Open Access Case Studies: 
Introduction to the Project

BY THE AUPRESSES DIGITAL PUBLISHING COMMITTEE, 2016–17

KEYWORDS: open access book projects; university presses and university libraries; experimental models in digital publishing

AUPresses Digital Publishing Committee, 2016–17
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September 2017, case studies finalized

THE DIGITAL PUBLISHING COMMITTEE of the Association of University Presses (AUPresses; www.aupresses.org) has as its general objective the development of programs and resources to educate association members about emerging digital technologies and the opportunities they present to the publishing industry. As an item on its 2016–17 agenda, the committee took on the task of developing a series of case studies of some Association members’ projects in open access book publishing over the past decade. The committee selected which projects to profile, drafted a common set of questions to guide inquiry, and undertook the interviewing and drafting necessary to produce the case studies. Representatives of the institutions whose projects were chosen as cases generously volunteered to be interviewed by committee members for information about their projects.

Four cases were featured on a panel at the Annual Meeting of the Association in Austin, Texas, on June 13, 2017. The panel, titled “Four Case Studies, Four Ways: Highlights from AAUP’s Review of OA Projects,” was chaired by Hope LeGro, chair of the committee, and featured representatives from four institutions as panelists: Dean Smith, director of Cornell University Press; Erich van Rijn, director of publishing operations at University of California Press;1 Mary Francis, editorial director of University of Michigan Press; and Kevin Hawkins, assistant dean for scholarly communication at University of North Texas Libraries.

In choosing its cases, the committee made a strategic decision to include both new projects and older ones. The older ones allow for more retrospection on the outcomes of the project relative to its original goals. The projects profiled may be one experiment of many open access book experiments that the press, or library and press together, has undertaken. One of the projects profiled is a homegrown effort, while the others involve external partners or external funding, or a combination of both. The set of questions developed by the committee suggested a common scheme of section heads to organize the presentation of information for each of the case studies. Having the case studies all follow the same pattern of organization is meant to facilitate comparisons across the projects.

The first case study describes the digitalculturebooks imprint, a collective imprint for multiple book series of the University of Michigan Press. The second case study profiles Duke

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1 A write-up of Luminos, the University of California Press’s open access monograph program, will appear in a special issue on open access of the Journal of Scholarly Publishing in October 2017; see Alison Mudditt, “Opening the Monograph: Lessons from Luminos,” Journal of Scholarly Publishing 49, no. 1 (forthcoming).
University Press in its participation in Knowledge Unlatched, an organization that coordinates scholarly publishers and a consortium of academic libraries to create open access book collections. The third case study describes a multi-participant grant, led by the University of North Texas Libraries, to reissue out-of-print books as part of the Humanities Open Book Program, sponsored jointly by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The fourth case study details the Signale open access monograph series and Cornell Open, also funded by the Humanities Open Book Program, both of which are run by Cornell University Press and Cornell University Library working in collaboration.

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Open Access Case Study, in Two Parts:
Signale and Cornell Open, Cornell University Press

BY THE AUPRESSES DIGITAL PUBLISHING COMMITTEE, 2016–17

KEYWORDS: open access monograph program; field-specific book series; press/library joint imprint; postponed open access; grant; focused backlist reissues; humanities; usage data

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September 2017

Part 1. Signale

Overview

SIGNALE (www.signale.cornell.edu), a book series with the full name Signale: Modern German Letters, Cultures, and Thought, is one of two recent book initiatives with an open access (OA) component undertaken collaboratively by Cornell University Press (CUP) and Cornell University Library (CUL). The other initiative, Cornell Open, CUP’s OA portal for selected out-of-print titles, is the subject of part 2 of this case study.

The Signale book series is a partnership of German studies scholars, CUL, CUP, and Cornell University’s College of Arts and Sciences. Signale books are published under the joint imprint of CUP and CUL. Signale was conceived to address a problem common to many small humanistic disciplines today: the publishing terrain essential to the vitality of German studies had eroded in recent time as publishing costs outstripped sales of books nationwide. The Signale partners are exploring the potential of new technologies and new divisions of labor to create economically viable channels for disseminating important scholarship in the interdisciplinary field served by the series.

Faculty and CUL staff began seriously discussing a publishing initiative in German studies in 2006. CUP’s involvement dates from 2007, and Signale was publicly announced in December 2007. The first books in the series were published in 2009. In 2010 Cornell University received a three-year officers’ grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support direct publication costs as well as sustainability planning for the series. In 2014 Signale introduced an OA program with a four-year “moving wall”: that is, most books in the series are made available as OA online in downloadable, digital rights management–free PDF chapter files four years after the date of original publication. By December 31, 2016, seventeen Signale books had been published.

Project Mission

For the interdisciplinary field of German studies, the goal of the Signale program is to provide an innovative, sustainable, and enduring channel for the dissemination of high-quality scholarship. German studies in North America has suffered in recent years from a serious depletion of the channels through which scholarship in the field is disseminated. Along with other disciplines grounded in non-English literatures, German studies has been particularly hard hit by what the
Modern Language Association has identified as an overall constriction of publishing possibilities in the humanities due to economic pressures on university presses.¹

Signale seeks to address these pressures by containing the publishing costs associated with producing and warehousing large print runs and, most importantly, by exploring how a new collaborative relationship and distribution of labor among scholars, a press, and a library can preserve a high-quality space for the specialized monograph. Signale is rooted in the academy and seeks to provide a viable model for collaborative university publishing that can be adopted by other disciplines in the humanities and beyond.

**Product Strategy**

**Content Selection**

Signale: Modern German Letters, Cultures, and Thought is a book series for new English-language scholarship on the literature, culture, criticism, and intellectual history of the German-speaking world, as well as translations of important German-language works. Signale construes “modern” in the broadest of terms: from postmedieval Frühe Neuzeit to the postmodern present. A series for interdisciplinary and theoretical work concerned with this extended period of modernity, Signale is also building focus clusters in areas of German studies scholarship that have become increasingly difficult to place with North American publishers but that remain fundamental to the health of the field, such as work on the early modern period (Humanism, Baroque, Enlightenment). A goal of Signale is better integration, within a broad interdisciplinary understanding of German studies, of movements and scholarly genres that are vulnerable to marginalization.

