



Introducing the Canadian Scholarly Journals Dataset

by Alan Colin Arce | 10 March 2026 | English, Insights and Signals Reports



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This insights and signals report was written by Lucía Céspedes, Gwendal Henry and Simon van Bellen, with thanks to INKE Partner Sonya Betz for her comments and review.

At a Glance

Topic / Titre	Introducing the Canadian Scholarly Journals Dataset
Key Participants / Créateur	Érudit
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Summary

This *Insights and Signals* reports on the development, content and impact of the *Revue Savantes Canadiennes/Canadian Scholarly Journals* list dataset.

Items discussed in this report include:

- The unique traits and relevance of the *Revue Savantes Canadiennes/Canadian Scholarly Journals* list dataset
- Research projects, library science and scientific policy instances which have already used and benefited from the list
- The importance of collective work in keeping the list updated and in appropriating it as a valuable resource

An introduction to the Canadian scholarly journal landscape

Did you know that there are currently almost 1000 scholarly journals being published in Canada? Or that some of them have been active since the mid-19th century –and

are still going strong? Or that 61 % of them publish under the Diamond Open Access model, which supports community ownership of the publications and supposes no fees for authors nor readers?

It is rare for a country to have this kind of detailed information about the ensemble of their scholarly journals ecosystem. But, since November 2024, Canada has such a dataset: compiled by Érudit's senior research advisor Simon van Bellen, the *Revues savantes canadiennes/Canadian Scholarly Journals* list provides a wealth of metadata of Canadian publications, and has already been put to good use by researchers, librarians, and decision-makers across the country.

Existing journal lists: what are indexes and how do they work?

Journal lists do exist – they are *indexes*, some of the best known being Scopus or the Web of Science's (WoS) Core Collection. However, they are, by their very nature, exclusive. Indexes have clear criteria for inclusion, and, in the name of scientific excellence and editorial good practices, only journals that comply are included. The stricter the barriers, the more selective these lists become – and the included titles tend to be considered particularly prestigious. Furthermore, many mainstream indexes show biases in terms of language, discipline or geographical origin of journals, thus presenting a carefully curated but skewed and partial portrayal of international science. Nonetheless, WoS and Scopus' readily available lists of journals and journal metrics are used by many institutions for funding, assessment and evaluation processes (Pölönen et al., 2020).

When journal lists are compiled at national level, they are usually the responsibility of ministries, national research councils, or equivalent institutions, and are not limited to journals published within the country. It is often the case that organizations in charge of research assessment policies put together these lists to establish a tier system among journals, establishing explicit or implicit criteria for research quality and impact. For example, Brazil's Qualis system classifies journals in ten *strata*, from A1 (the highest) to C (the lowest). The classification is regularly updated by the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education according to criteria such as the journals' number of issues, inclusion in well-known indexes, publishing institution, or impact factor (Vasen et al., 2025). Similarly, the Finnish Publication Forum, an initiative of the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, rates scientific publications on a scale from 1 (basic level) to 3 (highest level) (Pölönen et al., 2021). These policies effectively orient researchers' publishing practices and are

therefore instrumental in encouraging or discouraging certain publication strategies or research topics –for example, by the value attributed to national or local *vis à vis* international journals. If these journal lists send researchers the message that international journals are those of highest quality, they will have greater incentives to turn their attention to research projects that will be likely published in such venues. Scientific excellence, topics and scope thus become mixed and confused.

The Canadian Scholarly Journals list: what makes it special?

Conversely, the Canadian Scholarly Journals list is unique in that it does not seek to categorize or establish hierarchies, nor to filter or exclude; rather, it has been put together with the care of a collector searching for the inclusion of every precious item, no matter how small or big, old or new. According to Sonya Betz (Head, Open Publishing Services, University of Alberta; co-chair of the Library Publishing Community Engagement Team, CARL),

“rather than seeking to select or curate titles, or validate quality, the list is most useful in its comprehensiveness, and in supporting a complete picture of the Canadian journal landscape”.

The list includes Canadian scholarly journals, both active and ceased, which apply some mechanism of peer- or editorial review, are published periodically, are mainly managed from within a Canada-based institution, association or society, have an ISSN associated, and appear legitimate (i.e. they should not be associated with publishers known to have questionable practices, commonly known as “predatory”). Thus, it represents the first exhaustive open list of Canadian scholarly journals, providing both a historical perspective of the evolution of these publications in Canada as well as an accurate portrait of the landscape at present.

An exhaustive dataset: what does it tell us?

