

A “Third Way” to Sustainable Open Access Publishing

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What is the Third Way to Expanding Access to Monographs?

The cost-recovery model is in permanent decline—a negative spiral where fewer copies are distributed at ever-growing prices.

While OA pilots have shown dramatic increases in usage, they have not scaled because of scarcity of long-term funding.

Is there a Third Way where University Press Monographs are embargoed in a paywalled collection for 36 months, but then made open to read? What would that model look like?

Stakeholders—all are stressed

Libraries: Facing declining budgets and allocating more resources to STEM fields

University Presses: Declining sales and pressured to publish in more “lucrative” disciplines at the expense of bibliodiversity

Authors: With fewer UP monographs being published and lower sales, is their scholarship making an impact?

Readers: As prices for books go up and fewer libraries are buying HSS titles, readers are being left out.

Institutions: They will spend \$ where there is measurable impact and accountability. But more \$ is now going to commercial publishers' OA initiatives.

Is this a
unique
moment?

During the summer of 2020 when the pandemic first struck, many UPs opened their collections at aggregators and saw usage spike to unprecedented levels. Perhaps it's not the monograph that is in decline. Perhaps it is the model that is broken. If you make it free to read, it gets read.

Is the White House OSTP memo an inflection point? While focused more on STEM journals, than HSS monographs, might it nevertheless begin a transformation where the expectation is that university-based scholarship should be as accessible as possible to the public and readers around the globe?

Usage of Convert to Open ebooks at JSTOR

- 336 titles across 30 publishers were converted to open eBooks in 2019 and 2020.
- Usage for the titles on JSTOR increased over 3,200% on average, when converted to open access.
- The impact varied by region and country with the regions of Africa and South America seeing the largest percentage increases.

Region	Pre OA Usage	Post OA Usage	% Increase
Africa	67	96,982	144649%
Asia	2,094	199,162	9411%
Europe	8,509	417,288	4804%
North America	21,338	441,015	1967%
Oceania	4,797	46,990	880%
South America	16	23,841	148906%
Unknown	1,420	66,841	4607%
	38,241	1,292,119	3279%

Third Way Overview

UPs would put hundreds of new monographs into the collection every year. They can permanently sell print and digital consumer copies (e.g., Kindle)

For three years the digital editions would be exclusively available to institutions through a JSTOR collection. Libraries who purchased the collection would have unlimited read/download rights for their patrons.

After three years, the books would become free to read, download, and share.

It only
works at
scale

If the per book stipends to UPs is \$5,000. The minimum expense would be greater than \$2 MM annually for a collection of 400 books.

Library subscriptions would need to generate the majority of this income. How many libraries would pay \$7,500 - \$15,000 for that collection? What if were 800 monographs?

Of course, there would be other expenses, transaction costs, hosting fees, etc. But these initial numbers are favorable and only improve with more scale. Especially if we can grow library participation.

Here's the pitch

For presses

- Financial security: guaranteed stipend and ability to do cost-recovery in “closed” system for three years
- Expanded usage over time creating long-term impact and potential long-tail print sales
- Confidence to publish in marginalized disciplines where marketplace returns may be lower

For libraries

- Liberal usage rules giving their patrons instant, flexible access to a major output of new humanities research
- One-stop shopping for purchasing the majority of UPs
- Supporting both humanities publishing/scholarship but also readers/institutions in historically marginalized geographies

The challenges

Will presses put their best books into the collection, or only marginal titles? Many have said they need \$7,500 instead of \$5,000.

Are their 300-500 libraries willing to pay \$7,500 - \$15,000 annually for a collection like this?

Are there other sources of income to support this? Research agencies? Author host institutions? Foundations?