Signale books are published jointly by CUP and CUL. Book proposals are accepted from scholars from around the world, at all stages of their careers. Manuscript submissions to Signale undergo the same editorial and peer review as CUP books published in the traditional manner. Authors are issued a CUP contract, and their books are marketed in the same way as other books published by the press. Signale books are featured in the CUP catalog, advertised in suitable venues, and displayed at the conference of the Modern Language Association and other meetings as appropriate.

**Formats**

CUL and CUP discussed OA options for Signale books from the beginning. An early concept was to make all of the books OA through an electronic publishing platform already in use in CUL and to offer print for sale via print on demand (POD). By the time the first books were published, the Signale partners had decided to provide a read-only version of the books as the OA version, using an open-source document reader on CUL’s server to provide page images. Soon after, Google introduced its Google Books program with sample view. The partners then decided to use Google preview, set to display 50 percent of the book content, as a simple way to provide partial OA. Then, in 2014, the partners introduced a program to provide OA to fully functional, downloadable PDFs of Signale books, in their entirety, after an interval of four years from their initial publication. MARC records for Signale titles are offered on Project MUSE and JSTOR (discussed below under “Partners and Platforms”).

**License Regime**

While copyright restrictions will exempt certain books in the series from free distribution, the OA program will apply to the vast majority of Signale titles over time. Some Signale books have rights restrictions because CUP and CUL are licensing rights from German publishers. The individual contract that authors sign does not specify a Creative Commons (CC) license or the OA stipulation. The OA arrangement, which happens four years after publication, is included in the series agreement that CUP has with CUL and Cornell’s Department of German Studies. CUP will begin to specify a CC license for Signale books like the one now used for Cornell Open.

**Preservation Plan**

Copies of Signale books are digitally stored with Project MUSE and JSTOR, which take advantage of Portico for archiving. Signale books also exist on CUP’s servers in addition to the print editions.

**Partners and Platforms**

All departments at CUP are involved in Signale, from production to finance. Library participants include CUL’s director of collections, who also serves as managing editor of the series, and a team of Web designers/programmers. Seven Cornell faculty members serve on an exceptionally active editorial board.
The platform partners for Signale are JSTOR and Project MUSE. (Until MUSE Open comes online, MUSE developed an OA icon to signal to researchers those titles available in OA.) The content is the same on both platforms. These platforms were chosen because they are not just stand-alone repositories. They have an established user base, have worked for decades to make their content discoverable, and are available at institutions in sixty countries. Both Project MUSE and JSTOR are experimenting with OA, and they are not-for-profit entities. They have a vested interest in seeing new models survive, and they provide a focused environment for scholarly explorations. CUP continues to use Google preview to display open content from the newer Signale books.

**Funding Model and Financials**

Initial start-up funding for Signale came from CUL and Cornell’s College of Arts and Sciences. In 2010 Cornell received a three-year officers’ grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support direct publication costs for the first Signale books as well as sustainability planning for the series. Having a distribution of labor among CUP, CUL, and Cornell faculty has helped to defray direct and indirect publishing costs. The four-year moving wall for making titles OA is intended to allow the partners to recover as much of the direct publishing costs as possible during the period when most print sales are anticipated.

CUP, CUL, and Cornell’s College of Arts and Sciences each maintain reserve funding to aid in the publication of Signale books. These accounts include revenue from book sales and publication subventions. Signale revenues since 2011 were approaching $150,000 as of June 2017. From CUP’s perspective, Signale is at or close to break-even levels.

Print editions are produced in small runs, backed up by trade-quality POD. Signale ebooks are available for sale on e-readers (Kindle, Google Play) and in aggregations for the library market, including the Books at JSTOR program and Project MUSE. The books in the aggregations are paid for during the first four years and then are made available as OA.

**Usage Metrics**

CUP monitors book downloads and chapter-level downloads. Since 2011, Signale titles have generated 4,400 chapter downloads on the Project MUSE platform. This sum represents usage from authorized users at licensed institutions and includes downloads from OA titles. When
usage from non-authorized users for five OA Signale titles is included, the number of chapter
downloads increases to more than 12,000—almost a threefold increase (Figure 1).

**OA Impact on Signale titles since 2015**

![Bar graph showing chapter downloads for five Signale titles.](image)

**FIGURE 1.** The bar graph depicts chapter downloads for five Signale titles. The left
(_blue_) bar above each title represents authorized/authenticated downloads (by users at
licensed institutions) on Project MUSE. The middle (_red_) bar represents non-
authorized/unauthenticated downloads. The right (_green_) bar represents total
downloads.

**Lessons Learned**

Signale books were some of the first titles that CUP made available in ebook editions, and they
have functioned as a test bed for new directions as the press began offering titles through Kindle
and Google Books and working with commercial and noncommercial ebook aggregators for
library sales. With the introduction of the four-year moving wall, Signale books were also the first OA titles offered by the press, paving the way for the Cornell Open program.

Because Signale is relatively self-contained, from acquisitions through editing and production, it has allowed both CUP and CUL to isolate, quantify, and better understand book publishing costs. With its strong editorial board, made up of Cornell University faculty from various departments who are responsible for publication decisions, and investment by the College of Arts and Sciences, Signale has increased the visibility and transparency of book publishing on the Cornell campus. And, importantly, Signale has been a channel for opening communication and building a relationship between the library and the press.

**Future Plans**

Signale has allowed CUP to innovate and expand in the direction of OA beyond the series itself. CUP recently launched a Humanities in Law series with the Cornell University School of Law and the College of Arts and Sciences and is considering a postponed model of OA like the four-year moving wall for Signale.

