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On Open Access to Academic Books
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Introduction

Open Access to research publications enables quick and free access to, and wider dissemination of, scholarly outputs. It also leads to an increase in the uptake and use of publications,¹ and can thus lead to new and better research in all disciplines. Open Access is a cornerstone of Open Science.

So far, much of the focus of the transition towards Open Access has been on scholarly and scientific articles. However, a significant number of disciplines, notably – but not only – within the Social Sciences, the Arts, and the Humanities produce and heavily use books. Monographs, in particular, which are pieces of work on a single research topic by one or several authors, have a strong significance to scholars working in these disciplines. Open Access to academic books must therefore be considered in the wider Open Access policies developed by research institutions, funders, and governments.

Science Europe Member Organisations are committed to ensuring a transition towards a system of Open Access for publicly-funded research. They share the vision that this transition will include all types of research publications and all academic fields. To this end, the specificities of academic books, including monographs, in the research ecosystem and the current market situation in the research sector have to be taken into account.

Aim of this Briefing Paper

This briefing paper identifies the key issues at stake in implementing a policy of Open Access to academic books, and outlines a number of recommendations to facilitate and accelerate such a policy.

Its objective is to provide directions for policy developments within Science Europe Member Organisations and other stakeholders who play an important role in the academic book landscape. One of its main messages is also to highlight the need for a collective effort to include books when going forward in the transition to Open Access.

The briefing paper is not an isolated document. It complements the Science Europe Principles on Open Access to Research Publications,² which apply to all publication formats, the Science Europe Briefing Paper on Open Access Business Models and Current Trends in the Open Access Publishing System,³ and the Science Europe Recommendations for the Disclosure of Publication Fees.⁴

The briefing paper is not designed as a practical implementation guideline. It was instead developed to enable all targeted organisations to put in place policies adapted to their own needs and specificities, while committing to a shared set of principles.

The Academic Book Landscape

1. Academic books

Academic books are a long-form way of communicating the findings of research, contributing to knowledge and understanding. The term covers different formats: it may refer to monographs (work on a single research topic by one or several authors), edited collections (collections of scholarly chapters written by different authors), and critical editions (editions that include annotations, comments, and external references), amongst others. Digitalisation and the rise of e-books have also led to the emergence of new and innovative formats and contents, including the use of multimedia and dynamic forms of publication, which may be covered under the term.

This diversity makes the academic book landscape more complex than the landscape of scholarly articles. The variety of formats, length, content, and so on must be acknowledged and taken into account when analysing the landscape and developing policies. Moreover, when various contributions are combined in a single book, they can be subject to different legal situations (such as different third-party rights and copyright costs for the re-use of text and images), which adds an extra layer of complexity and can result in prohibitive fees for Open Access publications.

Although used in all scientific disciplines, including engineering and natural sciences, books are particularly important for scholars in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) as one of their main modes of publication. The long format allows scholars to develop complex arguments or to gather various research outcomes on related topics, and it can be the most appropriate way to draw out the complexities and nuances of a particular topic or argument. Often, years of research are relayed into a single book.

In various disciplines, high academic prestige is related to and conferred by the medium. A study conducted by OAPEN-UK reports that an overwhelming percentage of researchers (95% in the Humanities) consider it very important to publish books.⁵ When it comes to career advancement and promotion, the higher education system values publishing books as scholarly outputs and, in some disciplines or institutions, such publication(s) can sometimes be expected.⁶ This is especially the case in the Humanities.

2. Publishing academic books

As is the case with articles, researchers take on a variety of roles at all stages of the academic book publishing process. These roles include writing, evaluating, peer-reviewing manuscripts, editing and selecting books for publication, and so on.⁷ Books may also be reviewed after their publication, with those reviews themselves being published as related publications. Researchers may even act as publishers themselves (such as in learned societies and academic-led presses).

Publishing houses have long seen it as their primary task to accompany the process of publication and to assure quality by organising editorial work and co-ordinating book series along with their editors. On a structural level, book series – in which a group of editors or individual editors make decisions on content selection – bear more similarities with journals than individual book titles do. As is the case for articles, the prestige of the book publication is sometimes still related to the renown of the publisher or of the editors.

