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The geographic distribution of open access journals

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THE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

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The regional distribution of Open Access (OA) journals in the ISI citation databases differs significantly from the overall distribution of journals, namely in favour of peripheral areas and regions constituted predominantly of poorer countries. According to McVeigh (2004) in the ISI citation databases as a whole, North America and Western Europe account for 90% of the titles indexed, yet they account for only 40% of OA journals. Less than 2% of European and North American journals employ the OA model, yet 15% of those from the Asia-Pacific region and 40% from Central and South America are OA. This leads the author to conclude that "[for] many journals, providing free content online expands their access to an international readership" (McVeigh 2004, p.4).

Departing from this assumption the study at hand addresses the following questions:

- Is the geographic distribution of OA journals in general more favourable towards peripheral publishing countries?
- How does it differ from the distribution of scholarly journals in general?
- Which proportions of scholarly journals and of scholarly online journals are OA in different regions and in groups of economically similar countries?*

For this purpose, publishing data for active scholarly/academic journals from Ulrich's Periodicals Directory and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) were gathered and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The data was gathered in May 2005.

The results indicate interesting differences between the geographic distribution of scholarly journals in general and the subgroup of OA journals. To illustrate, among the top 25 publishing countries for all journals, 7 do not belong to the group of high income countries*, and only 6 in the case of scholarly online journals. Yet for OA journals this number increases to 11, with Brazil taking the 3rd and India the 5th spot. According to the DOAJ almost a fifth (18%) of OA journals in the Health Sciences and over a quarter (26%) of Biology and Life Science OA journals are published in the Latin American and Caribbean region. While the group of high income countries publishes 6% of its online journals as OA, 32% of those from upper middle income countries, 10% of those from lower middle income countries, and 34% of online journals emanating from low income countries are OA. Correspondingly, 5% of online journals published in Western Europe* and 6% of those from Canada and the USA are OA, yet 51% of online journals published in Latin America and the Caribbean are. (South Asia: 7%, Africa/Middle East: 8%, Eastern Europe/Central Asia: 15% East Asia/Pacific: 15%) This also has to be seen in the light of the fact that the USA, Canada, and the countries of Western Europe together account for 80% of all registered academic online journals, while their share of OA journals amounts to 59%.

Due to the fast changing nature of the subject the results are meant to provide a snapshot as well as to be indicative and exploratory, and also to invite different interpretations. Yet at the same time they are also intended to instigate debate about the role OA is attributed and its significance as a peripheral practice.

Notes:

McVeigh, M. E. (2004). Open Access Journals in the ISI citation databases: Analysis of Impact Factors and Citation Patterns. Thomson Corporation

* see World Bank Classification of Economies. <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countryclass/countryclass.html>

** for the purpose of this study "Western Europe" means pre-enlargement European Union, plus Switzerland, Iceland, and Norway.

