

Open access monograph business models

In recent years, a number of business models have been developed for open access (OA) monographs in the humanities and social sciences (HSS). While each model has been created in response to specific circumstances and needs, some commonalities can be observed. This article outlines some of the main types of model to support the costs of publishing OA books and provides examples of these models across the world.

It is followed by three short sketches providing more depth on: firstly, a traditional publisher's OA monograph offer; secondly, a licensing-based model which draws from existing library budgets; and finally, an experiment with delayed open access for books in philosophy:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/2048-7754.118>

In many disciplines in the arts and humanities and some disciplines in the social sciences, the printed monograph remains the preferred format to communicate substantial research results. If open access (OA) is to succeed in these disciplines, OA models need to be developed for monographs. Book publishers have on the whole been slow to explore a transition to OA models, but in the last couple of years there has been an increase and there are now many examples of OA monograph publishing. This move to OA has been partly motivated by the declining position of the conventional monograph¹. Although we lack clear data, there is no disputing the fact that monograph sales have dropped considerably in the last three or four decades²⁻⁴. The rising cost of books compounded by the reduction in library budgets have undermined the traditional system of distribution through libraries and the availability of publication outlets for scholars. There is some evidence that open access will improve availability and usage of monographs, but in order to be successful, OA models for monographs also need to improve the sustainability of monograph publishing.⁵ This article attempts to give a brief overview of the main business models that are being explored.



EELCO FERWERDA
Director
OAPEN Foundation

Photo ©Annemiek
van der Kuil
PhotoA.nl

Hybrid models

In contrast to OA journal publishers, almost all OA book publishers use some sort of hybrid model for their books, providing free access to an OA edition (online or as a PDF) and offering other editions for sale. Recent evidence suggests that most people still prefer print for reading longer texts such as monographs⁶. Consequently, e-books do not substitute printed books in the same way as e-journals are substituting printed journals, and most publishers will offer a printed edition for sale alongside the OA edition. Often the printed edition is provided as a print-on-demand service and some publishers also offer an e-book version for sale.

"... most people still prefer print for reading longer texts such as monographs."

A few publishers use this hybrid model as their primary strategy to recover their costs. It was first developed by National Academies Press as early as 1994. Bloomsbury Academic also launched with this model, but OECD Publishing is probably the best example. OECD makes all its publications freely available online in HTML, and customers can buy other editions or subscribe to all content. OECD calls this a 'freemium' model, providing free versions of publications and selling premium editions and services, and is able to recover almost all of its costs through this model.

Institutional support

Many other open access publishers are able to publish OA books through financial support from a range of bodies, rather than by charging OA publication fees to the author. This is comparable to OA journals, where only around 30% of OA journals charge article processing charges (APCs) and the majority of OA journals receive some sort of support to maintain their activities⁷.

The model is most common among university presses and library-based publishing departments. Support comes in many different forms, such as direct financial support through grants, indirect support through subsidies from the parent institute, 'in kind' support for e-publishing activities by making available the infrastructure or staff of the parent institute, or by embedding the publishing activities within the university library.

Early examples of dedicated OA book publishers using a hybrid publishing model in combination with institutional support are Athabasca University Press in Canada, MPublishing in the USA (which also supports Open Humanities Press), ANU Press (formerly ANU E Press) in Australia and Göttingen University Press in Germany.

Author-side publication charges

This model is derived from the APC model for OA journals and has emerged in the last few years, one might say in anticipation of a gold OA model for monographs.

In this model the publisher charges a publication fee or book processing charge to make a book available in open access. The fee is usually paid by the funder of the original research, which can be a funding agency or the author's university. The first research council to fund OA monographs through this model was The Austrian Science Fund (FWF)⁸. Other funders, including a number of universities, have extended their OA publication funds to include books: examples include UCL, TU Delft and Lund University. In November 2013, Palgrave Macmillan published the first OA monograph funded by the Wellcome Trust^{9,10}.

Examples of book publishers using this model (and an indication of the OA charges) include: SpringerOpen (€15,000), Palgrave Macmillan (£11,000), Manchester University Press (£5,900 – £7,700, depending on length), Brill (€5,000 for 350 pages, and €11/page above 350 pages), Open Book Publishers (OBP) (under £4,000, although OBP does not charge authors if there is no funding to support the OA publication), Ubiquity Press (£150/ chapter)¹¹⁻¹⁶.

Library-side models

Some recent models have been developed with the current acquisition system in mind, looking at existing library budgets to support open access for publications. This approach is particularly relevant for the humanities and social sciences, where research grants are often smaller:

- **Consortium-based acquisition:** Knowledge Unlatched aims to create a financially sustainable route to open access for monographs through a globally co-ordinated model. The model is based on the idea that libraries can use their existing acquisitions budgets to 'unlatch' monographs by making them available in open access¹⁷.
- **Open access licensing for libraries:** OpenEdition developed a freemium model for libraries. Although the content is available in open access through its platform, OpenEdition charges libraries a fee for premium content and services. Libraries can thereby get access to the PDF or e-books for students¹⁸.
- **Library subsidy:** Open Library for Humanities is proposing a model which it calls Library Partnership Subsidy, in which libraries pay a relatively small annual subscription fee to secure open access to works. The model is being developed for its new journal initiative aimed at HSS, but it will be extended to monographs in the form of a pilot¹⁹.