The size of the academic book market is very difficult to gauge, as data are rather scarce. According to a report of the Federation of European Publishers, the total annual sales revenue of book publications in the European Economic Area in 2016 was approximately €22.3 billion and about 590,000 new titles were issued in the same year. If the publishers' net turnover is broken down into categories – educational (school books, language teaching books), academic/professional (higher education, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, STEM, SSH, management), consumer (trade) books (fiction, non-fiction), and children's books – roughly 20% of the revenues are generated by academic and professional books.⁸

The international landscape of academic book publication is characterised by smaller markets and a larger number of small- and medium-sized publishers, when compared to the landscape for journals. Although both contain a large diversity amongst publishers, revenues are in general considerably lower (both absolutely and in percentage terms) in the book market than in the journal market.

The costs of publishing books are higher than the costs for individual articles, and publishers often rely on sales of individual copies or book packages, rather than on continuous subscriptions, to recover these costs. The book market is also less concentrated in the hands of a few large multinationals than is the case for the journal market. However, trends of market concentration are visible, with effects such as the sale of e-book packages, comparable to the bundling of journal subscriptions.

Another important difference is that markets are still largely based on national language areas, in addition to the international market of books in English. As a consequence, publishing practices vary considerably across borders.

3. Difficulties of the sector and the 'monograph crisis'

What is sometimes called the 'monograph crisis' is a combination of trends that affect the production and publication of academic books. Although scholars write more titles and presses have published more titles, print runs and sales of academic books have stagnated or declined, with a decrease in sales per title over the last ten years.^{9,10}

This situation is partly caused by the so-called 'serials crisis'. The increasing subscription fees for journals in STEM fields have forced some libraries to cut back their acquisition budget for books. The US provider of library services EBSCO estimates an increase of 24% for journal subscription prices of a typical library list between 2013 and 2017.¹¹ The Academy of Finland registered an average increase of costs paid to academic publishers of 10% per year from the years 2010 to 2015.¹² This has resulted in a stronger focus from publishers on books that have a higher marketable value, but also in the situation described by Christopher Gasson: "The vicious cycle that monograph publishers are locked in is as follows: increasing title output leads to fewer unit sales, which leads to less profit per unit, which has to be off-set by increasing the title output. Some publishers, such as Oxford and Cambridge university presses have escaped this inexorable mathematics by relying on their other more commercial publishing activities to support the losses on monograph publishing — and maintaining a strict limit on the number of titles produced."¹³

This increase in individual titles, along with a decrease in sales per title, has had several consequences:

- The price of academic books has increased, making their acquisition more difficult for libraries and scholars.
- The authors rarely benefit directly from the sales, as either no profit is generated or the revenue is retained by publishers.
- Authors, especially early career stage scholars, often have to look for additional funds to pay the charges which are sometimes associated with book publishing such as printing costs or publication subvention.¹⁴
- The processes of quality assurance and copy-editing of books are harder to maintain, both for scholars and publishers, due to time constraints and/or economic pressure. For scholars, this is amplified by the lack of official recognition of this time-consuming activity.
- Academic book publishers are experiencing issues to cover the costs, which can be very high for certain types of books. In many countries, they depend on external subsidies, which in general stem from public foundations or funders.

Open Access to academic books, when properly financed, clearly has the potential to tackle some of these issues by increasing circulation, reception, usage, and impact of academic books.

Additionally, the possibilities of digital publication have the potential to impact the form and length of traditional book or e-book formats, as well as the integration of and interlinkage with other media (audio, video, research data, and so on). It therefore offers new possibilities to scholars and broadens the landscape of long scholarly publications.

Open Access does not imply a choice between print or digital. Open Access policies must apply to the first digital copy, which does not prevent the printing and selling of hard copies.

The Transition to Open Access

The transition to Open Access for academic books takes different paths than the transition to Open Access for articles.¹⁵ The cultural change, which is crucial to make authors want to publish Open Access, must continue and be encouraged. In that transition, the greater complexity of the book publishing landscape and diversity of academic books themselves, sometimes called 'bibliodiversity', have to be taken into account.

1. Market and business models

Markets for articles and markets for books operate differently. In the academic book sector, there is a continued demand for print, thus digital formats and workflows have received less attention than in the domain of articles. Print-oriented publishing practices and business models are prevalent, although they co-exist with alternative or innovative channels (publication via libraries, and so on).

The comparatively high costs of book publishing and the difficulty to cover these costs are additional obstacles to the development of a digital workflow and the transition to Open Access, especially for smaller publishers. Considering the large diversity of academic books, average publishing costs are difficult to estimate.¹⁶

Finally, the different publishing practices based on national specificities and languages entail that the solutions for a transition will vary from country to country, according to the characteristics of their academic book markets.