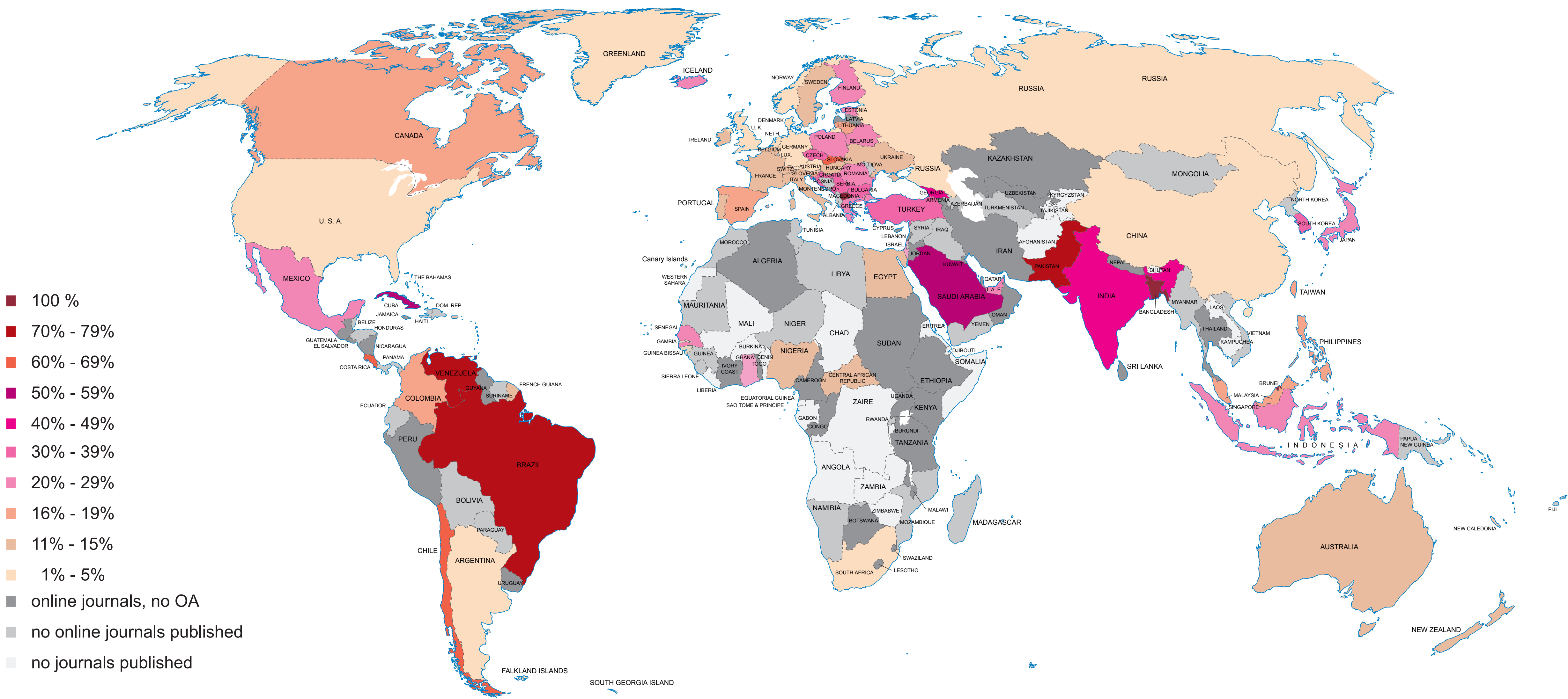
This investigation forms part of the author's doctoral research project and was intended as a preliminary and exploratory gauging of the area in order to establish the potential for further investigation of OA (publishing) as a peripheral practice.

