

Collaboration across campus: open monograph insights from a library and 'old' university press partnership

Liverpool University Press and the University of Liverpool Library collaborated to publish two open access monographs to gain insights into each other's processes and requirements, and improve the guidance provided to researchers and authors. Lessons learned include researchers' knowledge of publishing and open access, the monograph publishing process and costs involved, licences and third-party content and the marketing and discoverability of open monographs. Researchers, particularly those at the start of their career, may not have much knowledge and experience of publishing and so it is important for publishers to be as transparent as possible about the processes involved, and for libraries to ensure they are providing sufficient guidance. Knowledge about publishers' processes and costs allows libraries to have a better understanding about what is reasonable to expect and for researchers to better plan costs for funding applications. Transparency from publishers about the types of costs involved, as well as a greater understanding of the financial requirements of libraries and their institutions, will allow publishers to plan their marketing of open monographs more effectively. The project demonstrated that collaboration between libraries and publishers can be extremely valuable and beneficial to both.

Keywords

open access; open monographs; monographs; publishing; libraries; scholarly communications

Background

The University of Liverpool Library has been responsible for managing all things open access for several years now, and successfully developed and implemented the institutional approach to open access. The Library manages all open access funding and has responsibility for the university repository, as well as ensuring our researchers comply with applicable open access policies. The Library encourages researchers to engage with open access and open research in the broadest sense and tries to avoid solely focussing on compliance.

Liverpool University Press (LUP) was founded in 1899 and is the UK's third oldest university press. Producing approximately 150 books, 37 journals and a variety of digital resources each year, the Press operates entirely without subsidy. It has been at the forefront of open access in humanities and social sciences (HSS) since 2010 (as part of OAPEN-UK with Jisc). LUP was the first publisher to sign up to Knowledge Unlatched, launched Modern Languages Open (MLO) (a peer-reviewed, online platform for the open access publication of research from across the modern languages) with the Library in 2014, created innovative open access e-textbooks, developed hybrid journals as well as flipped journals with the Open Library of Humanities (OLH), and has published many open monographs. In 2021, LUP will publish an open monograph in the Sustainable History Monograph Project and over the last 18 months has developed a Digital Collaboration Hub on Manifold to provide open access resources to support their publications.

The Library and LUP have always maintained a collaborative relationship and both were keen to work together to learn about the challenges facing HSS researchers, particularly in making monographs openly available. This became increasingly important when Research



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- 2 England signalled their intention to include monographs in any post-2021 REF.¹ The 'Open Goal' project, as it was informally known, therefore began in mid-2018 with the aim of developing guidance and support for researchers at the University of Liverpool through the publication of two open access monographs and the sharing of knowledge and experiences between LUP and the Library.

Why did we decide to collaborate?

The partnership between the Library and LUP builds on numerous studies, pilots and projects on open monographs, including the Association of American Universities' TOME (Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem) project² which brings together presses, libraries and universities to support a scalable open access pilot. Recent years have also seen the development of new university presses created by academic libraries or research departments to satisfy institutions' research dissemination and impact aims.³ These projects often lead to wider discussions about issues associated with publishing open monographs. The Knowledge Exchange survey on open access monographs⁴ identified some of the issues that were particularly concerning for authors including copyright, sustainability, third-party rights and quality issues. Although those involved in the project recognise the importance of developing an economically sustainable business model for open monographs, the focus of our collaboration is very much on exploring the other issues that were identified by the Knowledge Exchange survey and other previous studies, taking advantage of our unique relationship so that both the Library and LUP are able to advise researchers going forward.

The Library receives an increasing number of requests from authors to fund their monographs to be published open access and this is recognized as a growing trend. Whilst there had been a standard process in place for funding and processing requests for open access journal articles for a decade, this did not exist for monographs. Consequently, each request is dealt with on an ad hoc basis, but with researchers encountering similar problems and requesting similar guidance every time. It was clear that a more consistent approach should be established and clear guidance for researchers developed. At the start of the project, the decision was made by LUP to be as transparent as possible about the process and costs involved in publishing open monographs. Sharing knowledge and insights would support the Library to make informed decisions when handling queries from researchers, also giving LUP an understanding of the challenges the Library faced so that changes could be made to support them and other libraries. It would also be an invaluable opportunity to put two monographs through a fully open access publishing process in order to evaluate sales, citations, author experience and impact.

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What did we learn?

Authors' knowledge and experience of open access and publishing

One of the most valuable parts of the project was the opportunity to gain an insight into HSS academic researchers' knowledge and experiences of open access and the publishing process. The authors involved in the project had little experience of publishing monographs. Both were early career researchers and both were publishing their first book, although they did have experience with publishing in journals. This was a deliberate decision taken at the beginning of the project; to provide early career researchers with the opportunity of having their first monograph published open access would be an additional bonus given the difficulties researchers at this stage in their careers usually have in accessing funding. We conducted interviews with both authors to gain an insight into their existing knowledge and experience of open access in general. Both authors had very different experiences, which could probably be attributed to how research is shared within their respective disciplines.