The list describes, for each journal included, a vast range of characteristics. These data allow any user to check, for groups of journals, or individually, the types of licences, the languages admitted, and the usage of APCs. One may filter the journals for specific analyses, for example, those that are associated with a specific institution. As we showed **in a paper published earlier this year**, it is also possible to analyze the structure of the landscape, by combining many of the characteristics

to extract major trends. Using multivariate analyses, we found four “clusters” of journals based on common traits: the first and largest one is characterized by Diamond OA journals, hosted by libraries, and publishing in English; the second one includes French-language journals using subscription models or Diamond OA, often disseminated on Érudit and associated with Arts and Literature, and the Humanities; the third cluster is mainly composed of hybrid journals edited by learned societies, mostly active in the Natural Sciences; and a fourth one, where journals are not associated with a clearly defined organization, are published almost exclusively in English, and are primarily associated with the Health Sciences. As we can see, each cluster originated from a different type of organization and/or during a specific period and could be associated to one or several disciplines. For example, currently active French-language journals were found to be relatively ancient, with a median age of 37 years, and often associated with the Humanities. Journals published by commercial entities were generally older still, and associated with learned societies. On the contrary, a very large group of journals have adopted diamond open access while using **Open Journal Systems**, an open source software for management and dissemination—these journals tend to be very recently founded and often actively supported by libraries. The inventory also shows that 84% of the journals founded since 2015 use a Diamond open access model. For more methodological details and in-depth analysis of the Canadian scholarly journals landscape, see van Bellen and Céspedes (2025).

An asset in action: how do we use it?

Since its publication, the list’s raw data have been downloaded more than 400 times from **Borealis, the Canadian Dataverse Repository**, where it is deposited under a CC-BY licence, suggesting many users are looking to explore the structure of the Canadian scholarly publishing in detail, or simply verifying information on the journals serving their communities. The interest around potential uses of the list was evident since its official presentation to the public (**a recording of the webinar is available**): it is a valuable resource for evidence-based decisions at multiple levels. Funding and support programs for journals, such as those from the Fonds de Recherche du Québec or the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, or Coalition Publica’s Partnership for Open Access have an interest in access to comprehensive journal inventories. As stated by Adèle Paul-Hus, Acting Senior Program Officer at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council: “The list of Canadian journals proved particularly valuable in the review of the Social Sciences and Humanities

Research Council's Aid to Scholarly Journals program. The list provided us with a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the Canadian scholarly journal landscape, helping to inform and facilitate the program's transition to immediate open access."

Universities have also used the list to identify the scholarly journals that are being managed within their walls. For example, Rémy Barbonne, Research Development Advisor at Université du Québec, was able to enrich the journal inventory of the ten facilities that constitute the Université du Québec system, by matching the Canadian journal list with the university's **institutional inventory**.

A Collective Work in Progress: How Can We Contribute?

The vitality of a country's scholarly publishing landscape, as evidenced or measured by the journals it is capable of sustaining, is a strong indicator of scientific leadership. Journals themselves can be considered scientific outputs, just as articles or patents, as they signal the maturity and level of development of disciplines. In Canada, where most journals are published by higher education institutions, this is also a testimony of the editorial efforts made by universities, colleges or research institutes to manage and support their own publication venues.

This spirit of collective work is at the heart of the journal list: Coalition Publica, represented by Jeanette Heatherill, as well as the Canadian Association of Research Libraries' Library Publishing Community Engagement Team, particularly its co-chair Sonya Betz, were key to the creation and promotion of the list. Now, far from being static, the dataset is open for improvement **by comments from the community**, so why not take a look yourself? These comments are later incorporated into the dataset in **periodically released "snapshots"**. By correcting information, adding missing journals, or helping keep the list updated, Canadian academic communities – and society as a whole – can make this resource their own and join efforts in improving the quality of the dataset, ultimately improving our understanding of the science done and published all across Canada.

Responses from the INKE Partnership

Sonya Betz (Head, Open Publishing Services, University of Alberta; co-chair of the Library Publishing Community Engagement Team, CARL):

As Head of the University of Alberta Library's Open Publishing Services program, and co-Chair of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries' Library Publishing Community Engagement Team, I have been a vocal supporter and promoter of the *Revue Savantes Canadiennes/Canadian Scholarly Journals* list dataset described in the report. This resource collects and collates formerly fragmented, disparate, and missing data to address a critical gap in our knowledge of Canadian journal publishing. Until the creation of this list, researchers and practitioners could not confidently answer the most basic questions of how many journals are being published in Canada, who supports their publication, and how and what they publish. For libraries, and library-publishing organizations specifically, this list confirms the important **role they play in publishing Canadian journals**, and the highly non-commercial nature of the national publishing ecosystem. This dataset provides crucial evidence for the development of local and national publishing service models, can help direct resource and policy development, and provides opportunities for informed advocacy and outreach efforts for administrators and practitioners.

In further describing its value and usefulness, at the University of Alberta, the *Revue Savantes Canadiennes/Canadian Scholarly Journals* list has provided us with accurate data about Canadian APC-free (diamond) publishing options that we were able to integrate into information researchers use to select publication venues. I've cited the dataset numerous times in presentations to librarians and administrators to shift deeply-held assumptions about Canadian journal publishing, and to highlight the predominantly open and non-commercial nature of our national literature. With this data now freely available, our national library publishing community can confidently assert their position as foundational stakeholders and partners in conversations about the future of scholarly publishing in Canada.


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