CUP would also like to continue experimenting with OA by taking part in ventures outside Cornell University. CUP participates in Knowledge Unlatched, an open access program that allows for a collection of publishers’ titles to be unlatched as OA when a consortium of libraries pledges a set amount for the collection. CUP has included twenty-four titles—a mixture of frontlist and backlist—in this program for 2016 and 2017. Additionally, CUP is monitoring the ARL/AAU/AUPresses Open Access Monograph Publishing Initiative as something the press would like to take part in.

On the wider publishing landscape, CUP is watching the experiments in OA undertaken by other presses. One challenge facing all presses venturing into OA is how to educate authors more effectively on what happens with OA. Publishing a book or journal as OA is a feat, but how to market it and make sure it is discovered is even more difficult.

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2 Duke University Press’s participation in Knowledge Unlatched is the subject of another case study in this series.
Part 2. Cornell Open

Overview

Cornell Open (www.cornellopen.org) is the new global OA portal for classic out-of-print titles from the back catalog of CUP. Funded by the Humanities Open Book Program, a collaborative effort by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Cornell Open offers OA versions for key titles from the press’s backlist in the areas of literary criticism and theory, German studies, and Slavic studies.

CUP collaborated with CUL in selecting titles for inclusion in Cornell Open. CUL provided local statistics on historical circulation of the press’s out-of-print books to identify titles that have had steady use over time. Subject-area librarians and Cornell University scholars reviewed titles in the targeted areas and recommended titles for inclusion on the basis of their citation history and contribution to the subject area.

The process of creating Cornell Open began on January 1, 2016. Grant activities were divided into three phases: 1) rights clearance, 2) scanning and digitization, and 3) launch. By the end of May, the press completed all activities in the rights clearance phase of the project and all activities in the scanning and digitization phase except for uploading all ebooks onto various platforms. Seven titles were launched on Project MUSE on June 7. These titles also appeared for the first time on the press’s NEH/Mellon grant-funded website, Cornell Open, one week later with EPUB versions available.

Cornell Open was publicly launched at the AAUP (now AUPresses) Annual Meeting in Philadelphia (June 2016). The remaining thirteen titles were published in August. At that time, twenty ebooks were available as OA from CUP as well as from platform partners JSTOR and Project Muse. The third and final phase of launching and driving usage and discoverability of the titles began on October 1, 2016. Cornell Open aims to expand its list to 150 titles for CUP’s 150th anniversary in 2019.

Project Mission

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3 Also a grantee of the Humanities Open Book Program, the University of North Texas has an OA project described in another case study of this series.
In the short term for Cornell Open, CUP hopes to drive the usage and discoverability of its classic out-of-print titles for use in the classroom and to provide a nexus for readers to engage more deeply with the content. The long-term goal is to launch 150 OA titles prior to 2019, CUP’s 150th anniversary.

In his own words, director Dean Smith described the impetus for starting Cornell Open:

During my interview for the director position at Cornell, I was struck by the passion and the excitement around bringing classic works back as ebooks. There was a lack of resources and a modest goal of five to ten titles per month. People were making extra time to do the tasks involved with digital publishing. I wanted to expand this activity and use grant funding to explore the possibility of operationalizing backlist digitization and OA. At Project MUSE, I’d worked on the early Mellon planning grant for MUSE Open and wanted to experiment with OA. . . . I wanted to experiment with a focused approach to OA—nothing-grandiose or world-changing. Focused OA concerns a specific subject area where unlimited exposure to classic scholarship is critical.

In selecting initial subject areas to focus on—German studies, literary criticism, and Slavic studies—the press was looking to build on its success with the Signale series in German studies. The press also wanted to celebrate the efforts of CUP’s previous director John Ackerman, a world-renowned Slavic studies scholar, and Bernie Kendler, a groundbreaking editor in literary criticism. Presses are known for their acquiring editors, and these editors helped to shape the fields they acquired in. Bringing back their acquired titles pays homage to their visionary efforts and will also, it is hoped, spark a renaissance in those fields.

CUP will also work to broaden interest in Cornell Open books beyond field-specific scholarly purposes and make them pertinent and accessible for other reader groups such as teachers, students, and the global community of scholars. Having the expertise of library subject specialists from CUL in daily contact with student and faculty researchers ensures that Cornell Open candidate titles are of continuing interest and relevance to scholars and other potential readers.

**Product Strategy**

**Content Selection**

CUL and CUP staff began the process of selecting the first twenty books to be digitized with the NEH/Mellon grant by examining over two decades of the library’s circulation statistics for
influential CUP titles that are currently out of print. Scholars and subject specialists in selected fields were then asked to evaluate the list of prospective titles, using both these quantitative data and their own knowledge of research and teaching needs in their specialty areas, in order to choose those books of greatest continuing interest and relevance.

Since the initial round of title selection, CUP has enhanced the selection process for grant-sponsored OA titles to include an additional round of synthesis and review. A faculty panel with representatives from the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell selected themed clusters of classic out-of-print titles to be used in undergraduate- and graduate-level humanities courses. The faculty panel includes leading scholars/administrators in the humanities at Cornell. The panel selected thirty-four titles to be used in courses and discussion groups. CUP will work closely with the faculty panel and CUL to assess the impact of the titles adopted for courses that will include faculty and student feedback.

In its strategy to reach a global market with Cornell Open content, CUP contacted LYRASIS and ICOLC (International Coalition of Licensed Consortia). These are two very large consortia of libraries encompassing millions of researchers. LYRASIS encompasses 1,200 institutions in the U.S. Northeast, and ICOLC is a global collective that includes 3,000–5,000 additional institutions in twenty countries. These consortia sent a survey regarding Cornell Open to their entire community, and the press received a lot of valuable feedback, which it will use to help improve the next round of the initiative. A brief selection of responses received is as follows:

- “Each and every open book initiative increases the knowledge base available to everyone in the global community. Each initiative makes a difference. Books and libraries make a difference. They save lives in thousands, if not millions, of different ways.”
- “We are a small liberal arts school—moving rapidly into professional programs, but these titles could be useful to a number of our students and faculty in the humanities.”
- “We are always happy to include academic open access titles such as these in our discovery system. They appear to be of interest to advanced researchers or graduate students, so they probably will see little use by our undergraduates. However, having them available to our faculty is very useful.”

