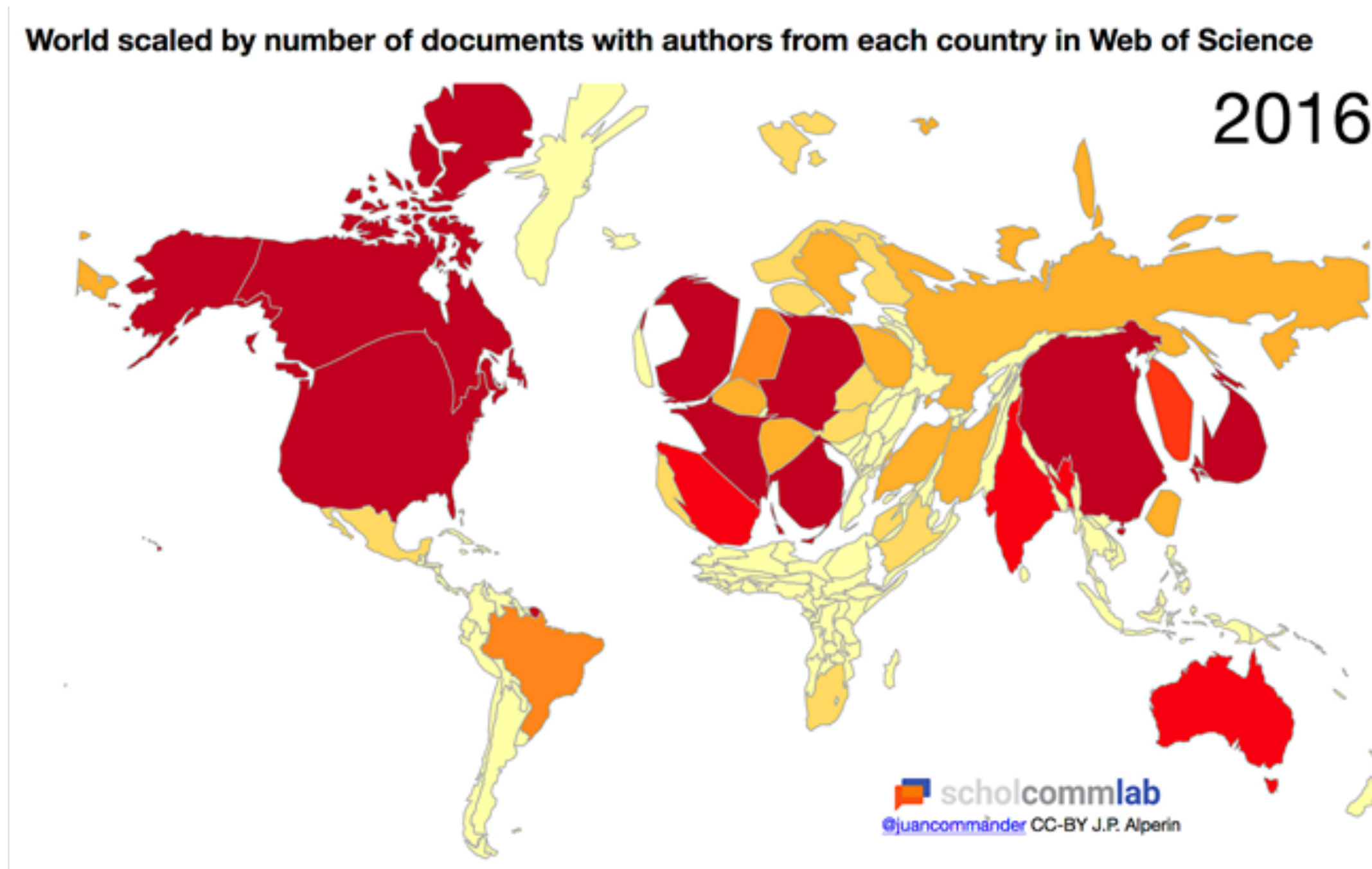




# Bibliodiversity at the Center: Decolonizing Open Access

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**The Historic Problem.** Scholars from the less developed countries of the Global South seek to be knowledge creators but often find themselves on the periphery. They are **under-resourced** in myriad ways including onerous teaching loads, insufficient research infrastructure, and lack of funding for international conferences. English may not be their first language. Open access was promised to be the great equalizer by removing barriers to knowledge. However, open access continues to be embedded in colonial models that have not fostered independence and self-determination for the South. **Open access was conceptualized in a development paradigm** to emphasize the reader (access) and not the author (knowledge creator). The map below depicts the global unbalance of scholarship.



**Business as usual.** Open access has become coopted by hegemonic corporate publishers who exploit the author-fee or article processing charge (APCs) model. Five largest corporate publishers have expanded by purchasing smaller and society publishers and their profit rates exceed other large corporations. APCs can be as high as \$6000 and publishers charge at rates the “market” will bear using prestige to justify exorbitant fees. **Many scholars, particularly in STEM, are shut out of publishing in upper tier open access journals.** Southern scholars lack grant and subvention funds to pay for APCs resulting in exclusion.

**Neoliberalism** also affects the South. Southern institutions of higher education and research compete alongside their Northern peers, creating winners and losers and further dividing elites from everyone else. **Plan S**, a rapid transition to open access predicated on the APC model that privileges the largest corporate publishers, further accelerates this divide as do **standard reward systems. Platform capitalism** encroaches on efforts to improve conditions. The same large publishers provide interconnected services to universities and research centers that expand their reach into all phases of scholarship including faculty evaluation.



**Bibliodiversity as Solution.** Self-determination is anti-colonial and scholarly communications should be locally determined. The concept of **bibliodiversity** relates to publishing and assessment as **self-determined** by individual countries and regions. Bibliodiversity promotes research and publishing on local and indigenous knowledge in local languages. It also considers **lay readers** and provides **innovative metrics** that measure different outcomes including research collaboration. This Latin American concept has been enacted in a series of publicly funded innovative publishing cooperatives that bring together all stakeholders including editors, bibliometricians, engineers, physicists, programmers, and librarians. Publishing is largely in Spanish and Portuguese (with English abstracts). Researchers around the globe use **SciELO**. Other lauded initiatives include **Clacso/Redalyc, Amelica,** and **LA Referencia’s** regional network of national repositories for scholarship.



**New publishing models from Latin America.** **LA Referencia** is working with the Confederation of Open Access Repositories to create new, sustainable publishing models that reconceive traditional journals and operate using low-cost repository platforms akin to CUNY’s Academic Works. This model will empower other Southern countries to improve existing publishing and resist dependence on Northern publishers and their article processing charges.

Bibliodiversity is also important to **scholars in Europe** who resist English as the lingua franca of publishing and science as exemplified by the **OPERAS initiative**. The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) called for reform of scholarly assessment as did the subsequent Leiden Manifesto. The 2017 **Jussieu Call for Open Science and Bibliodiversity** builds on DORA and Leiden explicitly discusses bibliodiversity stating that there are **multiple paths to open access** including open access without author fees. It also supports opening scholarship to lay readers.



## Conclusion.

*The problems of the Global South are the problems of all under-resourced institutions.* Paywalled scholarship and adjacent bibliometric tools often limit readership to research intensive institutions. Open access funded by APCs excludes many authors from publishing in open access journals, particularly in STEM. More non-commercial open access, based on the Fair Open Access Principles, needs our support. Infrastructure for innovative scholar-led publishing could be supported by funds earmarked for APCs. We must develop open access models that better serve all allowing knowledge to flow in all directions and ending epistemological inequality.

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