



A higher impact for open access monographs: disseminating through OAPEN and DOAB at AUP

For years, Amsterdam University Press (AUP) has been publishing books in open access (OA). It uses the OAPEN Library and the *Directory of Open Access Books* (DOAB) to actively disseminate and promote its peer-reviewed OA monographs. The OAPEN Library targets both individual readers and academic libraries. On top of that, books with a 'free to read' licence are further promoted via DOAB. AUP also co-operates with the IMISCOE research networks to promote their books. While the online usage of OA books is rising, AUP has not found evidence that open access harms sales of printed editions.

Introduction

The paper academic monograph is struggling, with smaller print runs and declining sales, as we can see from the following references. Greco and Wharton describe the problems faced by university presses, resulting in smaller print runs per title and declining sales to libraries and institutions¹. Thompson describes falling print runs and declining sales². While the monograph remains the single most valued means of scholarly publishing within the field of arts and humanities, according to Williams et al, they face a decline of sales combined with negative effects on print runs³. Withey et al conclude that the economic model supporting monographs depends for a significant amount on subsidies⁴, not on sales. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) provides a recent example. The ARL reports that expenditures on serials have risen considerably: in 2011 it was four times the amount spent on monographs⁵. With book budgets often bearing the brunt of library budget cuts in order to protect subscription spend, it becomes harder for authors to make their ideas available to their peers. In response, monographs are being published digitally in open access (OA). By providing a free digital copy, the book has the potential to be read by everyone. At Amsterdam University Press (AUP) we have gained quite some experience with publishing monographs in open access. In this article I will discuss the promotion through active dissemination of these books.

Actively disseminating OA books means more than just making them available in an institutional repository. All our OA books – almost 800 titles – are placed in a repository, but only a selection of these books is actively disseminated. Apart from the regular marketing activities for the printed editions, we place the OA edition in the OAPEN Library (see below) and the *Directory of Open Access Books* (DOAB).

OAPEN Library: quality control

From 2008 until 2011, AUP co-ordinated a project co-financed by the European Commission called OAPEN – an acronym for Open Access Publishing in European Networks. Apart from AUP, the project members consisted of five other university presses and two universities, all aiming to improve the dissemination and usage of monographs by exploring the possibilities of publishing in open access. The OAPEN Library⁶ was one of its results. Currently, it holds over a 1,000 titles by 35 publishers. The collection of the OAPEN Library contains a wide range of subjects, predominantly within the humanities and social sciences. There is also a



RONALD SNIJDER
Project Manager
Digital Publications
Amsterdam
University Press

56 wide range of languages available. While more than half of the titles are written in English, books in German, Danish, Dutch, Italian and even Latin, Welsh and Russian are available.

In 2011, the OAPEN Foundation was created to continue the activities of the project.

The OAPEN Foundation – based at the National Library in The Hague – develops open access models for books and co-operates with academic publishers and research institutes to build a collection of OA books through the OAPEN Library. OAPEN is currently involved in two pilot projects in the Netherlands⁷ and the UK⁸ experimenting with OA monograph publishing. AUP is a member of the Board of the OAPEN Foundation, and is also a major contributor to the collection of the OAPEN Library.

“Building a high quality collection is only the first step.”

From the start, the OAPEN Library has focused on the quality of the content. Only books that have been published through a system of scholarly quality control are accepted and the peer review procedure of the publishers is published within the Library. Thus the OAPEN Library contributes to the perception of academic quality of the participating publishers.

Strategies to increase usage

Building a high quality collection is only the first step. The primary motive to publish books in open access is to improve dissemination and usage. In order to make this possible, the OAPEN Library uses several methods. First, we enable the use of social media by linking to Twitter, Facebook, etc. and by announcing news via the Twitter account @OAPENBooks. When we look at the usage statistics, Facebook and Twitter are in the top ten of referring websites. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are important, but these channels are primarily used by individuals. Apart from using social media, the OAPEN Library also targets academic libraries by providing metadata and working with aggregators.