Despite these obstacles, the book market is evolving. Open Access to academic books is becoming an accepted model and a growing number of publishers are exploring or proposing business models for academic book publishing. Open Access is also adopted as the primary model by some new entrants, sometimes complemented by print on demand. Many different book publishing models co-exist, ranging from commercial book publishers and non-subsidised university presses to academic-led publishers and fully funded publishing operations within institutions.¹⁷ This diversity of models entails a broad range of prices for book processing charges (BPC).¹⁸ Some university presses or other Open Access venues do not charge BPCs at all and use non-BPC publishing models, including crowdfunding or membership schemes.

While many publishers are still searching for sustainable Open Access business models, Open Access can be an opportunity to capitalise on better services. Deviating from a 'reader pays' model makes it possible to specify additional or enhanced required services up front, such as regarding standards for copy-editing and transparent, externally verifiable quality assurance processes. Quality assurance is a cornerstone of the publishing process and could be improved through the development of community standards and a higher transparency on the various practices and mechanisms.

2. Infrastructures and discoverability

In order for researchers to disseminate their results and knowledge as widely as possible, and to have access to the knowledge they need, properly indexed and findable content on regular research navigation routes are necessary.¹⁹ New models and places of publications must therefore go hand in hand with appropriate, non-scattered infrastructures and discovery and archiving mechanisms.

In the past years many initiatives have emerged catering to various needs such as hosting, preservation, metadata-enhancement, aggregation, deposit, and so on. Notable examples are the Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB),²⁰ which gathers metadata of Open Access books to facilitate their discoverability, or the OAPEN Library,²¹ a central repository for hosting and disseminating Open Access books.

In addition, various SSH players are collaborating within the OPERAS initiative – led by the French digital platform OpenEdition – that co-ordinates and pools university-led scholarly communication activities in Europe and is developing the idea of a distributed infrastructure that can counter the current fragmentation.²² OPERAS has published a study on the visibility of Open Access monographs²³ and is currently conducting an EU-funded Horizon 2020 project, HIRMEOS, dedicated to Open Access books.²⁴

Infrastructures and innovative services are also needed to improve the comprehensive monitoring of Open Access book publication. They should provide the most relevant and accurate information on Open Access publishing venues, their quality assurance procedures, and their Open Access options and policies. For this purpose, new services that provide labels on quality assurance mechanisms have also emerged in a few European countries.²⁵ Other initiatives are also being explored to co-ordinate initiatives amongst countries and develop an Open Access book watch.

Principles for Open Access to Books

The transition to a well-functioning ecosystem of Open Access academic books must be based on a series of principles that encompass all dimensions of the issue and addresses related questions, including legal ones.

The implementation of these principles, in a sustainable way, will need to be co-ordinated amongst the various stakeholders. A joint effort towards the common goal is vital: make scholarly output fully accessible, as soon as possible.

1. An explicit Open Access policy

Many governmental bodies, funding agencies, Research Performing Organisations (RPOs), and learned societies support the idea that the results of research financed by public funds are a public good and should be freely and immediately available without charge or unjustified restrictions. Transitioning the publication system towards Open Access can follow different models and a mix of these models should be considered. Open Access policies should be explicit on their provisions for different formats and models. The key principles are:

- ▶ Open Access policies must comprise and explicitly mention all formats of scholarly publications, including both articles and scholarly books.
- ▶ Full and immediate Open Access should be recommended or required as it enables the best level of dissemination and impact of Open Access academic books, and because it is able to increase the return value of public investment in research.
- ▶ If delayed Open Access is accepted, the proposed maximum embargo period is 12 months.²⁶
- ▶ Open Access policies should take into account the diversity of academic books, including new or innovative publishing formats.

2. Funding and business models

The transition to Open Access means, on one hand, a change of the publication process so that publishers have to adapt their workflows. On the other hand, the shift away from a ‘reader pays’ model requires an extension of the existing funding options for Open Access academic books. Sustainable funding and business models have to be further developed to encourage the transition.²⁷ It should be stressed that no ideal road exists and a diversity of models should be maintained and acknowledged.²⁸ The key principles are:

- ▶ There are different economic and organisational models for publishing academic books that allow for full and immediate Open Access. In all models, the price of the publishers’ services should be fully transparent and publicly accessible,²⁹ and the cost–benefit ratio must be reasonable.
- ▶ The funding models of Open Access academic books may vary. The publication via BPCs is only one model and must not be unduly privileged. All models, including co-operative funding models, should be supported.
- ▶ Existing funds that are now used to support print publications or acquire books, should, in the future, be partly redirected to cover Open Access publication costs. Funders should cover the production costs of the first digital copy for Open Access dissemination.