THE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS

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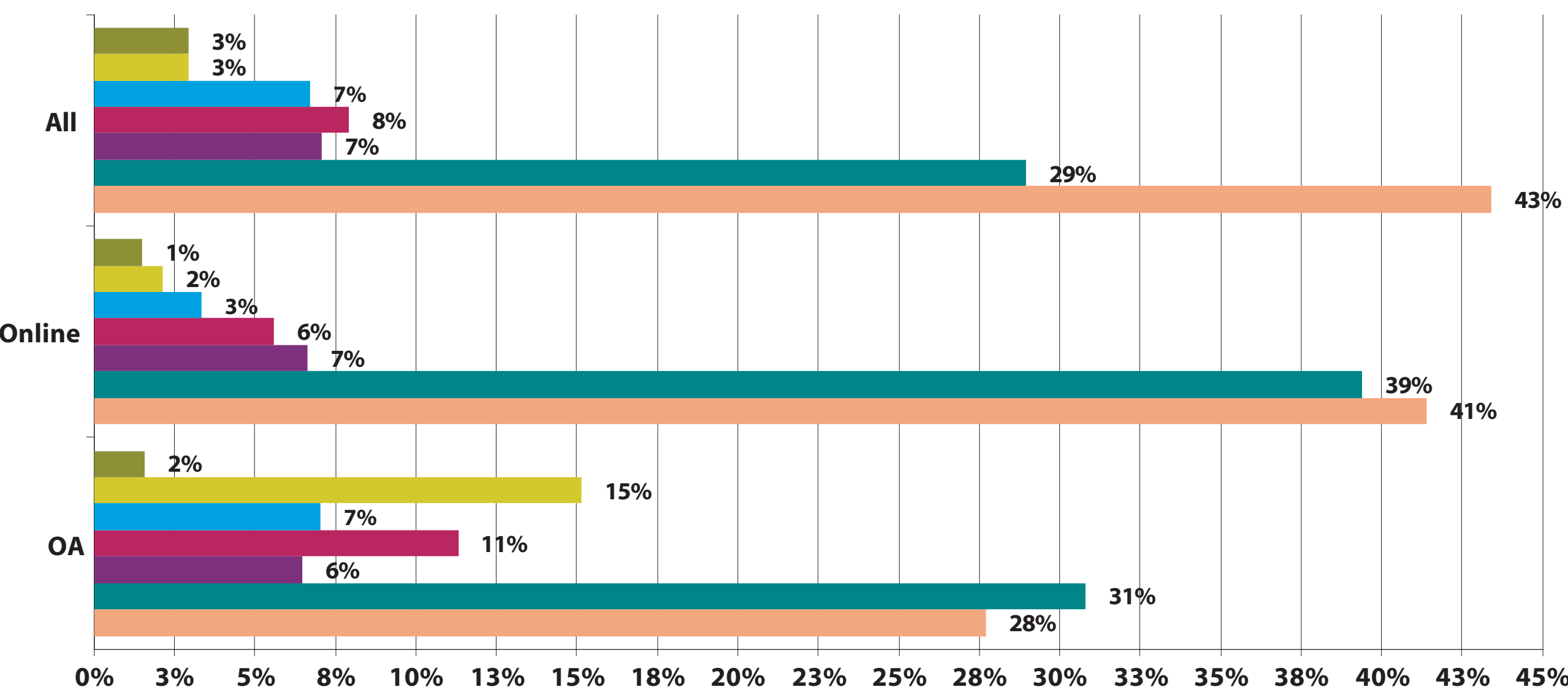
MAP: WORLD DISTRIBUTION OF OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS AS SHARE OF SCHOLARLY ONLINE JOURNALS IN INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES

TOP 25 PUBLISHING COUNTRIES

All Journals	Online	Open Access
1 USA	USA	USA
2 UK	UK	UK
3 Germany	Netherlands	Brazil
4 Netherlands	China	Japan
5 China	Germany	India
6 Japan	Australia	Canada
7 Italy	Canada	Australia
8 France	Japan	Germany
9 Australia	France	Chile
10 Poland	Switzerland	Venezuela
11 Canada	Russia	Spain
12 India	Italy	France
13 Spain	Spain	Italy
14 Switzerland	Denmark	Pakistan
15 Russia	Brazil	Switzerland
16 Belgium	Sweden	Poland
17 Austria	South Africa	Mexico
18 Sweden	India	Turkey
19 Denmark	Singapore	China
20 Brazil	New Zealand	South Korea
21 South Africa	Norway	Czech Republic
22 Singapore	Austria	Croatia
23 Egypt	Ireland	Netherlands
24 Norway	Mexico	Sweden
25 Czech Republic	Poland	Finland

Source: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, May 2005

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOLARLY JOURNALS



Source: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, May 2005

MOTIVATION

According to a recent study (McVeigh 2004) the regional distribution of Open Access (OA) journals in the ISI citation databases differs significantly from the overall distribution of journals, namely in favour of peripheral areas and regions constituted pre-dominantly of poorer countries.