Currently the grant-sponsored reissued books of Cornell Open are being marketed by the library consortia directors at institutions with programs in German studies, Slavic studies, and
literary criticism. The titles also appear in CUP’s catalogs and are available through all major search engines and on Amazon.

**Formats**

Books are downloadable from the Cornell Open website in PDF and EPUB formats and are downloadable in PDF by chapters from JSTOR and Project MUSE. MARC records for Cornell Open titles are offered on Project MUSE and JSTOR.

**License Regime**

CUP staff designed a workflow for clearing author rights and secondary rights in parallel, which helped to expedite the overall process. By engaging in both activities simultaneously, the press saved time and cleared rights faster than would have been possible by pursuing rights clearance in a linear, consecutive fashion. Using this parallel workflow, the press cleared all rights for fifty books, with other books having to drop out for want of clearance.

Reissued books in Cornell Open are licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND license (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives).

**Preservation Plan**

Electronic copies of Cornell Open books are stored on Project MUSE and JSTOR, which both take advantage of Portico’s archiving service. The books also exist on CUP servers and in print editions.

**Partners and Platforms**

CUP’s grant partners for Cornell Open are the NEH and the Mellon Foundation, which have been helpful and supportive. They are both committed to knowledge sharing in a new world of scholarly communication and discovery. CUP enlisted Supadu as its website partner for Cornell Open. In addition to the Cornell Open website, OA books in the program are also hosted on the platforms of partners JSTOR and Project MUSE, which likewise host the titles of the Signale series.

CUP is investigating tech partners such as University of Minnesota Press’s Manifold initiative, University of Michigan Press’s Fulcrum, PaperHive, and K2 Denmark as CUP considers extending the peer-review conversation on born-digital OA titles and allowing for commentary directly on its classic OA titles.
Apex Co-Vantage has also been an excellent partner for Cornell Open. Apex Co-Advantage provides fast turnaround times and has offered to digitize fifty-seven titles from the second grant at no charge to support the initiative.

Through Ingram’s CoreSource, CUP can, for a modest fee, create Web-enhanced PDFs economically for the deep backlist and integrate them more quickly into its distribution channels. POD paperbacks for OA titles are also easier to produce.

**Funding Model and Financials**

The NEH/Mellon grant underwrote the reissue costs for all the out-of-print backlist titles in Cornell Open. Forty percent of the costs covered went toward file conversion and institutional overhead. The digital versions of Cornell Open titles are OA, and POD paperbacks are available for $19.95 as a test to see what happens.

**Usage Metrics**

The press is monitoring book downloads and chapter downloads on JSTOR and Project MUSE, as well as monitoring traffic on the Cornell Open website. JSTOR is data-mining CUP’s grant-sponsored OA titles as part of its Reimagining the Monograph initiative.

CUP director Dean Smith reported in June at the AUPresses annual meeting in Austin that from the period between June 2016 and March 2017, Cornell Open titles had generated more than 60,000 chapter downloads through JSTOR and Project MUSE alone (Figure 2). Students and researchers accessed these titles at 800 institutions in 152 countries. From August 2016 through March 2017, the titles generated 2,273 full-book no-charge downloads on Kindle. Since June 2017, Kindle downloads have increased to 5,200 full-book downloads. In July these titles were downloaded 1,500 times and in August more than 950 times.

These statistics are not conclusive evidence that extensive marketing to global library consortia has caused an increase in Kindle books being downloaded for courses, but activity has increased significantly in the months leading up to the new academic year. In scholarly publishing July and August are traditionally known for high sales to academic libraries and bookstores. More investigation is needed to determine causality.

Additionally, CUP will work closely with the faculty panel and CUL to conduct an assessment of the impact of the titles (those titles selected for themed clusters) being used in
Cornell courses. This assessment will include faculty and student feedback. CUP is currently in discussion with key faculty about how this assessment will work. The titles will not be available for classroom use until spring semester 2018.

**NEH Usage Overview**

![NEH Chapter Downloads chart]

**Total: 63,566 chapter downloads/152 countries/800 institutions**

**FIGURE 2.** The bar graph depicts downloads, broken out by platform, for Cornell Open titles from summer 2016 to March 2017.

**Lessons Learned**

Dean Smith enumerated some of the learning outcomes for CUP from the Cornell Open project.

1. Authors appreciated that their books had been selected for the program. They also liked the idea of their books being brought back as a paperback through POD. Only one author declined to participate.

2. Enlisting global library consortia to market the titles to millions of researchers and making EPUB versions available on Amazon provided great market research and accelerated the uptake. The press experienced great uptake of its titles on Kindle during
December and January of 2016, even though those titles had been available since August. Aby Warburg’s *Images from the Regions of the Pueblo Indians of North America* generated significant Kindle downloads (350) as did Patrick Brantlinger’s *Bread and Circuses* (170).

3. The press did not anticipate the increased workload involved in making the POD paperbacks. Each one required a new cover, copyright page, etc.

**Future Plans**

CUP is in the process of digitizing as many of its out-of-print books as possible, and the NEH/Mellon program has kick-started efforts to catalog its backlist titles, which reach back to 1869. CUP has received an additional NEH/Mellon grant for reissuing fifty-seven more out-of-print titles in OA as part of a celebration of the humanities at Cornell University.

Cornell University’s investment in the humanities prompted CUP to expand the initial goals for Cornell Open so that it aligns more directly with scholarship at the university. In 2016 the university celebrated a “New Century for the Humanities” with a series of events and the unveiling of a new humanities building, Klarman Hall. CUP will join forces with this humanities initiative to work with professors to assign CUP texts in the classroom and to disseminate its classic out-of-print humanities scholarship on a global scale. Cornell University’s interim president Hunter Rawlings and provost Michael Kotlikoff endorse this effort to bring back out-of-print scholarship from CUP for use in humanities courses.

