OPENING
THE FUTURE

Opening the Future open access monograph revenue model for scholarly presses

Working with the OtF project team: launching the programme at your press, what is involved, and how the Copim community can support you.

copim

Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs

OtF

Why OA for monographs?

The roots of open access for monograph publishing have been growing since the 2013 Wellcome Trust OA policy which noted that recipients of its funding would need to include "all scholarly monographs and book chapters written by its grant holders as part of their Trust-funded research". (Wellcome Trust, 2013). Since then, several agencies and bodies have begun to mandate in a similar fashion: UKRI in the UK, Horizon Europe, Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research and many more. But aside from the big stick of mandates and policies there are carrots too.

The possibilities for global dissemination and increased citation when publishing OA are well documented - a good summary on this topic can be found in Lucraft, M. 2021, March 3, 'Open Access to academic books creates larger, more diverse and more equitable readerships', LSE Impact Blog. At the same time it's been argued that traditional sales of AHSS academic books are declining.[1] With library budgets under even more pressure than ever, all of this poses a set of opportunities and challenges to scholarly presses.

So, how to adapt to this changing environment? One solution might be to emulate the journal world's move to OA, since that transition is more mature than in the monograph space. However the journal equivalent of the Book Processing Charge (in journals, the APC) has become entrenched there and we've seen the emergence of a few very strong central players who control most of the market. And this is to say nothing of the inequalities built into the BPC model (favouring relatively established authors, in receipt of research funding, and/or positioned at wealthy institutions). It would be a shame for bibliodiversity, author choice, and academic freedom to see the same thing happen with books in the move towards OA. And libraries may find such a trajectory financially unsustainable for them: moving to OA for books by BPCs alone just doesn't add up.

Professor Martin Eve at Birkbeck College, UoL, pointed out in an article on WonkHE in 2020 that "the biggest blocker to OA in the humanities seems to be economic. BPCs at the £11,000 [$14,000USD] mark will not scale in disciplines where an entire department's book purchasing budget is just £7,000 [$9,000USD]." This is where Copim's *Opening the Future* (OtF) revenue model comes in: we were tasked with finding a way for 'traditional' scholarly presses to move towards OA for books in a sustainable way. OtF is a funding mechanism, pooling small contributions from many libraries, that gives small presses an income stream to publish OA books without charging authors BPCs. Read on for more details on how it works.

[1] 'Worst sellers: warning of existential crisis for academic books' Times Higher Ed, June 16, 2017 https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/worst-sellers-warning-existential-crisis-academic-books The landmark 'Crossick Report', commissioned by the UK Government in 2015, also has a very useful - and still relevant - section on scholarly monograph supply and demand in Section 3.3, p.21. See Crossick, G (2015). Monographs and open access. A report to HEFCE, http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2015/monographs/

Opening the Future (OtF) is a collective funding model developed by the Copim community. It offers an avenue for small/medium-sized scholarly publishers to fund open access (OA) monographs without author-facing Book Processing Charges.

Copim and OtF

The model was developed as part of two Arcadia and Research England funded research projects, which have received over £9million in funding. These projects were led by the Copim community, a group of people and organisations working to build a fairer, more open future for scholarly books. Engaging with libraries, scholars, infrastructure providers and publishers, the Copim community is working to improve the quantity, discoverability, preservation and accessibility of academic content, aiming to make it freely and easily available to all. *Opening the Future* was conceived as a low-risk revenue mechanism to help small/medium-sized presses move towards an OA frontlist. It has been successfully implemented at two publishers since 2021, and we are now seeking three more presses to work with us in launching an OtF programme of their own.

Through OtF, Liverpool University Press (UK) and Central European University Press (Austria/Hungary) have already published 25+ OA monographs between them, and have accumulated enough funding to publish 45+ more books in the coming years, with plans to continue scaling up their programmes in the future.