QUESTIONS

Is the geographic distribution of OA journals in general more favourable towards peripheral publishing countries?
How does it differ from the distribution of scholarly journals in general?
Which proportions of scholarly journals and of scholarly online journals are OA in different regions and in groups of economically similar countries?

DATA & METHOD

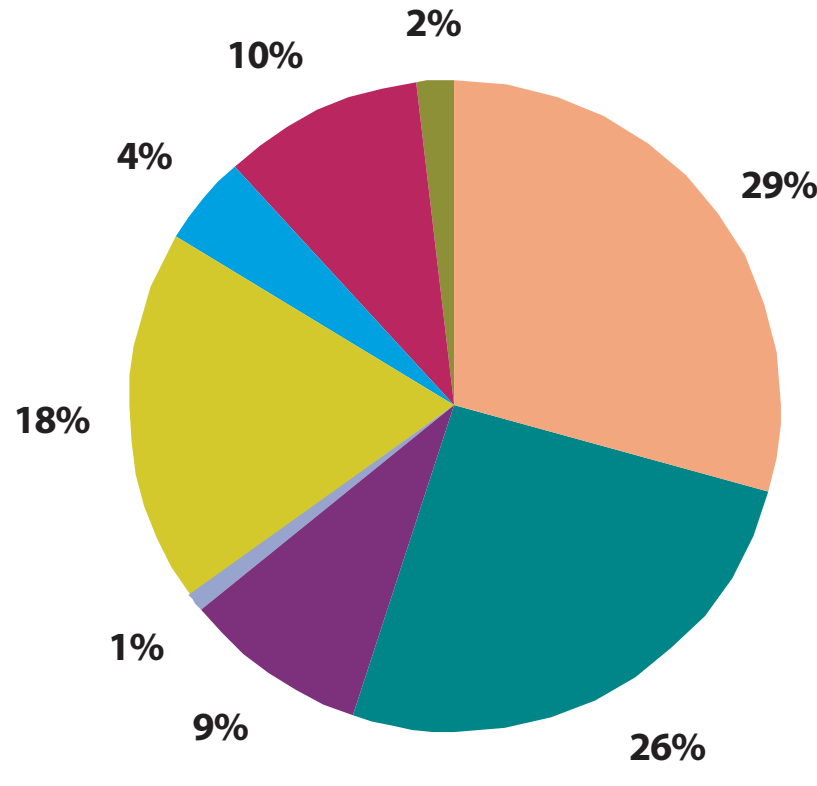
Journal publishing data for active academic/scholarly journals was gathered from Ulrich's Periodicals Directory as well as the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) and was analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The results are indicative and are meant to invite different interpretations. Data gathered in May 2005.

	All	Online	Open Access
Ulrich's	47406	16897	1250
DOAJ	-	-	1535

Note: McVeigh, M. E. (2004). Open Access Journals in the ISI citation databases: Analysis of Impact Factors and Citation Patterns. Thomson Corporation