Additionally, CUP would like to operationalize a program for frontlist titles that would fold into Cornell Open, but it does not have the business model ready. If an author comes with a subvention in the range of $10,000 to $15,000 and is interested in OA, then CUP will discuss the possibility with its publication board. But for the humanities, it does not appear that an author-pays model of OA can be sustained on a large scale. Some portion of CUP’s frontlist in the future will be OA from the outset. As of now CUP’s OA frontlist offerings consist of the four or five titles from the Signale series out of more than one hundred frontlist titles in all. The number could rise to fifteen to twenty in the years ahead.
Open Access Case Study: Participant in Knowledge Unlatched, Duke University Press

BY THE AUPRESSES DIGITAL PUBLISHING COMMITTEE, 2016–17

KEYWORDS: hybrid open access; monograph; library consortium; experimental business model; pilot test

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Acknowledgments: The committee acknowledges with gratitude the significant contributions to this case study made by committee member NEIL CHRISTENSEN and by STEVE COHN, director, and MICHAEL MCCULLOUGH, senior manager for book sales and marketing, Duke University Press.

September 2017

Overview

KNOWLEDGE UNLATCHED (www.knowledgeunlatched.org) has enabled Duke University Press (Duke UP) to begin experimenting with, and collecting data on, hybrid open access (OA) publishing. The press decided to participate in the program because it saw potential in the Knowledge Unlatched idea of asking libraries collectively to provide an amount of money that would let a publisher come out more or less whole financially, while creating a version of a book that could be openly accessed by everyone.

The original Knowledge Unlatched process requested that publishers propose titles for inclusion in an OA collection and set the “unlatching” fee for each one. A panel of librarians would select desired titles from those offered by the publishers. Then libraries would be asked to pledge a set amount to support the resulting OA collection. When the title fees for the full selected set were met by pledges, all the books would be unlatched by their publishers through Knowledge Unlatched posting the files to the OA sites of HathiTrust and OAPEN. As the model has been tested, changes to the fee arrangements have been made, and the model has also evolved in other ways based on the results of several pilot rounds and the reactions of libraries and publishers to those rounds.

Duke UP originally made a formal expression of interest to Knowledge Unlatched in late 2012, submitted titles in 2013, and had a first set of four selected titles posted in early 2014. After two more pilot rounds that Duke UP participated in, a total of twenty-nine frontlist books from Duke UP were openly available as of summer 2017, along with eleven backlist titles. A fourth pilot is under way in 2017, with many added publishers participating. As a result, a significantly smaller percentage of the titles submitted by Duke UP were accepted into the 2017 packages, whereas in the earlier rounds the majority of the titles submitted by Duke UP were accepted.

Frances Pinter, the founder of Knowledge Unlatched, was open to Duke UP’s input on how such an OA model can and should work. The press worked early with the Knowledge Unlatched team to figure out how much the library payment for books would need to be if the books being made available in a simple OA version were to work in tandem with selling those books in print and in other digital formats. Now that some of the unlatched Duke UP books are starting to develop track records, the press will be studying the effects of OA availability on the sales of those books.
**Project Mission**

Duke UP’s reason for participating in Knowledge Unlatched was to learn about hybrid OA from direct experience in a context where the press believed that the effects were more likely to be positive for revenue than negative. Duke UP wanted to learn whether hybrid OA (under what circumstances and for which sorts of books) could be a viable model. After talking with Pinter about Knowledge Unlatched, Duke UP decided that it offered a promising model to experiment with. Moreover, Pinter was eager to conduct pilot tests and to learn from them, and she expressed an interest in wanting feedback and hearing ideas from the press.

Duke UP foresees no fundamental organizational impact resulting from its participation in Knowledge Unlatched. The program is marginal and experimental, not primary for the press at this point. Duke UP does not expect hybrid OA book publishing, or any other form of OA book publishing, to become its primary way of publishing books for the foreseeable future. But the press does see in hybrid OA publishing the possibility of supporting certain books, and certain sorts of books, that it might otherwise not be able to afford to publish if sales of monographic books continue to decline.

**Product Strategy**

**Content Selection**

Most of the books that Duke UP has submitted to Knowledge Unlatched are monographic books, specialized scholarship that it does not expect to sell many copies of in paperback. (Duke UP publishes almost every book simultaneously in hardcover and paperback editions.) But Duke UP has also experimented with submitting a few titles that it did expect to sell quite well—though none that it expected to be especially strong sellers—in order to see if it can tell from the experiment how the sales of those books are affected.

Under a system like that of Knowledge Unlatched, peer review for Duke UP’s OA books is no different from that for its non-OA books since the press does not know whether a book will be accepted by Knowledge Unlatched until well after the press has made its decision to accept the book. But even if a system came into being in which there could be an early expectation of hybrid OA publishing, all of the books published by Duke UP would go through the same rigorous peer review process.
The subject matter of the books selected for the program has tended to be more international than the average Duke UP book because Knowledge Unlatched made it clear that its library selectors are from all over the world and, by and large, do not want books primarily aimed at US audiences. Knowledge Unlatched does have particular subject areas that its library selectors have said they prefer and others areas that are unwanted.

Knowledge Unlatched included backlist as well as frontlist books in the 2016 and 2017 pilot batches, whereas the first two pilots consisted only of frontlist books. One limiting factor on Duke UP’s frontlist submissions to Knowledge Unlatched, were the program to be greatly expanded, is that the press sells its own frontlist collection each year, as the eDuke Books Scholarly Collection, and so would not want librarians to accuse the press of “double dipping,” if many of the titles in eDuke Books were also in Knowledge Unlatched and thus available for free. That is not a limiting factor for Duke UP’s backlist, however, for which the press has plenty of books with established track records showing how much (or little) it stands to lose by making the books OA.

