

# Open access e-books: the role of the institution

This article explains the policy position taken by University College London (UCL) in establishing the UCL Press. It sets the creation of the Press against the background of national open access (OA) policy development in the UK. UCL Press, repatriated from a commercial provider, was relaunched as an OA press as part of UCL Library Services on 1 August 2013. The Press will publish both OA electronic journals and OA monographs, with a particular emphasis in the latter on the arts, humanities and social sciences. UCL is largely funding Press activity from its own internal funds, seeing OA as an opportunity rather than a threat.

“Giving people the right to roam freely over publicly funded research will usher in a new era of academic discovery and collaboration, and will put the UK at the forefront of open research. The challenge is how we get there without ruining the value added by academic publishers.”

(David Willetts, Minister of State for Universities and Science)<sup>1</sup>

Speaking in 2012, the UK Minister of State for Universities and Science underlined the challenges for scholarship in moving forward to an open access (OA) future. Open access has the potential to revolutionize the role of research-based libraries in the research process at their universities. Following the publication of the Finch Report<sup>2</sup> on access to research publications, and the RCUK Policy on Open Access<sup>3</sup>, UK universities have been faced with the significant challenges of both embracing the new policy frameworks and developing them in a way which supports UK academic research.

The RCUK Open Access policy lays down that certain types of its funded research outputs should be made available in open access as a condition of grant. This policy covers all peer-reviewed research and review articles normally published in academic journals or conference proceedings, and which acknowledge Research Council funding. The policy does not cover monographs, books, critical editions, volumes and catalogues, or forms of non-peer-reviewed material. However, RCUK encourages authors of such material to consider making them OA where possible.

University College London (UCL) is a research-intensive university, a member of the Russell Group of universities in the UK, and an institution which came fourth in the 2013 QS World University rankings.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary for UCL to pursue a policy towards open access which supports its world standing as a centre of research excellence, but which also creates a move towards OA dissemination. Given the increasing number of funder mandates requiring OA dissemination, the Vice-Provost (Research)'s Office, supported by the UCL SMT (Senior Management Team), agreed that UCL should take a principled stand on the payment of OA publication charges, thereby offering leadership to the HE sector.

## Why a publication fund, who pays and how?

It is important to UCL that all UCL researchers have access to the same breadth of opportunity for publishing their research findings. Lack of external funding should not be a barrier to publication. This is a precept which UCL has adopted in implementing



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8 OA approaches to publishing. The university has therefore created its own institutional Publication Fund, to mirror the funding received for OA from RCUK and the Wellcome Trust.

Detailed workflow diagrams have been constructed for major research funders in UCL.<sup>5</sup> There are tailored analyses of the workflow for RCUK-funded researchers, Wellcome Trust-funded research, authors with other funding and authors with no funding at all. The workflows are necessarily very detailed, but many academics have stressed how straightforward UCL's guidance is. The workflows cover issues such as whether UCL already has an OA membership scheme with a selected publisher, and what sort of licence the funder requires to be assigned to the work.

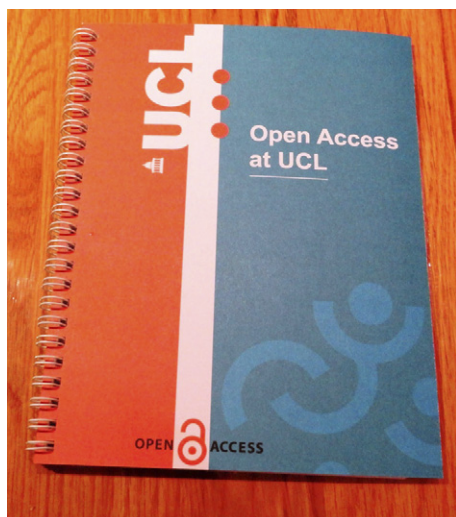


Figure 1. Open Access at UCL guide

All this research funding is administered by UCL Library Services and has necessitated the creation of significant infrastructure (staff posts, workflows, liaison routes with academic departments, budget management and reporting, copyright and compliance monitoring) to ensure that the monies are well managed and well spent. An extensive website has been created by the Library which informs academics how to apply for funds.<sup>6</sup> A separate Open Access Guide<sup>7</sup> (see Figure 1) has been produced for all researchers, whether funded by UCL or not, underlining how they can apply for funding to fund their OA publications.