Author A, from the humanities, had limited knowledge or experience of open access publishing and wanted to take part in the project specifically to learn more. Although none of their previous publications were open access, they were highly positive about it and

3 recognised the potential to reach a broader audience. However, when questioned further, Author A did admit that finding a publisher with a good reputation would always be a more important consideration compared to whether there was an open access publishing option or not. Author B, from a social sciences department, similarly chose LUP based on their reputation rather than the availability of an open access option, but they too recognised the value in the book being openly available in terms of readership and impact. This was particularly important to Author B given the subject matter of their book as they were keen for the organizations they had worked with during their research to have access to any resulting publications.

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Author B had much more experience with open access publishing in general, having already published a chapter in an open access book and several open access journal articles. Interestingly, however, they had little knowledge of the costs involved in publishing in general. This could be seen when the final manuscript submitted was found to be 50,000 words over the contracted limit. When questioned, Author B stated that they had assumed that, because the book was being published electronically, the word count would not matter. Despite having published open access material previously, Author B was not aware that electronic publications incurred the usual publishing costs, and specifically those relating to copyediting and typesetting. This assumption that electronic books and journal articles do not incur the same types of costs as physical copies is one that LUP, and no doubt other publishers, encounters frequently. It demonstrates the importance of being transparent about the costs involved in publishing in general.

Rather disappointingly, neither author had ever considered approaching the Library for guidance on monograph publishing, preferring instead to consult with their academic colleagues. This made the Library realize the importance of the project even more, to ensure the availability of clearly signposted guidance to all researchers in the University. Although the advice of academic colleagues is important, ensuring that consistent and transparent guidance is available to everyone is crucial.

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Open monograph publishing processes

As part of the project, LUP demonstrated to the Library the full process of publishing open monographs and the time invested by the Press at all stages. Both books had already been contracted by the time the project started, so the lengthy but essential stages of proposal submission and editorial input with the author, external peer review, response to the peer review and editorial discussions with the author, the University's Editorial Advisory Board review, contract negotiations and initial scheduling were missing from the project's timeline. However, the Library were able to witness the manuscript submission, peer review and author response stages, as well as the production process and marketing activities. By doing so, the Library learned there is no difference in the process of publishing a non-open monograph compared to open monograph publishing up until the printing stage is reached and, even then, copies are still printed for the author and series editor, as well as gratis copies for marketing and reviews. This type of insight was invaluable to the Library as it meant they could advise and reassure authors on any concerns about quality. Obviously, those involved in scholarly communications in the Library had no qualms about the quality of peer review and other aspects of the publishing process when it comes to open access, but having a thorough understanding of the different stages meant staff could confidently answer any queries from researchers going forward.

'Transparency regarding the cost of publishing an open monograph is crucial for libraries and other stakeholders'

Costs involved in publishing open monographs

Transparency regarding the cost of publishing an open monograph is crucial for libraries and other stakeholders to understand the investment made by academic publishers in scholarly works, and, as highlighted earlier, the process of publishing an open monograph is

4 no different to the process of publishing a non-open monograph, except at the final printing and distribution stages. The 2016 Ithaka S+R report on the costs of publishing monographs⁵ gathered the costs of 382 titles from 20 US university presses and found they ranged from US\$15,140 to US\$129,909. In comparison, LUP's average cost for a standard monograph is £8,500, which includes an operational cost of £6,000. This is undoubtedly lean in comparison but is due to LUP spreading their overheads over a carefully cultivated, mixed portfolio of books, journals, collaborative publishing and digital publishing of high-quality research. LUP's book processing charge is £7,500, which assumes some print-on-demand copies of the book will be sold with a marginal surplus. Ultimately though, the books are published at a loss as LUP continues to work with and learn from open monographs. Currently this loss can be absorbed but if the scale of open monographs required is to increase, then it is likely that LUP's book processing charge will be reconsidered.

From the Library's perspective, it was incredibly helpful to get a sense of the costs involved in the production of a monograph. Book processing charges vary widely from publisher to publisher and it had previously been difficult to advise researchers as to why some publishers charged vastly different amounts compared to others. Knowing the costs of the different aspects of monograph publishing now allows staff to provide guidance to researchers on what costs to expect and those which are reasonable. This is particularly useful for those researchers who are having to build these costs into funding applications.

As well as gaining an understanding of the costs involved in producing a monograph, it is important to point out the issues encountered with the actual payment of the book processing charges with this project and in similar transactions with other publishers. The University of Liverpool's finance system, like most others, operates on the basis that when something is paid for within a particular financial year, the item is 'received' during that same financial year. This is of course straight forward with most purchases made by the Library, including article processing charges. The paying of book processing charges is more problematic however, as monographs can often take years to complete. Additionally, the publisher or author will sometimes need assurances that the funding is available to cover the costs of book processing charges before embarking on the whole publication process. Providing that assurance in an environment where available funding is often only confirmed on a year-to-year basis is extremely difficult.