Knowledge Unlatched expects that the authors of the selected books must agree to have their books made OA, and Duke UP would have it no other way. Even after what is sometimes a great deal of correspondence to explain Knowledge Unlatched and why the press thinks inclusion will be good for a book, a few of the authors to whom Duke UP proposed this idea (well under 10 percent) were unwilling to include their book, generally out of a fear that making the book OA would cheapen it and diminish the academic credit the author received from publishing it with a distinguished university press. (Some authors have said they heard this from their dean or department chair.)

**Formats**

Duke UP provides a PDF of its unlatched books to Knowledge Unlatched, which then makes them openly available on OAPEN, HathiTrust, and now perhaps JSTOR. Duke UP has MARC records created for its books by Duke University Libraries, and it gives those records to Knowledge Unlatched.

**License Regime**

Knowledge Unlatched has a general expectation that all of the included books will be licensed under a current Creative Commons (CC) license of one kind or another. But Duke UP is no longer agreeing to having any of its books use the current CC licenses, or any CC license
without added clarifying language, because of concerns about the legal stipulation of the CC 4.0 license that users may “reproduce and Share the material in whole or in part” (given the frequency of third-party material such as images in Duke UP’s books, which the press does not believe it can legally license the reproduction of). Knowledge Unlatched, OAPEN, and HathiTrust—understanding the press’s concerns and not wanting to include any clarifications on a CC license, which CC generally objects to—have all agreed that no CC license is necessary for any of Duke UP’s books.

**Preservation Plan**

Knowledge Unlatched offers preservation through Portico. Duke UP also archives all its ebooks through Portico on its own, as part of its sales/marketing/preservation efforts for its ebook collections. The deposits into HathiTrust also serve an archival function.

**Partners and Platforms**

Duke UP decided to work with Knowledge Unlatched because of its promising financial model and the willingness of Pinter, its founder, to consider Duke UP’s input. Knowledge Unlatched was established in August 2012 with the aim of creating a sustainable route to OA by helping libraries around the world share the costs of publishing monographs in OA. The role of Knowledge Unlatched is that of project management, which involves the operational costs of coordinating its participants, chiefly libraries and publishers. Duke UP provides a PDF of its unlatched books to Knowledge Unlatched, which then makes them openly available on OAPEN, HathiTrust, and now JSTOR (at least to some extent).

Knowledge Unlatched conducted its proof-of-concept pilot from 2013 to 2014 with thirteen publishers participating. Duke UP was one of them, having contributed four titles to the collection of twenty-eight books in the humanities and social sciences. The second pilot included seventy-eight titles in all, from twenty-six publishers, with Duke UP and the University of Michigan Press each having a publisher package of ten titles, while the other titles were in disciplinary packages. The publisher packages were not as easy to unlatch as the disciplinary packages, so Knowledge Unlatched abandoned that idea for future pilots. The KU Select 2016 pilot was much expanded, including 343 titles from fifty-four publishers: 147 frontlist and 196 backlist books. Of these, fifteen frontlist titles and eleven backlist titles were from Duke UP.
Funding Model and Financials

For its first pilot, conducted from 2013 to 2014, Knowledge Unlatched invited libraries to pledge $1,680 toward securing OA for the collection. If at least two hundred libraries agreed to contribute that amount to the cost of the collection, publishers would then be paid a title fee in return for making the books openly available with a CC license once they had been published. In the end, 297 libraries pledged support for the collection, thereby reducing the cost paid by each library. Participating publishers (who set title fees from $10,000 to $15,000 based on their cost calculations) received a mean title fee payment of $12,000 for each unlatched book.¹

Except for the first pilot, in which Duke UP was allowed to set the unlatching amount for each book (within a range), Knowledge Unlatched thereafter set a standard per-book unlatching amount for each pilot round: $X amount per frontlist title, and then also $Y amount per backlist title for the last two rounds. Duke UP agreed to accept that amount (minus 7.5 percent retained by Knowledge Unlatched to cover its operating costs) if Knowledge Unlatched could raise the amount from its library participants. If it succeeds in raising the requisite amount, the books are then unlatched: Duke UP sends Knowledge Unlatched the PDFs for the books, and Knowledge Unlatched sends the publisher the money.

The press does not consider the payment a subvention; rather, the press considers it to be a bulk purchase of OA for all, and so it pays its authors full royalties on the “sale” at the same level it pays royalties on all other sales of electronic editions. A library that has contributed to the unlatching of a book is offered a discount on a print copy, if it buys the book directly from Duke UP, but there have been very few takers.

All Duke UP books in Knowledge Unlatched are also available for sale in print—from a print run in both hardcover and paperback editions, as is usual for the press. Duke UP has not printed the books included in Knowledge Unlatched any differently from its other books, in numbers or in type of run. The timing of unlatching would make any alternative hard to manage. (Duke UP does not know for sure that the books in any given cohort will unlatch until about half of them have already been published.) The books submitted to Knowledge Unlatched, which are flat

PDFs, are also available for sale in the same ebook formats as for all other Duke UP titles, including consumer ebook formats like Kindle and library ebook formats like ProQuest.

Duke UP sells print versions of its Knowledge Unlatched books on its website. Duke UP does not yet sell ebooks directly from its site (though it expects to do so soon), but it does provide links to ebook vendors. Duke UP does not now mention the Knowledge Unlatched OA books on its own website, believing that offering the same books as OA downloads on its website would confuse things. But when Duke UP creates a planned OA section in connection with the new website it is currently developing, it does plan to list the Knowledge Unlatched books in that separate section of the website.

Duke UP assumes some risk by participating in Knowledge Unlatched, in that making some of its books available as OA could hurt their print sales. There is no good way of measuring that impact, but it is certainly a risk. The press is quite sure that, at this point, the unlatching fees should cover the risk; but whether that will remain true later on, as readers become more accustomed to finding the books in their OA form, is impossible yet to say.

