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Open Access Monographs Update

by Caroline Winter | 29 September 2022 | English, Observations, Observations and Responses | 0 comments



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At a glance:

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As discussed in the observation “[Open Access Monographs](#),” published in March 2021, increasing attention has been paid in recent years to strategies for successfully publishing open access (OA) monographs and other long-form publications such as book chapters. Martin Eve and Anthony Cond described 2021 as “the year of the ‘starting pistol’” for OA books, with the release of Plan S guidelines

for OA monographs, UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) new OA policy that for the first time applies to monographs, and the countdown to the UK's next Research Excellence Framework (REF) (2021). This observation summarizes select developments related to OA monograph publishing over the past year.

In June 2021, the UK's Cambridge University Press launched the **Flip it Open** pilot, a demand-based OA initiative. When 25 selected monographs from participating publishers reach a specified revenue target, they will be flipped to open access and a paperback version will be available for purchase. This publication model focuses on making the books with the highest demand openly accessible, and institutions who purchase the book will benefit from earlier access to it and will be acknowledged in print and digital versions of the OA book for their role in flipping it. As of September 2022, five books had been flipped under the program (Cambridge University Press 2022). Because the flip to OA is supported through sales rather than book publishing charges (BPCs), the program aims to be more inclusive of authors excluded from publishing their books OA because of high BPCs (Tivnan 2021).

Also in June, **OPERAS (Open Scholarly Collaboration in the European Research Area for Social Sciences and Humanities)** and **OASPA (Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association)** published *The Future of Scholarly Communication*, a report addressing challenges and potential solutions for scholarly communication in the social sciences and humanities in Europe, including those related to OA monographs.

In August, **UKRI** released a **new OA policy** that applies to all publications supported by funding from any of its research council (see "**UKRI's 2021 Open Access Policy**"). This version includes for the first time a requirement for long-form scholarly publications—monographs, edited volumes, book chapters—to be OA immediately upon publication.

In September, **cOAlition S** released a set of **recommendations for open access academic books**, which they define as long-form publications including monographs, edited volumes, and individual book chapters, as well as critical editions. They are recommendations rather than part of the formal Plan S policy and have no set timeframe for implementation in recognition of the complex and diverse nature of academic book publishing. Because cOAlition S is a growing international consortium, these recommendations will potentially have widespread effects on OA monograph publishing (see "**The Fonds de Recherche du Québec Join cOAlition S**" and "**Plan S Update: The Expanding Membership of cOAlition S**").

In the same month, the **Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)** announced a **partnership with MIT Press Direct to Open (D2O)**: CRKN will handle payments and licensing for its members who want to be a part of this initiative, thereby lowering barriers to participation.

In November, US-based **MIT Press** announced that it had met its funding target for the D2O initiative and would be publishing its full spring 2022 list of scholarly books open access.

In December, MIT Press published "**The MIT Press Open Monograph Model: Direct to Open,**" a white paper describing the model and its implementation through the pilot project.

In April 2022, the UK-based **COPIM project (Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs)** launched the **Open Book Collective**, a platform bringing together libraries, research institutions, and OA publishers and publishing services providers to facilitate membership-based funding initiatives.

In May, the University of California signed onto the **Opening the Future** program, developed through **COPIM**. It is a collective subscription model in which libraries subscribe to a publisher's backlist, and the publisher directs some of those funds to supporting new OA books. Opening the Future was launched in 2020 but expanded in June 2021. Although UC joining the initiative is a landmark because of that university system's size and influence, it is one of many **supporters** to sign on to the program.

In June, the US-based [Educopia Institute](#) announced the [Book Analytics Dashboard Project \(2022–2025\)](#), developed in partnership with [OAPEN](#) and [Curtin University's Open Knowledge Initiative](#), with funding from the [Mellon Foundation](#). The project will make robust analytics about OA book usage available to small and medium publishers through shared digital infrastructure, enabling them to make data-drive strategic decisions and to compete with larger publishers on a more level playing field.

In July, [MIT Press](#) announced that it would be publishing its full 2022 list of 80 scholarly books OA.

In the same month, [Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem \(TOME\)](#) released a preliminary report on [The Cost to Publish TOME Monographs](#) (Maron and Schmelzinger 2022). TOME is a five-year pilot program (2017–2022) for cooperative OA monograph publishing in the US through which institutions provide a grant of at least \$15,000 per monograph to fund faculty members' OA monographs. The report is an initial evaluation of whether this grant adequately covers publishing costs, given the changing landscape of OA monograph publishing.

In August, [the British Academy](#) published the first OA book in its British Academy Monograph series, and [announced plans](#) to publish all subsequent books in the series as OA.

Trends across the past year have thus included policy that mandates OA for monographs as well as pilot projects and research reports that investigate how this transition to OA can be best accomplished, given the diverse and complex nature of scholarly monograph publishing.

Open Access Monographs in the Press

OA monograph publishing is a topic of interest in the library and book industry presses as well as the academic press. *Library Journal's* InfoDocket covered the launch of [COPIM's Open Book Collective](#) and the launch of the [Book Analysis Dashboard Project](#), and *The Bookseller* covered [CUP's Flip it Open](#) initiative.

Open Access Monographs and the INKE Community

As noted in our earlier post, [“Open Access Monographs,”](#) OA monographs have long been a topic of interest for the INKE community. In addition to the activities listed in that observation, the [Public Knowledge Project \(PKP\)](#) launched [Open Monograph Press](#), an open source platform for managing scholarly book publishing workflows, in 2012. PKP recently announced that its newest development partner is the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO); SciELO Books has nearly 1000 OA scholarly books in its collection (see [“The PKP and SciELO's Renewed Partnership”](#)).

Additionally, the [Portal to Canadian Research Outputs](#), the result of a partnership between the [Canadian Association of Research Libraries \(CARL\)](#), an INKE partner, and [OpenAIRE](#), aggregates metadata about Canadian research outputs, including monographs. Searches can be limited to OA monographs, facilitating data gathering (see [“The CARL–OpenAIRE Collaboration”](#)).

Open Access Monographs and the Broader Community

Judith Fathallah published [an article discussing UKRI's new OA policy](#) in January 2022, responding to some of the community's concern around it. Fathallah also showcases some existing initiatives for advancing OA monograph publishing, including COPIM's Open Book Collective.

Open Access Monographs and Open Scholarship

Advancing OA monographs requires adapting and tailoring existing infrastructures and developing innovating new ones, from digital publishing platforms to funding models.

Charles Watkinson and Melissa Pitts argue that university presses need to be recognized as crucial elements in OA monograph infrastructures, since they not only publish monographs and other long-form scholarship but also develop open source publishing platforms and innovative funding models. They

write:

Powered by high-quality peer review, they [university presses] function as a network of innovative laboratories for scholars; their combined impact is particularly clear in the growth of disciplines and the progress of interdisciplinary scholarship. They also increasingly incubate sophisticated inter-institutional collaborations, purpose-building platforms and practices responsive to the changing needs of scholars and knowledge itself. (Watkinson and Pitts)

Eve and Cond similarly argue that advancing OA monograph publishing is crucial for the humanities in particular: “Without investment in pilots and without author engagement, we will reach a bad place. We will reach a world where all scientific work is free to read by the public, but all humanities work is prohibitively expensive. We must avoid this elitist world at all costs” (2021).

The innovations developed to advance OA monograph publishing will be part of the broader open scholarly publishing ecosystem, contributing to the advancement of OA and open scholarship more broadly as well.

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