UCL researchers, therefore, are free to publish in whatever way they wish, subject to any conditions laid on them by their funders. Lack

of external funding is not a barrier to OA publication, as UCL has made institutional funds available to cover outputs such as OA monographs.

## UCL Press and open access publishing

The payment of OA publication charges for all UCL researchers is an important part of the journey which UCL has made. In itself, however, such a move will not deliver a pervasive OA future in UCL.

Arts and humanities academics can be ambivalent towards open access, as they perceive that OA principles do not embrace their real concerns about the future of publishing, particularly monograph publishing.<sup>8</sup> Conscious of the need not to develop a 'one size fits all' policy for OA implementation, the UCL Publications Board (which oversees OA developments in UCL) took a hard look at the needs of the arts, humanities and social sciences (AHSS) through discussion with senior academic leaders in these areas.

The UCL Publications Board, with senior representatives from all major academic disciplines in UCL, held brainstorming discussions on how a UCL Press might help them in their research dissemination. The results of the discussions identified that the main concern in AHSS was the perilous future of the research monograph as a unit of publication. These concerns have also been voiced by Louise Adler, Chief Executive of Melbourne University Press, who has underlined that loss-making monographs face a grim future.<sup>9</sup>

Monographs are sold largely to a library market, and library budgets are under enormous pressure as a result of the serials crisis. UCL considered this to be a real problem, but has an innovative solution – open access to research monographs. Open access is seen here not as a problem but as an opportunity. If the commercial business model for monographs is broken, OA can provide a new one, where the costs of publication are met not by the purchaser but by the author or the author's research funder.

"... the perilous future of the research monograph as a unit of publication."

9 UCL did have a UCL Press imprint, which it licensed to the commercial publishing sector. In 2013, this imprint was repatriated into UCL and the UCL Press was reborn on 1 August 2013 as an OA press and as a department of UCL Library Services.

There is a journals publishing platform, using OJS (Open Journal Systems), which sits on top of the repository, UCL Discovery<sup>10</sup>. The Library manages the repository as a storage layer for content in the journals. OJS is made available to Editorial Boards as a means to control the flow of manuscripts undergoing peer review and also the presentation of each issue of a journal. The development of a journal publishing platform – Repository Interface to Overlaid Journal Archives (RIOJA) – was seeded by earlier project funding from Jisc<sup>11</sup>.

From 2014, UCL Press will also produce OA monographs.<sup>12</sup> For UCL authors, the book publication charges (BPCs) will be met in full from the institutional Publication Fund. For non-UCL authors, a BPC (level still to be determined) will be levied on each author whose monograph is accepted for publication. UCL Discovery will once again form the storage layer, and the publication layer will be provided by Open Monograph Press (OMP).

“... a shared OA monograph publishing infrastructure across Europe.”

UCL and OAPEN<sup>13</sup> are taking open monograph publishing further. Through the Gold-Lite partnership, 19 content partners led by UCL have agreed to construct a shared OA monograph publishing infrastructure across Europe. So far, 35 series titles have been proposed, which could result in 180 monograph titles being published. This partnership was formally agreed in December 2013.

## Conclusion

At the end of the 15th century, the invention of printing with moveable type in the West revolutionized the way information and knowledge were disseminated. The European Reformation would not have taken the form that it did without access to the printing press. As in the 15th century, so in the 21st. UCL believes that open access has the power to transform the way scholarly outputs are made available to other researchers, to decision makers and to society at large. To support this belief, it has invested in an ambitious OA programme which has the power to transform the University and the role UCL plays in society.

### References and notes

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