- ▶ Print copies remain relevant for researchers and should still be offered by publishers and bought by libraries. The use of models such as print-on-demand should also be encouraged.
- ▶ The basis for the price calculation of BPCs as well as their funding should be limited to the first digital copy.
- ▶ Models and practices that lead to so-called 'double dipping'³⁰ must be prevented.
- ▶ An infrastructure to monitor the prices of Open Access academic books is recommended. It should take the diversity of books and of book publishing models into account. The data should be kept in an open infrastructure.³¹

3. Quality assurance

Ensuring the highest quality of Open Access academic books is key to the scholarly system. It is also essential to secure the reputation of Open Access publishing. Quality assurance mechanisms, such as peer review, must guarantee the scientific quality of the content that is to be published. To ensure and improve the quality of an academic book, an independent, external and documented quality assurance process should be guaranteed. Different approaches concerning quality assurance should be encouraged.³² The key principles are:

- ▶ The quality assurance mechanisms used by publishing venues must be clear, transparent, and easily accessible in documented policies.
- ▶ The review should be conducted by independent experts in the field and should, by default, be based on the complete manuscript, and not on the proposal.
- ▶ All funding models should cover copy-editing as a minimum standard of formal quality assurance.
- ▶ New and innovative forms of review processes, including for post-publication review, might be considered.

4. Licences and copyright

Open Access, as defined in the Berlin Declaration,³³ is not only about the right of access, but also about the opportunity to re-use information with as few restrictions as possible, subject to proper attribution. Legal questions, such as the extension of third-party rights to text as well as images, are therefore crucial. The key principles are:

- ▶ Authors or their institutions should retain copyright on the content published in academic books.
- ▶ All publications should be published under an open license, preferably the Creative Commons³⁴ Attribution CC-BY (attribution alone). Due to issues with third-party rights and the role of the monograph in the research system, CC-BY-SA (Attribution + Share Alike) and CC-BY-NC (Attribution + Non-commercial use) or CC-BY-ND (Attribution + No Derivatives) might also be appropriate choices.

5. Dissemination, discoverability, and archiving

The greatest advantages of Open Access publication is free access to research findings and greater visibility for those results. However, free availability is not sufficient to guarantee discovery of Open Access publications at the point where this information is most needed, such as in library discovery systems and book acquisition systems. To ensure this, the technical quality of academic books and the use of common standards for their metadata, are essential.

The governance of infrastructure for archiving Open Access publications also brings challenges concerning the long-term availability of digital objects. In many countries, the national libraries preserve a copy of any printed and/or digital book published in the respective country. The key principles are:

- ▶ To ensure their discoverability, Open Access academic books must include complete metadata based on common standards.³⁵ Publishers must guarantee the use of these standards.
- ▶ Open Access content (including books) should be included in the discovery systems of scholarly publications (for example making use of DOAB).
- ▶ The archiving of Open Access academic books needs to be undertaken on a national or international level and has to follow best practices to guarantee long-term access.³⁶
- ▶ All vital infrastructures and services supporting the transition to Open Access for academic books (hosting, preservation, metadata-enhancement, aggregation, deposit, and support to quality assurance) should be open, transparent, and community-governed.

Recommendations for Stakeholders

The transition to Open Access to academic books must be a collective effort involving a series of stakeholders, as is the case for the transition for articles and journals. To make the transition effective, dialogues with and engagement amongst all stakeholders is key.

All stakeholders, but especially Research Funding Organisations (RFOs), Research Performing Organisations (RPOs), learned societies, and libraries should collaborate to address the misconceptions about Open Access academic books and foster a cultural change in academia. Exchange of best practices, including lessons learnt, should also be shared amongst the stakeholder communities.

All stakeholders should also emphasise that it is not a choice between Open Access and print, but a choice for print and Open Access. Open Access leads to increased dissemination, usage, engagement, and impact, but can be complemented by prints.

1. Recommendations for Research Funding Organisations

RFOs aim to maximise the dissemination and the impact of publicly-funded research in all disciplines. To support the transition to Open Access to academic books, Science Europe recommends that RFOs:

- Define an explicit Open Access policy that includes books and encourage dialogue with all relevant stakeholders to ensure common understanding and support compliance.
- Allocate budget, or redirect a part of the funds already earmarked for the publication of books, to implement fair funding mechanisms for Open Access by BPCs or other suitable business models.
- Set up a separate funding instrument for Open Access academic books in order to enable funding beyond the duration of grants and facilitate the monitoring of the transition. If such an instrument cannot be created, funding for Open Access books must be provided as part of the research grant.

