

# Alexander Street goes open access

This article describes two complementary OA (open access) initiatives launching in 2016 at Alexander Street. Contributing Collections will see 10% of all revenue generated dedicated to digitizing and making OA important archives. Premium Services offer member libraries the opportunity to upload and make OA locally generated content. While this article focuses on the discipline of anthropology, Alexander Street will extend these two models into history, music and theater later in 2016.

Alexander Street occupies a unique space in the university library ecosystem. Where others license or publish, and then aggregate and distribute, we curate multimedia content (much of it licensed, some of it published) into discipline-specific or multidisciplinary collections and packages of collections. In most cases these collections and packages are decidedly aimed at the scholar/researcher, but many of them have a specifically learning-oriented/classroom focus. We enhance the 'value in use' of our curated content through semantic-faceted browsing, in-house prepared MARC records and through carefully constructed and maintained controlled vocabularies. In addition, we seek to make content richer through services like scrolling transcripts, media-type synchronization (for example, a musical score and a musical performance of that score running synchronously), JAWS (job access with speech) compatibility and pre-segmented video.

Over the course of our 15-year history we have moved from delivering previously undigitized text archives like the *Black Panther* magazine to streaming audio (even before iTunes) and then to streaming video (at about the same time YouTube launched in mid-2005). Most recently, in 2013, we launched a new platform that allows us to deliver mixed media in a unified user experience and this prompted the release of several multimedia case studies, such as Psychological Experiments Online, which presents the best-known experiments of the 20th century in video, audio, text and images. We have extended this model into engineering case studies (focused on major engineering failures), human rights tragedies and food studies, and will very soon be adding an exploration of migrations and border crossings.

This background is essential to understanding how we are approaching OA (open access). We have closely followed developments in scholarly OA journal, monograph and archive publishing since our founding. We have also paid close attention to developments in the field of open educational resources and, especially, open e-textbooks and open source learning management systems. We have stayed abreast of the many funding models, including governmental and institutional sponsorship, the article processing charge, the sales threshold model and the voluntary funding model supported by individual and institutional contributors. At Alexander Street, open access was never an 'if' question, but rather a 'when' question.

## Alexander Street goes OA: the plan

In 2016 we are making our entry into open access guided by these four principles rooted in our 15-year company history and our observations about what has and has not worked in OA product and funding models as described above:

1. Open access publishing must continue our founding company mission to 'make silent voices heard.'
2. Open access must support both the needs of the scholar/researcher and the undergraduate student in the classroom.



DAVID PARKER  
SVP Editorial and  
Licensing,  
Alexander Street,  
USA



JENNA MAKOWSKI  
Editor, Anthropology,  
Alexander Street,  
USA

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3. Open access must be delivered across all the media types our platform enables: text, image, audio and video.
  4. Open access must *fund* the digitization of rare and important content, help users *find* OA content via discovery and indexing and *facilitate* the hosting of community-generated and locally created OA content.

## Two complementary initiatives: Contributing Collections and Premium Services

### Contributing Collections

In April 2016 Alexander Street will launch 'Anthropological Fieldwork Online.' This cross-searchable, integrated OA and for-fee database creates an unprecedented publishing solution for primary sources and archival materials in the field of anthropology. While open access was adopted early by anthropology journal publishers and locally hosted primary source repositories, until now there has not been a comprehensive mechanism to digitize, open and connect primary source ethnographic research on a global scale. This 200,000+ page collection is an ambitious effort to find, license and digitize the fieldwork notes, images and recordings that informed the writing of the seminal ethnographies of the 20th century.

Imagine searching in one database the fieldwork notes of Max Gluckman, Ruth Benedict, Victor Turner and Bronislaw Malinowski, to name a select few. The creation and launch of Anthropological Fieldwork Online and its supporting licensing model, the 'Anthropology Commons,' would not have been possible without a prior commitment to OA by Alexander Street. This is so because of the varied missions of the many archives we have worked with to make the fieldwork files available. In short, we found archives committed to open access, archives committed to generating revenue to sustain their non-profit mission and archives with a short-term revenue generation need, but a longer-term commitment to OA. With this in mind, we designed Anthropological Fieldwork Online and the Anthropology Commons to support three different access models, all delivered in a unified platform and use environment:

1. *OA on publication*: visible to the world via the Anthropology Commons.
2. *Delayed OA* – behind a paywall for seven years and then OA: visible to purchasers of Anthropological Fieldwork Online for seven years and then visible to the world in the Anthropology Commons.
3. *Permanently behind a paywall*: only visible to purchasers of Anthropological Fieldwork Online.