Connecting with libraries

Actively disseminating OA books to academic libraries requires easy integration into their systems, either directly or by working together with their suppliers. For libraries, the catalogue is the main instrument in making their collection available to their patrons. In order to support this, the OAPEN Library provides several data feeds which contain the complete description of all books. These daily updated feeds are formatted in several ways, enabling libraries to use the most appropriate data feed to load into their catalogue. Consequently, library users can find the title in the library system and subsequently download the book from the OAPEN Library. The content of the data feeds is licensed under a Creative Commons Zero licence, which makes them free to use under any circumstance.

Several academic libraries also work with content management solution providers, such as ProQuest (Serials Solutions: Summon), ExLibris (Primo Central) or Ebsco (EDS). These aggregators give access to a wide range of digital resources through a standardized interface, thus enabling libraries to make these resources available. The complete description of the OAPEN books is available through these three content management solution providers. Furthermore, the metadata is incorporated into OCLC's WorldCat, the 'world's largest network of library content and services'.

“Actively disseminating OA books to academic libraries requires easy integration into their systems, either directly or by working together with their suppliers.”

DOAB

Since April 2012, the top referral site for OAPEN Library is from another service of the OAPEN Foundation: the *Directory of Open Access Books* (DOAB)⁹. DOAB – launched in April 2012 – is a discovery service for open access books. The directory is open to all academic publishers and aims to contain as many books as possible, provided that these books are peer reviewed and published under an open access licence. Apart from the publishers already taking part in OAPEN, several academic publishers have placed their books in DOAB, among them Springer, Open Book Publishers, Open Humanities Press, MPublishing and Athabasca University Press.

57 Contrary to what you might expect, not all titles in the OAPEN Library are part of DOAB. Whether an 'OAPEN book' is listed in DOAB does not depend on aspects like language, subject or quality; it is determined by its licence. Only a book with a licence that enables readers to share its contents is allowed in DOAB. Amsterdam University Press has placed almost 400 books in OAPEN, but less than half of them are also listed in the *Directory of Open Access Books*. So, on top of quality, the books with a more open licence are displayed on an extra platform. This gives authors a choice: depending on the licence, their work can be promoted through several routes.

"Only a book with a licence that enables readers to share its contents is allowed in DOAB."

Search engines

Online dissemination strategies must of course include search engines. We have taken several steps to ensure maximum 'coverage' by search engines. First of all, we have created a *site map*. This is a standardized search-engine-readable directory of the OAPEN website. A search engine can use this directory to identify all the book descriptions – and the books themselves – in our site, which should make it easier to index them. Secondly, we have applied the *schema.org model for books*. This is a special mark-up telling search engines that the OAPEN site contains books, and points to the title, author/s, etc.

A problem we encountered was that most of our content consists of books in PDF. Search engines have more problems indexing this type of file compared to documents written in HTML, the language of the web. That is why we looked at uploading our data in specialized search engines.

The collection in the OAPEN Library consists of academic publications, and our first goal was to make them available via Google Scholar. Unfortunately, Google Scholar does not directly index books, only articles. For books, Google offers the Google Books platform, where publishers can upload their books directly. In the OAPEN case, this is not an option. By uploading the books in a rather anonymous database, the OAPEN label would become more or less invisible. One of the goals of OAPEN is to assure the readers that all books within our collection meet certain standards, and this would be hard to convey using the Google Books platform.

Setting up these various routes resulted in the following usage percentages: roughly 40% of our visitors go directly to the OAPEN site, another 40% of our visitors reach us via search engines and the rest are referred through other websites. And although it took some time to set up, the online dissemination is now mostly automated and requires very little maintenance. Figure 1 illustrates the connections used to disseminate OAPEN's content.