For our next three publishers, this is an exciting opportunity to join an established and expanding model, to use and help shape infrastructure designed to serve small scholarly publishers rather than large commercial entities, and to gain an affordable and sustainable route to OA books. We will provide you with expert support, guidance and input at every step of the way.
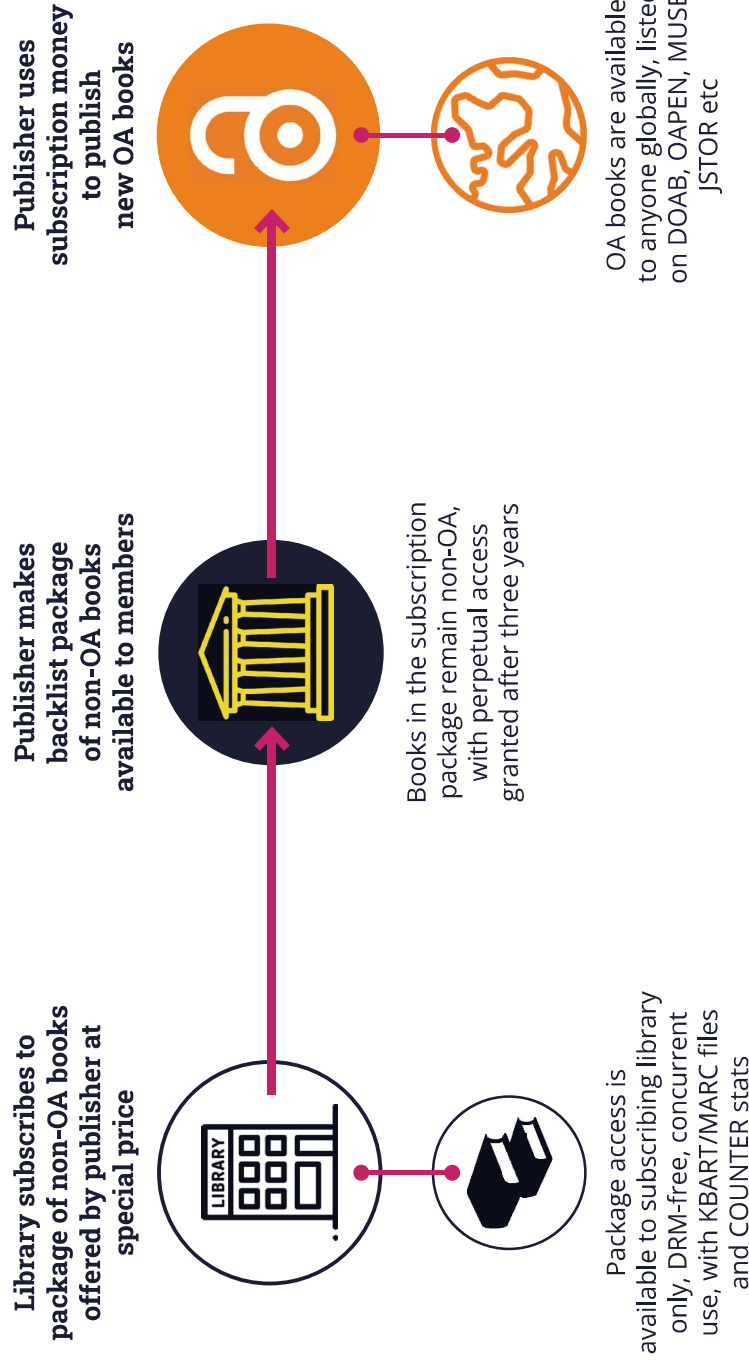
How it works

Libraries sign up to get unlimited, DRM-free access to curated packages of a press's backlist via non-profit project partner Project MUSE, with perpetual access after three years. The press then uses the revenue from the membership subscription fees to produce frontlist titles in open access format immediately on publication. Publishing the OA titles is a rolling process: as soon as they accrue the funds to produce a book, the press can publish the next one in line, and so on. Unlike many other collective models, there is no target member threshold to reach other than the production cost of the next book, which means the more members they have, the more books a press can publish OA, and the risk for the press is minimal.