The key to creating a sustainable OA component within Anthropological Fieldwork Online is the new Alexander Street model of 'Contributing Collections.' Put most simply, any Alexander Street collection named as a Contributing Collection, such as Anthropology Fieldwork Online, will have 10% of its net sales dedicated to underwriting OA content either within the specific collection or across a wider discipline effort.

With each sale of Anthropological Fieldwork Online, Alexander Street will set aside 10% of the purchase to fund the digitization of the archives that are committed to open access. Pre-sales of Anthropological Fieldwork Online, for example, have enabled Alexander Street to include, OA, the fieldwork notes of Ruth Benedict from the Vassar College archive.

Anthropological Fieldwork Online is but one Contributing Collection, so there is much potential for future funding of open access. Beginning in 2016 Alexander Street will name upwards of 20 collections in anthropology, history and theater as Contributing Collections with the expectation this will generate substantial revenues dedicated to the digitization of OA content.

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## Premium Services

As we evolved the Anthropology Commons to support the delivery to the world of the OA component of Anthropological Fieldwork Online, it became clear that a wider vision and opportunity was available to support universities and libraries from around the world seeking to contribute locally generated anthropological fieldwork and materials to our project. In many cases local institutions have struggled with preserving the primary research of resident anthropologists and simply having a digital repository for local viewing was enough; the possibility of locally loading this content into a universally OA, cross-searchable database of fieldwork was a welcome bonus. This realization led to the creation of the Alexander Street 'Premium Services' model. The Anthropology Commons is freely available to the world and enables everyone to view the fieldwork notes that Alexander Street has digitized and made available OA. By subscribing to the Anthropology Commons – Premium Services (for a fee of between US\$1000 and US\$3000 per year), any library can upload and share locally or globally the fieldwork and ephemera of its resident anthropologists, with the choice to make it OA or to maintain more nuanced access restrictions. Alexander Street and its anthropology faculty and librarian advisory board will then review and select OA content for indexing and metadata creation for inclusion in Anthropological Fieldwork Online; with this combined effort, Alexander Street and the global community of anthropologists will create the world's largest database of primary source fieldwork, notes, recordings, videos, photos and other ephemera!

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## Summary: the world's archives don't seek tenure

Open access in the journal world, and to a lesser extent in the scholarly monograph space, has absorbed the majority of our collective attention primarily because faculty seek tenure and the publication of research in journals is the currency of tenure. Archives, meanwhile, provide scholars with important material for learning and research. The most fortunate PhD students and faculty have sufficient financial resources to travel the world visiting archives, but most do not. Therefore, the digitization of important archives – OA whenever possible – is a mission that must be embraced. It has taken us several years of surveying the OA space to formulate our new models of Contributing Collections and Premium Services, but early feedback and, indeed, pre-purchases of Anthropology Fieldwork Online strongly suggest we have found a sustainable path forward towards the digitization of highly sought-after archives and locally generated anthropology fieldwork, OA when possible and when supported by the academic community.

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### Abbreviations and Acronyms

A list of the abbreviations and acronyms used in this and other *Insights* articles can be accessed here – click on the URL below and then select the 'Abbreviations and Acronyms' link at the top of the page it directs you to: <http://www.uksg.org/publications#aa>

### Competing interests

The authors have openly declared that they work for Alexander Street.

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Corresponding author: David Parker

SVP Editorial and Licensing  
Alexander Street, USA  
E-mail: [dparker@astreetpress.com](mailto:dparker@astreetpress.com)

Jenna Makowski  
Editor, Anthropology  
Alexander Street, USA

ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9614-6172>

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