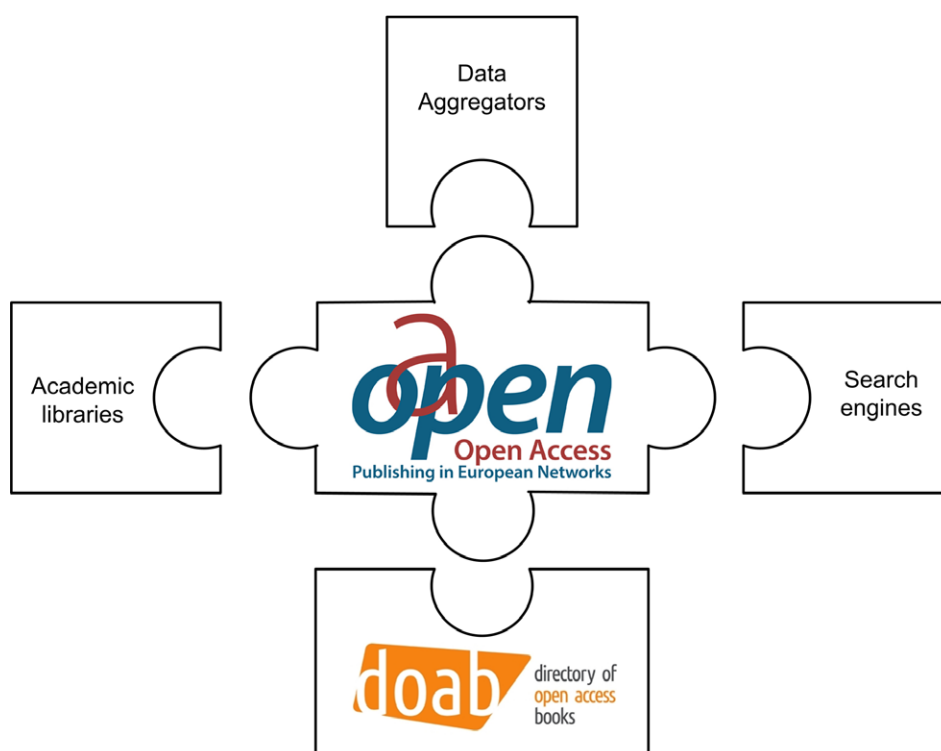


Figure 1. The OAPEN Library, connected

Communities of interest, usage data and sales

The OAPEN platform can also be used to highlight the publications of a specific community of interest. Amsterdam University Press is the publisher of the IMISCOE Research Network on international migration, integration and social cohesion¹⁰. The IMISCOE network consists of 20 European research organizations, with locations from Norway to Turkey. Up to now, collaboration with AUP has resulted in almost 60 publications, all available in open access.

The IMISCOE network has decided to make its books available in the OAPEN Library. The IMISCOE website contains a section on publications, where all books are described including a link to the OAPEN Library. Furthermore, one of the functions of the OAPEN Library is an automatic search on a topic or series. This enables visitors to the IMISCOE website always to find the complete list of publications in the OAPEN Library, whether it is described on the IMISCOE site or not. Apart from these tools, IMISCOE gives much attention to the publications in their conferences. Here again we see that the active dissemination of OA books requires using several channels.

“ ... does this wider readership also mean that more paper books are sold, or does it harm sales?”

This brings us to the usage data: how many times has a book been downloaded from the OAPEN Library? On average, the IMISCOE books have been downloaded 583 times from January 2011 until August 2012. This is higher than normal: all other books published by Amsterdam University Press have been downloaded 550 times on average in the same period.

Some books have been available in the OAPEN Library for over two years, others for a shorter period of time. If we take that into account and look at the number of downloads per book per month, we still see that the IMISCOE books perform slightly better than average: an IMISCOE book is downloaded 34 times per month, while the average for an AUP book is lower: 32 times per month. The most ‘popular’ book with over 2,800 downloads – or 130 downloads per month – is *Diaspora and Transnationalism : Concepts, Theories and Methods*, written by Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist. It is also interesting to see that the online usage – both of the IMISCOE titles and all AUP titles – is rising.

