



UTS  
ePRESS

Construction  
Economics and  
Building

Vol. 24, No. 1/2  
July 2024



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**Citation:** Brewer, G. 2024. The Value of Open Access Research in the Age of Opinion-Based Decision-Making. *Construction Economics and Building*, 24:1/2, 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.5130/AJCEB.v24i1/2.9205>

ISSN 2204-9029 | Published by UTS ePRESS | <https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/AJCEB>

EDITORIAL

## The Value of Open Access Research in the Age of Opinion-Based Decision-Making

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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5130/AJCEB.v24i1/2.9205>

**Article History:** Received 27/06/2024; Accepted 27/06/2024; Published 01/07/2024

Back in March 2024, Dr Cathy Foley, Australia's chief scientist took aim at Australia's academic publications model, proposing a nationwide deal that would democratise public access to research literature through a single relationship with all publishers (Cassidy, 2024). The benefits would include making current research findings available to decision-makers to inform their actions, and to the public to assist them in their democratic actions. As a provider of high quality, free-to-all research papers, being produced at a time of unparalleled stress in the higher education sector, we at Construction Economics and Building recognise the time and emotional commitment required by academics – from postgraduate students to Vice Chancellors -- to generate the publications that are its lifeblood, matched by nameless others who deliver the quality reviews that are its oxygen. The papers that make up this Issue, together with its companion Special Issue, should therefore be essential reading for decision-makers in our industry and the government departments that regulate it: our open access commitment should mean that there is no impediment for them to do so. In this issue they would read:

The construction industry worldwide faces numerous challenges, from trust and transparency issues in Nigeria to health and safety concerns in India, and the need for digital and technological advancements across various regions.

In an article that presages the Special Issue (published simultaneously with this one), Kapogiannis, Panagiotis and Sawhney examine digital construction's impact on GDP growth rates in the EU, demonstrating the sector's potential. However, they reveal that stronger

**DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTEREST** The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. **FUNDING** The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

economies benefit more from digital construction, suggesting that weaker economies need structural reforms to integrate digitalisation effectively. They highlight the essential role of human capital in adopting digital construction techniques, emphasising innovation and collaboration for competitive growth. Hong, Akotia and Egbu explain that China's construction industry faces significant barriers in adopting Virtual Reality (VR), primarily due to economic issues, technical knowledge gaps, and a fragmented supply chain. Addressing these through raised awareness, workflow establishment, and government support could pave the way for VR's broader adoption, enhancing project outcomes.

Bello, Abdulraheem, Afolabi, Aka and Gbenga describe a study of the Nigerian construction industry, which underscores the critical need for clear communication protocols, reinforced ethical standards, and technological integration to foster a culture of trust and transparency. Similarly, in India, the research of Upadhyaya and Malek highlights subpar health and safety standards, proposing a robust categorised into management, worker, workplace, and government factors to enhance safety measures on construction sites.

Learning from past project failures remains crucial for construction firms, with a focus on broader institutional contexts rather than just internal mechanisms. Chiponde, Gledson and Greenwood suggest that fostering better networks and collaboration through professional and regulatory bodies can enhance learning and improve project delivery outcomes. By addressing these multifaceted challenges, the construction industry can advance towards more efficient, transparent, and innovative practices. Barajel, Kusi, Ackon, Osman, Mohammed, Simpeh and Gyimah emphasise external environment, project management and procurement-related factors playing a significant role in the success or otherwise of consultant selection, emphasising the path dependency of early decision-making on eventual project success. In managing large industrial capital projects, the development of a standardised Project Success Framework for Integrated Project Delivery by Wood, Ghimire, Kim, Barutha and Jeong has shown promise. By incorporating machine learning tools, this framework offers a practical approach for evaluating IPD's efficacy, aiding in the selection of optimal strategies and fostering successful project outcomes.

Khan and Munawer remind us that successful projects delivering urban sustainability hinge on innovative solutions like Vertical Greenery Systems, which, despite high initial costs, offer long-term financial benefits through energy savings and increased property values. However, their extended payback periods and occasional negative net present values challenge their economic feasibility, necessitating effective implementation guidelines.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and its companion, and reflect on your contribution as a member of the academic community to research-based decision-making both by those in government and the electors who put them in place. Lastly, I trust you will be sympathetic to our future review requests; I am all too aware of the price you pay to support the work of this Journal and am deeply grateful when you answer the call.

Graham Brewer, Editor-in-Chief

## Reference

Cassidy, Caitlin. 2024. *Australia's chief scientist takes on the journal publishers gatekeeping knowledge*. The Guardian. Sunday 10 March 2024. Available at [https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/mar/10/australias-chief-scientist-is-taking-on-the-journal-publishing-monopoly-gatekeeping-knowledge?CMP=GTAU\\_email#top](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2024/mar/10/australias-chief-scientist-is-taking-on-the-journal-publishing-monopoly-gatekeeping-knowledge?CMP=GTAU_email#top)