- Require a transparent quality assurance process (together with relevant scientific communities) in order to fund only quality publications.
- Share data on the prices of book publishing.
- Reserve part of their budget to support the development and maintenance of infrastructures and services supporting Open Access books.³⁷
- Reconsider academic incentive and reward mechanisms to recognise quality assurance work, such as peer review and editorial work.

2. Recommendations for Research Performing Organisations

RPOs aim to support the dissemination but also the recognition of the work done in their research units. To support the transition to Open Access to academic books, Science Europe recommends that RPOs:

- Define an explicit Open Access policy that includes books, and provide assistance to researchers to encourage and support compliance.
- Implement funding of Open Access books by BPCs or other suitable business models.
- Share data on the prices of academic book publishing.
- Reserve a part of their budget to support the development and maintenance of infrastructures and services supporting Open Access books.³⁸
- Develop or expand training mechanisms (mentorship and peer support, leadership at institutional level, and so on) on all aspects of Open Access publishing to stimulate cultural change and raise awareness on the added value and opportunities of Open Access.
- Reconsider academic incentive and reward mechanisms to recognise quality assurance work, such as peer review and editorial work.
- Retain copyright, unless authors can do so at individual level, when publishing academic books.

3. Recommendations for libraries

Libraries want to have access to all content needed for their institutions, but also increasingly support the publications of their own authors in Open Access. To support the transition to Open Access to academic books, Science Europe recommends that libraries:

- Support the Open Access policy of their home institution.
- Provide support and training to their authors regarding Open Access publishing.
- Consider providing their own publishing activities. This could include the use of existing infrastructures (such as repositories) as publication platforms.
- Repurpose part of their acquisition budget towards Open Access (of both journals and books) and be transparent about price development.
- Encourage the conversion of e-book packages to Open Access (such as via library consortia).
- Participate in co-operative funding and freemium models (basic access for free and premium features to be paid for) for Open Access books.
- Include Open Access book collections (for example OAPEN Library, OpenEdition Books, DOAB) in their discovery systems and ensure that Open Access books are included in their catalogues.

4. Recommendations for academic researchers

Academic researchers strive to disseminate their results as widely as possible, require access to the knowledge they need, and benefit from appropriate reward and incentive mechanisms to support their career progression. To support the transition to Open Access to academic books, Science Europe recommends that academic researchers:

- Actively support Open Access book publishing in their role as authors, editors, and reviewers.
- Explore Open Access funding possibilities for their publications.
- Support and require the rerouting of existing print subsidies.
- Consider and compare Open Access services, and ask for the assistance of their institutions to gain further understanding of the various dimensions of Open Access publishing.
- Demand that their work is published under a Creative Commons license and insist on keeping copyright.

5. Recommendations for learned societies

Learned societies have a strong influence on scientific practices and therefore play an important role in shaping publication practices. To support the transition to Open Access to academic books, Science Europe recommends that learned societies:

- Define an Open Access policy that includes academic books.
- Adapt their own publication portfolio to Open Access publishing.
- Explore new or enhanced quality assurance mechanisms and represent the scholarly work done in their discipline.

6. Recommendations for publishers

Publishers (including traditional, commercial, academic, university-led presses, and learned societies) must adapt to the ongoing transition towards Open Access and seize new opportunities. To support the transition to Open Access to academic books, Science Europe recommends that publishers:

- Commit to Open Access principles and implement business models for Open Access to academic books. A mix of models should be offered and exchange of best practices must be encouraged to support all publishers, including the smallest ones, to contribute to the transition.
- Provide transparent information on their Open Access policy on their website, including the self-archiving rights in delayed Open Access situations, and the services they offer to authors.
- Make the pricing of Open Access books transparent in order to qualify for public funding.
- Use the transition to Open Access to develop new and better services for authors, libraries, and academic support staff.

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36. See Directory of Open Access Repositories at <http://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/opensoar/> or for example the German Initiative for Network Information’s DINI certificate specifying criteria of quality and sustainability for repositories at <https://dini.de/dienste-projekte/dini-zertifikat/> and <https://dini.de/dienste-projekte/dini-zertifikat/english/about-the-certificate/>
37. For example, OAPEN Library, DOAB, and so on. See also the Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS): <https://sparceurope.org/global-sustainability-coalition-open-science-services-established/>
38. See footnote 37

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