Duke UP is just getting to the point of having enough of a track record to assess the effects of OA on its print and electronic sales of the books it has made available through Knowledge Unlatched. The print sales, perhaps particularly the hardcover print sales, do seem to be depressed a bit for the books in Knowledge Unlatched from what they otherwise would have been. But as of summer 2017, with only four books in the oldest cohort from fall 2013 (so having three-plus years of sales) and ten books in the second cohort from fall 2015 and spring 2016 (so not yet having two years of sales), the press is only now getting to the point where it makes any sense to analyze differences in the sales of these books compared with similar books from the same periods. The press has not noticed any differences in return patterns. Duke UP has no control group here, so it is hard to make good comparisons. Even without participation in Knowledge Unlatched, two books that seem about the same to the press may well show very different sales performances.

**Usage Metrics**

Duke UP looks at metrics provided by the platforms—such as the number of hits on OAPEN, the number of pageviews on HathiTrust, and the number of hits by country—but the press is not yet doing anything proactive with these metrics and may never find any useful way to do that. The
numbers of readers who are accessing the Duke UP books made available through Knowledge Unlatched are substantial, particularly on the OAPEN site (for the first four books unlatched, the number of hits on that one site, as of the end of 2016, ranged from 2,871 to 4,361), but the press does not know who the readers are or how many of them are serious readers rather than casual browsers. The usage statistics reveal that they are a very international group, but that is all the press knows about them. In the last three months of 2016, more than thirty months after the first four books were initially posted on the OA sites, average usage per book at OAPEN was still averaging more than one hundred hits per month.

**Lessons Learned**

The main risk of participation for Duke UP comes from learning wrong lessons about the viability of hybrid OA, if the Knowledge Unlatched model—which is both singular and also steadily evolving, sometimes without full transparency—causes Duke UP to draw wrong conclusions. Knowledge Unlatched is caught between librarians’ needs, wants, and expectations, on the one hand; and publishers’ needs, wants, and expectations, on the other. Knowledge Unlatched is trying to satisfy both, but that is not always possible. From Duke UP’s viewpoint, this has sometimes caused unexpected shifts of the model that the press has had to push back against—sometimes successfully, sometimes not.

It was also a bit unexpected, in the much-expanded third-round pilot (Select 2016), when Knowledge Unlatched asked Duke UP to settle for 80 percent of the agreed-on fee to unlatch its books. All the publishers involved in the third round had to wrestle with this question of what to do since the full unlatching amount had not been raised. In the end Duke UP and every other publisher did agree to accept 80 percent of the amount originally set for unlatching.

Knowledge Unlatched had actually asked Duke UP, early on, whether it would accept such a proposal. After some consideration, the press responded that it could accept it as part of the learning experience of a pilot. Duke UP wanted to support the effort, in the spirit of a pilot, as long as Knowledge Unlatched could be clear about what it was learning from its first failure to raise the full unlatching amount and could prove it was not taking for granted that publishers will settle for less as a rule.

So Knowledge Unlatched asked Duke UP to help draft the letter to publishers that explained the request to accept a lower payment. The press agreed to help because it was
convinced that this was the right thing to do. Duke UP will be watching the fourth pilot in 2017 closely to see if Knowledge Unlatched is able to learn lessons from this experience and raise the full unlatching amount for an even larger collection of books.

**Future Plans**

The scalability of Knowledge Unlatched is uncertain. At this point, the model for Knowledge Unlatched seems to be fairly well set, so the main questions are whether the pledging model can support larger collections and whether the unlatching fees will be sufficient in the long term to defray the cost of high-quality scholarly publication.

As the pilots that Duke UP took part in grew steadily larger year by year, the needed commitments from libraries grew proportionally. From the results of the three pilots completed so far, Knowledge Unlatched will need to find ways to improve significantly the response level of libraries in order to continue expanding. If Knowledge Unlatched cannot enlarge the total number of books going through the program in a year as it attracts more publishers, then the proportion of Duke UP’s books that can be included in the program is likely to diminish, not increase.

For that reason, Duke UP is watching with interest other experiments with hybrid OA publishing of monographs, in particular the new Open Access Monograph Publishing Initiative launched by the Association of American Universities, the Association of Research Libraries, and the Association of University Presses.
Open Access Case Study: digitalculturebooks, University of Michigan Press

BY THE AUPRESSES DIGITAL PUBLISHING COMMITTEE, 2016–17

KEYWORDS: open access book series; press/library integration; digital platform; metrics; platinum open access; freemium

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September 2017

**Overview**

**DigitalCulturesBooks** (www.digitalculture.org) began in 2006 as a joint venture between the University of Michigan Press (UMP) and the Office of Scholarly Publishing at the University of Michigan Library. (In 2009 UMP was incorporated into the library and is now a division of Michigan Publishing at the University of Michigan Library.) Digitalculturebooks (DCB) was designed as an open access (OA) imprint containing several series. The intention was that most series included in the imprint would have a connection to the idea of digital culture or to the digital humanities. Other series were included not so much for their connection with digital culture but because their scholarship was thought to benefit from distribution on an OA platform. The series operate independently of one another, in some cases with designated series editors or sponsors.

The first title in DCB appeared in 2007; 53 were available as of early 2017. (See the appendix for a count of titles by series.) All titles published in DCB have undergone the same scholarly peer-review process as other UMP books do. All titles are made freely available for online chapter-by-chapter reading. With the exception of special publications that exist only in the form of a dedicated website, all DCB titles are also available for sale in print editions. The online reading environment for DCB titles is provided by the University of Michigan’s Digital Library Extension Service (DLXS), which offers a suite of resources supporting the archiving and publication of digital library resources for collections based on XML plus images.