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This could ultimately impact on the format in which the book is published. Often funding for an open access edition is confirmed late in the process when a manuscript is in production. By this time, the metadata for the hardback has already been released and promoted, which can be difficult to retract. This is why the hardback format is retained but the price of the book is lowered significantly to cover the print-on-demand cost for a hardback, retail discount, distribution costs, author royalty and a marginal surplus to the publisher. Knowing that open access funding is guaranteed at the beginning allows LUP to publish and promote a paperback edition from the start, permitting a more affordable print edition due to the lower print-on-demand costs for a paperback.

'for monographs, a CC-BY-ND licence may be the most appropriate licence'

Licences and third-party content

The University of Liverpool, like most funders, insists on a CC-BY licence when paying article processing charges. This less restrictive licence allows for greater reuse, dissemination and therefore impact of research, and so library staff had always been quite strict with this policy. This had also been the case when researchers requested funding for making a monograph open access and the adherence to this policy caused some issues. Often, monograph publishers do not offer that licence and some humanities researchers in particular expressed reservations about it. LUP's standard licence is CC-BY-NC-ND, but they agreed to apply CC-BY licences to both books involved in this project. However, the experience of this project, confirmed by having discussions with the authors about the issue, has illustrated that for monographs, a CC-BY-ND licence may be the most appropriate licence and the Library amended its

5 guidance accordingly. Going forward, if an author demonstrates a clear reason why a CC-BY licence would not be appropriate for their monograph, the Library would be willing to fund a CC-BY-ND licence.

Neither monograph included in the project contained a significant number of third-party images or diagrams and so the usual difficulties in gaining permissions were not encountered. However, one of the authors wished to include some content that they had previously published as a journal article with a different publisher during their PhD. This journal article had been published under the subscription model and so the author had transferred the copyright to the publisher, who disappointingly insisted on a payment of £1,895 for reuse of the content. It was only after LUP contacted the journal publisher to explain it was the author requesting permission to reuse their own work in their own monograph publication, where 80% of the article was being used and would be spread across three chapters in the book, that the journal publisher granted permission free of reuse charges.

Discoverability and marketing

As LUP knew the two books in this project would be open access from the start, they were able to ensure the metadata for each book clearly stated that an open access option would be available on publication. It was therefore interesting to learn that third parties in the supply chain could alter the metadata and, if a change is made to the metadata and pushed out via LUP's data feed, recipients of the data are not obliged to adopt the change. For example, at the beginning of the main description for both books in this project, it states 'An Open Access edition of this book is available on the Liverpool University Press website and the OAPEN library.' This is included on the books' description on one retailer's website yet is missing from another retailer's website. Interestingly, even book suppliers to academic libraries are failing to include this important piece of metadata. Of the suppliers looked at as part of the project, only one included the information regarding the open status of the book. This is incredibly disappointing and could ultimately lead to almost a 'double-dipping' for monographs, whereby one part of the library budget has been used to pay for a book processing charge and another part has been used to unnecessarily pay for a copy of the book simply because the information had not been made available by the supplier, despite the best intentions of the publisher.

'interesting to learn that third parties in the supply chain could alter the metadata ... regarding the open status of the book'

Conclusions

This project has been invaluable to both LUP and the Library and we encourage other libraries and publishers to work together in this way. LUP learned the importance of being as open as possible about the costs and processes involved in publishing so that libraries and other stakeholders have a better understanding of the time and investment made by academic presses. Being more open about processes also ensures authors are aware that open monographs are treated exactly the same as non-open monographs with regard to editorial review, production standards and marketing activity. These practices encourage greater consideration of the open access option for monographs. The Library has a much clearer understanding of the publishing process of monographs, both open and not, and an awareness of the costs involved in production. This means better guidance and support can be provided to authors, especially early career researchers who may have little or no knowledge of publishing. This work is increasingly important as monographs are included within the scope of funders' open access policies.

'The Library has a much clearer understanding of the publishing process of monographs'

Both LUP and the Library plan to continue to work together on the project, including looking at the effect on print sales, particularly on paperback copies, citations and wider research impact. These studies are obviously affected by COVID-19 and the full extent of the

6 pandemic's impact remains to be seen. Both organizations also look forward to collaborating on further projects, with several in the pipeline including a project with Special Collections and Archives at the University of Liverpool Library to put medieval manuscripts on LUP's Digital Collaboration Hub. Our experience clearly shows how mutually beneficial it can be for publishers and libraries to work together.

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 'full list of industry A&As' link: <http://www.uksg.org/publications#aa>.

Competing interests

The authors have declared no competing interests.

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