Canadian Food Studies La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation

Editorial

O is for open (as well as optimal, operable, optimistic, organic)

David Szanto & Alexia Moyer

Much as we might like to think of the academy as an enlightened domain of pure knowledge creation, it is inextricably linked to financial and corporate influences. The business of academic publishing is a complex ecosystem of actors, processes, expectations, and perversions. Many of us have encountered—indeed, have reinforced—such entanglements. Very often our academic success depends on learning the rules of engagement and then following them. We research, we write, we publish; we review, we critique, we edit. We make our textual submissions and pay our subscription fees, whether directly to a journal or indirectly through our participation in the institutions, organizations, and libraries to which we are connected.

But this system, when we start to unpack it, can present some pretty nefarious effects. Research papers published in for-profit journals are not easily and freely accessible to those outside of institutional life. Yet these papers are generally produced by people with access to public funding, either from research councils or educational institutions. By paying for journal articles that sit behind paywalls, we are effectively transferring tax revenue into the pockets of private corporations. Of course, for those who can't or don't want to pay, there are semi- and non-legal options, but even 'free' access to PDFs comes with costs (often folded back into commercial publishers' fee structures).

Other significant issues arise from for-profit knowledge. Students with limited income are often forced to make program and course decisions based on the price of textbooks and learning resources. Worse, they sometimes have to decide between buying these materials and eating well. Scholars, who choose to flout copyright and publicly post copies of their work, can face intimidating legal missives from publishers. Junior academics, trying to move up in their careers, and who have less access to knowledge dissemination funding, may opt to publish with a paywalled journal, reinforcing the system and limiting broader access to their work.

Within this morass of issues, advocates for Open are trying to imagine another way of doing things. Open education and open educational resources (OER), open publishing, and open distribution are all part of the eco-system of open knowledge. Open source software and open licensing undergird the movement, creating powerful tools that are non-private and freely

*Corresponding author: david.szanto@gmail.com
DOI: 10.15353/cfs-rcea.v8i1.513
ISSN: 2292-3071

adaptable. Other efforts—including opening up peer review, attending to accessibility standards, and acknowledging editorial input—address early concerns about the quality and rigor of open publishing (which is sometimes confused with vanity and self-publishing). Organizations like SPARC (the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition), Creative Commons, GNU, and the Rebus Foundation all support and contribute to the eco-system, but its long-term resilience depends on the participation of the multitudes, of *us*.

Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation is itself part of this world, providing open access to its contributors' content. Our workflow systems and website are built on the open-source platform, OJS (Open Journal Systems), which is an initiative of the Public Knowledge Project (PKP). Like many other open access journals, we charge our authors a publishing fee, which varies according to their financial means and submission type. (See the CFS/RCÉA fee schedule for details.) These fees allow us to keep the journal in operation, covering administrative costs and copyediting fees, while resisting the need for other sources of revenue such as advertising and data analytics. Although our editors work on a volunteer basis, each article comes with production costs, and over the long term, we want CFS/RCÉA to remain sustainable, both in terms of labour and finances.

Yet even as journals like ours participate in the open eco-system, many of the giant academic publishers are also moving towards open access. But it's not out of the goodness of their hearts. Insiders acknowledge that open is the wave of the future, and so for-profit publishers have recognized that they need to change their revenue models. This is why many of them have moved into the highly lucrative (and extremely problematic) business of selling data analytics—processed user behaviour that is in turn sold to academic institutions to improve their own financial performance. This then has effects on the selective hiring of professors, the valorization of one or another research program, the investment in new pedagogical initiatives, and, importantly, the attraction of specific student populations. While some might tout this as the 'smartening' of the education industry, data-driven decision making is never without bias. Algorithms and predictive technologies invariably allow for systemic discrimination to become baked in, reinforcing many of the same social justice issues that food scholars often seek to undo.

So what are we to do? Once one dives into the murk, it may seem that, as individuals, we are mostly fairly powerless. Like every complex system, academic publishing presents challenges that can neither be understood nor addressed simply. Yet there are many ways to engage. The most significant are to talk about how messy the industry is, to investigate and learn about it, to think about our publishing choices wisely, and to support those who choose to do work that returns more value to learners and researchers, and focuses less on academic prestige and advancement. That doesn't mean giving up on our careers, it just means realigning our values and being mindful of the implications embedded in our choices. (Kind of like everything we do within food systems…)

As CFS/RCÉA continues to evolve and grow, we will remain committed to providing full, free, and open access to the content our contributors create. We will adapt with the times,

stay open to critiques and recommendations, and respond to the needs of the CAFS/ACÉA community and food scholarship more broadly. We are grateful to have you along for the ride.

Speaking of opening things up, this issue of CFS/RCEA brings together two perspectives, one narrative, two research articles and four book reviews.

We kick off with Charlene Elliott's reflections on play and food. While many of us may have once been admonished for playing around the table, the world of children's packaged foods says otherwise. Elliott explores what play looks like to producers of such foods, as well as to the parents and children who consume them—or not—and to the governments who regulate them.

Next, is Sarah Elton's contemplation of the 'obesity crisis'. Are increasing waistlines the most appropriate rationale for overhauling the food system, asks Elton, as she makes a case that human health is more profoundly and inextricably tied to ecological criteria. If kale is grown in such a way that damages the water on which we rely, then can it really be called healthy?

In her narrative—"Who are the Cattails? Stories of Algonquin Anishinaabe Food Systems"—Kaitlyn Patterson is equally wary of such tendencies toward oversimplification. She writes, "as dietitians, we study the function of food within our human bodies, but we are not often taught to think about the *who* behind our more-than-human food sources. Who are the living, diverse beings whom we consume (plants and animals included)? How do we take care of one another?"

What follows is a territorial approach to understanding the food system, an original research article by Manon Boulianne, Carole Després, Patrick Mundler, Geneviève Parent, and Véronique Provencher of l'Université Laval. Boulianne et al. are concerned with mapping out the modalities of production and exchange that ultimately nourish the inhabitants of a particular region, in this case the Quebec City area.

Elaine Power, Julie Dietrich, Zoe Walter, and Susan Belyea round out this section with a study of student experiences of food insecurity at Queen's University. Their interviewees include first-generation Canadians, international students, Indigenous students, law students and undergraduate students transitioning to independent living.

Should you find room on your double-stacked bookcases, book reviews editor Michael Classens and his team of critical readers lead us through a selection of the latest food-centered offerings. Jennifer Sumner relates the ways in which chef and food activist Joshna Maharaj's *Take Back the Tray: Revolutionizing Food in Hospitals, Schools, and Other Institutions* is every bit as "original, bright, and nourishing" as the food she makes. Japji Bas, Jake Robitaille and Alejandro Bas engage in a collaborative and personal exploration of Amy Symmington's *The Long Table Cookbook*. The result is a thoughtful search for community in a time of physical distancing. Kaitlyn Duthie-Kannikkatt sifts through *Thinking With Soils: Material Politics and Social Theory*, turning it over and deftly taking its measure. And finally, Rachel Mason carefully unpacks the relationship between meat and the environment as tackled by editors Ryan M. Katz-Rosene and Sarah J. Martin in *Green Mean? Sustaining Eaters, Animals, and the Planet*.