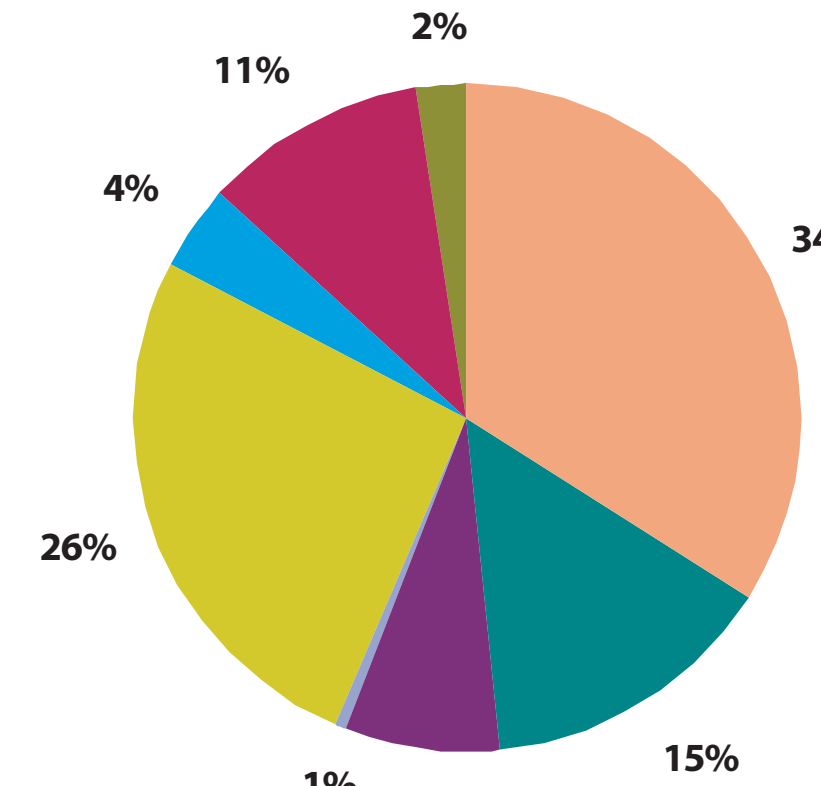
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF OA JOURNALS: BY SUBJECT