Library subscribes to package of non-OA books offered by publisher at special price

Publisher makes backlist package of non-OA books available to members

Publisher uses subscription money to publish new OA books

Package access is available to subscribing library only, DRM-free, concurrent use, with KBART/MARC files and COUNTER stats

Books in the subscription package remain non-OA, with perpetual access granted after three years

OA books are available to anyone globally, listed on DOAB, OAPEN, MUSE, JSTOR etc

For a small press publishing in a specialist area of study our progress in publishing OA books has far exceeded anything we hoped to achieve when we first launched Opening the Future with Copim. We are already working with our library member community to expand our offer and we hope to have them supporting our OA journey for many years to come.

Emily Poznanski, CEU Press Director

Reasons to consider this model

1 Sustainable, mandate-compliant OA funding

OA mandates for academic publishing are increasing worldwide. OtF can provide you with a route to compliance, no matter your current level of knowledge regarding OA, or if your press is only small.

Unlike BPCs, which are unaffordable for most authors particularly in AHSS fields, OtF charges participating libraries affordable fees and does not impose any financial burden on authors. The funding is therefore equitable, and moving towards sustainable if we can get libraries to maintain support.

2 A scalable, low risk model, already tried and tested

OtF is an excellent entry to OA for publishers who do not have subsidies to support this transition and who seek a sustainable, equitable, and library-friendly approach.

The model exposes your press to minimal risk, as only some of your backlist is used to create subscription packages, rather than imposing an 'all or nothing' approach to OA. Additionally, you are still able to sell individual copies of your backlist titles and print copies of the OA frontlist titles that the subscription funds.

3 Expert support on the fast-changing OA landscape

The Copim community can give you expert guidance on the fast-evolving OA funding landscape, and help you to determine what participation in a subscription model would look like for your press.

Working with the OtF team at Copim

We support you through implementation and beyond. OtF provides a workflow, manages invoicing and licensing through Jisc/Lyrasis for participating libraries, and works with trusted non-profit Project MUSE to host the books on the programme. The team can help to engage potential subscribers and help with member retention, explain the model to your networks, and work closely with you to document the implementation and outcomes.

We will, within the confines of an NDA if needed, analyse your press' titles, current and potential revenue streams, and work with the press and appropriate partners to implement the model with you. We will also work with you on a business case should you need to take one to a parent institution, and a risk register with any necessary mitigation/rollback strategies, and contribute to reports you may need to provide to your own partners or stakeholders.

After implementation, we can help with outreach to subscribers, and will work with you on coordinated marketing activities and adjusting subscription pricing over time. Copim is funded until April 2026 so up to that date we will work with you to help embed OtF as an ongoing programme that you can run unaided.

Our current press partners

This initiative first launched in 2021 with CEU Press, and later expanded with Liverpool University Press. You can follow their progress on the OtF website (openingthefuture.net), through their newsletters (CEU Press newsletter signup | LUP newsletter signup) and industry announcements. In piloting it they have both proven that OtF can work to increase global access to quality scholarship. We are now seeking three more presses with whom to launch the model. This is a unique opportunity to move towards funding your OA frontlist reliably and equitably, with support from the Copim team, one of the pioneers of OA monograph collective funding.

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Get in touch

To discuss any aspect of the programme and/or to arrange an informal chat, please contact Tom and Kira, the OtF team at Copim, on openingthefuture@copim.ac.uk

Tom Grady and Kira Hopkins are based at Birkbeck College, University of London. Birkbeck is a Copim project partner and you can read more about their involvement here: https://www.bbk.ac.uk/news/birkbeck-plays-leading-role-in-project-set-to-increase-access-of-valuable-research-to-the-general-public

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