The next question would be whether making books available in open access has an effect on sales. As we have seen, it does have an effect on the usage: it increases the audience for our authors. But does this wider readership also mean that more paper books are sold, or does it harm sales? Within AUP, we did research on this topic. In 2009, we conducted a tightly controlled experiment on 400 titles to measure the effects of open access publishing¹¹. One of the conclusions was that it had no effect on sales. It should perhaps be noted that during the experiment, the number of e-books sold – whether the titles were part of the experimental group or the control group – was very low.

Since 2010, AUP has been making books under the imprint ‘Amsterdam University Press’ available via the OAPEN Library. All books published under that imprint have been peer reviewed. But AUP did not make all books it publishes available in open access: a sizeable portion of titles published under the ‘Amsterdam University Press’ imprint was *not* made available in open access. When we compare the sales in the period January 2010 until August 2012 of the ‘OAPEN titles’ to the ‘non OAPEN titles’ of that imprint, we found that on average, the first group actually performed better. Thus, making those books available in open access did not harm the sales figures.

Conclusion

The OAPEN Library and the *Directory of Open Access Books* have proven to be a successful platform for promoting OA monographs. Making a book available in the OAPEN Library does not only widen its readership, it is also a message about its academic quality. Furthermore, if an author chooses to use a more open licence, it will also be listed on the DOAB platform. Apart from highlighting the work of individual authors, the OAPEN platform can also be used to market the publications of an organization such as the IMISCOE network. For AUP, the OAPEN and DOAB platforms are very useful tools for promoting our OA books.

References

1. Greco, A N and Wharton, R M, Should university presses adopt an open access [electronic publishing] business model for all of their scholarly books?, 2008, ELPUB2008. *Open Scholarship: Authority, Community, and Sustainability in the Age of Web 2.0 – Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Electronic Publishing held in Toronto, Canada 25–27 June 2008*, 149–164: http://elpub.scix.net/cgi-bin/works/Show?149_elpub2008 (accessed 3 January 2013).
2. Thompson, J B, *Books in the Digital Age: The Transformation of Academic and Higher Education Publishing in Britain and the United States*, 2005, Polity Press, 468.
3. Williams, P, Stevenson, I, Nicholas, D, Watkinson, A and Rowlands, I, The role and future of the monograph in arts and humanities research, *Aslib Proceedings: New Information Perspectives*, 2009, 61, 67–82.
4. Withey, L *et al*, Sustaining Scholarly Publishing: New Business Models for University Presses, *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 2011, 42, 397–441.
5. Association of Research Libraries (ARL): ARL Statistics 2010–11 (2012): <http://www.arl.org/stats/annualsurveys/arlstats/arlstats11.shtml>
6. OAPEN: <http://www.oapen.org>
7. OAPEN.nl website - English: http://www.oapen.nl/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58:english&catid=49:english&Itemid=63
8. JISC - OAPEN-UK: <http://oapen-uk.jiscebooks.org/>
9. DOAB: *Directory of Open Access Books*: <http://www.doabooks.org/>
10. IMISCOE: <http://imiscoe.org/>
11. Snijder, R, The profits of free books: an experiment to measure the impact of open access publishing, *Learned Publishing*, 2010, 23, 293–301.

Article © Ronald Snijder

Ronald Snijder, Project Manager Digital Publications
Amsterdam University Press
Herengracht 221, 1016 BG Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Tel: +31 (0)20 420 0050 | E-mail: r.snijder@aup.nl | web: www.aup.nl

To cite this article:

Snijder, R, A higher impact for open access monographs: disseminating through OAPEN and DOAB at AUP, *Insights*, 2013, 26(1), 55–59, doi: 10.1629/2048-7754.26.1.55

To link to this article:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/2048-7754.26.1.55>