HEALTH SCIENCES



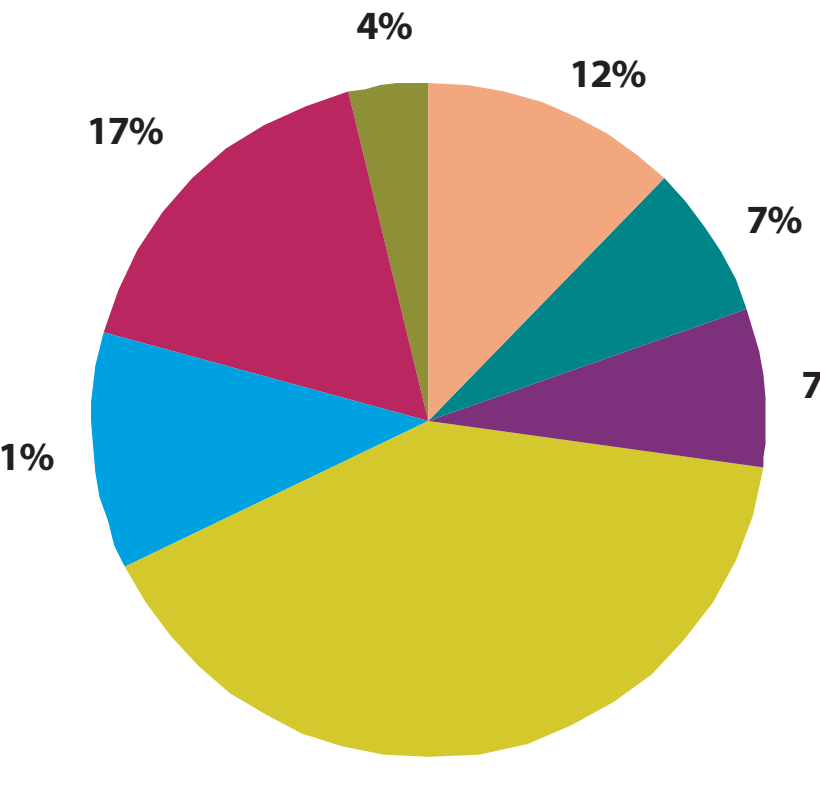
558 journals

BIOLOGY & LIFE SCIENCES



165 journals

AGRICULTURE



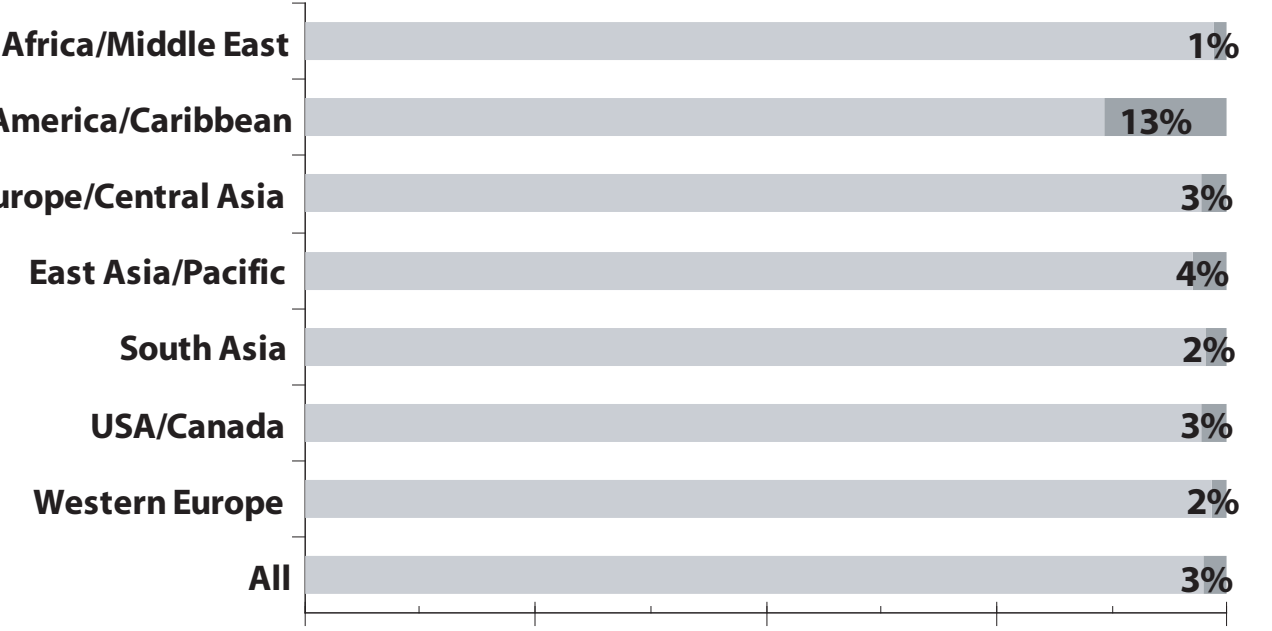
81 journals

Source: DOAJ, May 2005

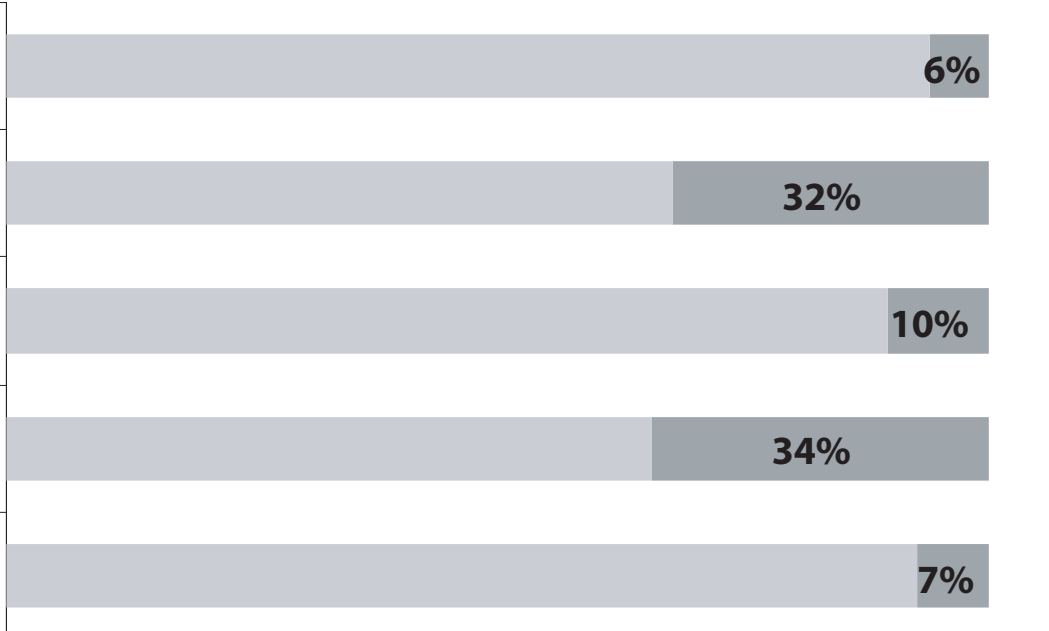
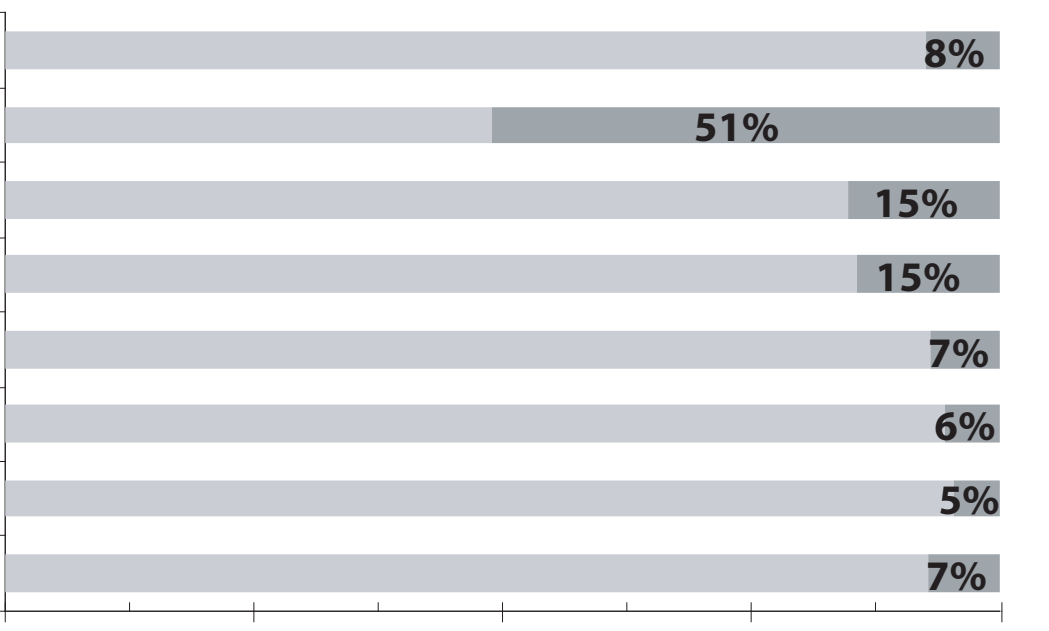
Africa/Middle East	East Asia/Pacific	Eastern Europe/Central Asia	Latin America/Caribbean
South Asia	USA/Canada	Western Europe	Multi-country

OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS AS PROPORTION OF

ALL ACADEMIC/SCHOLARLY JOURNALS



ACADEMIC/SCHOLARLY ONLINE JOURNALS



Source: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, May 2005

ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS:

Hi: High Income (GNI \$10066 or more), UMI: Upper Middle Income (GNI \$3256-\$10065), LMI: Lower Middle Income (GNI \$826-\$3255), LI: Low Income (GNI \$825 or less). See World Bank Classification of Economies: <http://www.worldbank.org/data/countryclass/countryclass.html> [30/08/2005]
WESTERN EUROPE: Pre-enlargement EU plus Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, SOUTH ASIA: India, Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore (Hong Kong was treated as part of China) MULTI-COUNTRY: More than one publishing country, no GNI classification