the journals environment has been changed radically by the advent of open access (OA) publishing — making articles (or whole journals) freely available to read and re-use. OA turned journals publishing on its head — from being an industry focussed on the end customer (readers, largely represented by academic libraries), to one at least equally focussed on the producer (authors). There have been many benefits to this change — most notably that a large proportion of high quality research is now openly available worldwide, accelerating the progress of science. For example, in 2025 around 25% of articles published in BCSJ and CL were OA. The advent of OA publishing has required publishers to constantly innovate, improve and in some cases radically change business models, provide authors with the best service possible, and generally always remain vigilant to and cognizant of the rapid changes OA brought about. These are all good things to the benefit of readers, authors, and science.

In the last couple of years though OA has taken something of a back seat as journals publishing has, like every other industry, been heavily disrupted by generative AI. AI

affects every facet of the publishing process, offering lots of opportunities for efficiency and improvement in journals publishing. To give a few examples, it can help authors whose first language is not English improve the grammar in their work, it can aid editors and publishers in identifying breaches of publishing ethics, it can speed up publication processes by taking an initial assessment of what level of copy-editing a manuscript requires, and it can improve search on journal websites. The list of potential benefits is long, but unfortunately AI also presents a myriad of challenges. Articles can be written by AI (and not acknowledged as such), purportedly 'peer' reviews can be conducted with AI, and there are many ways in which images or data can be created with AI, just to name a few potential misuses. That's before we think about the environmental impact of AI even in its appropriate uses, which must be acknowledged and minimised. Publishers such as OUP and journals such as BCSJ and CL are taking steps both to utilize the positive aspects of AI, while putting in place policies to protect against the threats (e.g. we do not allow peer reviewers to run articles through AI services, and the use of AI by authors should be acknowledged). AI provides lots of exciting opportunities, and if well-used it will be to the benefit of all involved with scholarly publishing. We just need to be aware of the risks and manage them well.

AI and OA both represent change, change which well managed will be very positive for the CSJ, OUP, and the journals we work together to produce. At OUP, we are very grateful to work with everyone at the CSJ — we share the same goals to publish the highest quality research and to provide an excellent service to our authors and customers. We are confident that our two organisations can steer our way through the complicated (and exciting) challenges which await us, and look forward to seeing BCSJ and CL thrive over the coming years.

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