Crowdfunding

An example of crowdfunding for books is Gluejar, with its website, unglue.it, where visitors have the opportunity to contribute payments towards 'ungluing' a book. In this model the publisher sets a target price for funding, at which point the title is released in open access. The model is mostly being used to release back-list titles, although Open Book Publishers worked with Gluejar to publish two front-list monographs. De Gruyter is also trying out the model with 100 selected back-list titles²⁰.

Green OA for books

Although the green model is quite prominent for open access to articles, there are few examples of this model for books. As book publishers adopt a hybrid approach to OA, with the need to recover the costs of the printed edition in a number of years following publication, they will be reluctant to allow a free version of the book to be made available without compensation. There is, however, an interesting example: AGORA, an EU co-funded project.²¹ The project explored delayed and hybrid OA models in collaboration with Ontos Verlag, by making 27 monographs available in open access. Results showed a significant increase in usage, without loss of revenue.

References and notes

1. Willinsky, J and Parry, F, *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship*, vol 49, 2006, Cambridge, MIT Press, 165–168.
2. Steele, C, Scholarly Monograph Publishing in the 21st Century: The Future More Than Ever Should Be an Open Book, *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, May 2008, 11(2).
3. Trounson, A, Loss-making monographs face a grim future, *The Australian*, 2012: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/loss-making-monographs-face-a-grim-future/story-e6frgcjx-1226246679624#> (accessed 17 September 2013 – subscribed content).
4. Greco, A N and Wharton, R M, Should university presses adopt an open access [electronic publishing] business model for all of their scholarly books? In *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.
5. This article makes use of the results of the OAPEN-NL project (www.oapen.nl), in particular of sections in chapter 5 of the Final report: Ferwerda, E, Adema, A and Snijder, R, *OAPEN-NL, a project exploring Open Access monograph publishing in the Netherlands*, 2013: <http://oapen.org/download?type=export&export=oapen-nl-final-report> (accessed 12 March 2014).
6. UK HSS Researcher Survey Results (OAPEN-UK project report), 2012.
7. Based on data assembled from the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), December 2013.
8. FWF Austrian Science Fund – Funding Programs – Stand-alone Publications, 2013: http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/projects/stand_alone_publications.html. (accessed 13 August 2013).
9. Howard, J, Wellcome Trust, Palgrave Macmillan Publish Their First Open-Access Monograph, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 2013: <http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/wellcome-trust-palgrave-macmillan-publish-their-first-open-access-monograph/48415> (accessed 5 February 2014).
10. DOAB: *Fungal Disease in Britain and the United States 1850-2000*: <http://www.doabooks.org/doab?func=search&query=rid%3A15582> (accessed 5 February 2014).
11. SpringerOpen books, 2013: <http://www.springeropen.com/books> (accessed 12 March 2014).
12. Palgrave Macmillan – Palgrave Open, 2013: <http://www.palgrave.com/open/> (accessed 12 March 2014).
13. Manchester University Press – Open Access, 2013: <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/scribe?showgroup=ig06> (accessed 12 March 2014).
14. Brill Open | Brill, 2013: <http://www.brill.com/brill-open-0> (accessed 5 February 2014).
15. Information for Authors – Open Book Publishers, 2014: <http://www.openbookpublishers.com/section/6/1/information-for-authors>. (accessed 5 February 2014).
16. Publish with us, Ubiquity Press: <http://www.ubiquitypress.com/publish> (accessed 5 February 2014).
17. Montgomery, L, Open Access Books : Knowledge Unlatched, *eLucidate*, 2013, 10(1), 3–6.

18. Mounier, P, Freemium as a sustainable economic model for open access electronic publishing in humanities and social sciences, *Information Services & Use*, 2011, 31(3), 225–233.
19. Summary of Open Access monographs in the humanities and social sciences conference, 1–2 July 2013, pp. 1–35.
20. Eldridge, D, Unglue.it teams up with academic publisher De Gruyter, *TeleRead: News and views on e-books, libraries, publishing and related topics*, April 2013: <http://www.teleread.com/copy-right/de-gruyter-to-cooperate-with-unglue-it-toward-achieving-open-access-with-crowdfunding/> (accessed 5 February 2014).
21. AGORA – Scholarly Open Access Research in European Philosophy, 2014: <http://www.project-agera.org/> (accessed 9 February 2014).

Article copyright: © 2014 Eelco Ferwerda. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence, which permits unrestricted use and distribution provided the original author and source are credited.



Article received 27 January 2014; revised 9 February 2014; accepted 10 February 2014; published online April 2014

Eelco Ferwerda, Director
OAPEN Foundation
Tel: +31 6 29565168 | E-mail: e.ferwerda@oapen.org | Web: www.oapen.org

To cite this article:

Ferwerda, E, Open access monograph business models, *Insights*, 2014, 27(S), 35–38; DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1629/2048-7754.46>