**Project Mission**

The original impetus for DCB was, according to Mary Francis, editorial director of the University of Michigan Press, “to establish a collaboration between the Press and the Library at a period when the Press still reported to the Graduate School, but there was a separate publishing group, the Scholarly Publishing Office, in the Library.” As such, collaborative partnership was perceived to be one of the inherent benefits to the project, as Francis explained:

While the Library was an “external agency” prior to 2009, there were still close links between the Press and the Library. The main benefit of partnering was that the Library had greater technological capacity and skills at a time when *digital* was emerging as an important area for publishers. The main risk of partnering was that the identity of the Press and the Library’s Scholarly Publishing Office would become confused in author
and reader minds—this is why a fairly narrow subject area was chosen as the focus of DCB.

The current stated mission of DCB is “to be an incubator for new publishing models in the humanities and social sciences.”\(^1\) Its mission and goals have remained constant since its inception. DCB’s goals, formulated by the steering group of press and library administrators that created the imprint, are as follows:

- To provide an open and flexible publishing program that combines print and electronic distribution to maximize the audiences and uses for each project. This program is intended to introduce humanists to the advantages of online publication.
- To apply a mixed business model that will embody OA principles in an online context, while simultaneously generating revenue from printed books.
- To establish a data-collection program to help improve UMP’s understanding of the changing world of publishing, research, reading, and the way in which reading and user habits vary across different constituencies and genres.
- To make a sustained effort to catalyze and nurture a national dialogue about the future of scholarly publishing in general and about new possibilities for humanistic discourse and scholarly exchange in particular.

**Product Strategy**

**Content Selection**

The authors and editors who have contributed work to DCB come largely from the general pool of authors and editors associated with UMP’s titles. Often, but not always, potential contributors will have a particular interest in the digital humanities and/or in OA publishing. Series editors tend to be the most likely to have enthusiasm for digital and/or OA publishing, and they bring projects to DCB out of that interest. Authors and editors also tend to be more interested in “digital affordances” (i.e., the ways in which readers can interact with a digital object) than in OA per se. As Francis noted, “We have had to educate several authors along the way, but none have balked at the idea of an OA version alongside the print/premium ebook version.”

To a large extent, the series and titles in DCB are aimed at communities of authors and readers who are “predisposed to embrace the goals of DCB as part of their own investment in exploring and understanding digital culture,” said Francis. The nature of and audience for a title do factor into UMP’s decision about whether it would benefit from OA distribution. UMP considers, on a book-by-book basis, whether OA will help the author or authors of a title achieve a particular strategic goal they have. For example, UMP would try to find a way to publish in OA a book on a regional topic about the developing world so that readers in the target countries could access it more easily. UMP is also interested in making OA those books with an explicit ambition to influence public policy.

Apart from these considerations of subject matter and audience, there is no significant difference in the vetting and selection process for DCB titles and that for UMP’s for-sale-only scholarly titles. DCB titles are subjected to the same type of peer review as any other scholarly work, but in at least one case the traditional process was supplemented with open peer review using the Hypothes.is annotation/commenting software tool. Readers have also taken advantage of the Hypothes.is plug-in, which accompanies every DCB book, to comment on and annotate the online versions.

**Formats**

All content in DCB is offered in both OA (online reader) and paid (print and downloadable ebook) versions. All titles are made freely available for online chapter-by-chapter reading only. OA versions of entire titles as PDF or ebook (EPUB, Mobi) are not available, but these downloadable editions are made available for sale. The online reading environment for DCB titles is provided by the University of Michigan’s DLXS, which offers a suite of resources supporting the archiving and publication of digital library resources for collections based on XML plus images. A downloadable bundle of MARC records for all titles is available on the DCB website. Each DCB volume is assigned a DOI and an ISBN for the OA version, an ISBN for downloadable ebook versions, and an ISBN for the print edition.

**License Regime**

In most cases DCB titles are licensed under Creative Commons (CC) BY-NC-ND (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives). This restrictive CC license has not only been the one that most

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2 For information about Hypothes.is, see https://web.hypothes.is.
authors have preferred but is also aligned with the freemium funding model that DCB has focused on exploring. Licensing and sales revenues play an important role in sustaining the imprint without having to charge book processing charges to authors or their parent institutions.

**Preservation Plan**

The University of Michigan Library considers publications on its DLXS platform—soon to be replaced by Fulcrum, now under development (see “Partners and Platforms” below)—to be part of its collections and has developed preservation policies and technology solutions to ensure the long-term curation of these digital objects.

**Partners and Platforms**

DCB as a whole has no formal collaborators or support beyond the University of Michigan, but individual projects have been supported by subventions or research grants.

DCB currently runs on the DLXS platform. UMP uses DLXS to host other OA journals and books not part of DCB; the University of Michigan Library uses it to host digital collections; and other institutions have installed their own instantiations of DLXS to host publications and collections.¹ Not all of Michigan Publishing’s OA titles are delivered via DLXS, however, because it imposes considerable technical requirements for conversion of books to the XML schema used by the platform. Some, especially those with complicated layouts, are made available as page images and downloadable PDFs on HathiTrust and OAPEN.

At present the University of Michigan Library is developing Fulcrum, a new publishing platform funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which will replace DLXS. DCB titles and other encoded text products that Michigan Publishing has developed on DLXS will be migrated to Fulcrum. Fulcrum is part of a larger strategy by the library to migrate a range of products and platforms (e.g., DSpace, Omeka, Drupal) that it has accreted over the years to a single software framework, Samvera, which is community supported by a consortium of other large research libraries.² As it has done with collections created for DLXS, the library considers publications on Fulcrum to be part of its collections and has developed preservation policies and technology solutions to ensure their long-term maintenance.

³ For information about DLXS, see www.dlxs.org/about/samples.html. The software is no longer supported.
⁴ For information about the Samvera community, see https://samvera.org/.

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Funding Model and Financials

Initial research and development for DCB came from the University of Michigan Library’s information technology funds, in particular for the development of the DLXS system. Ongoing technical programming and maintenance costs of the platform are also covered by library funding, with labor divided between the programming group in the library’s Department of Information Technology and the Publishing Technology Group within Michigan Publishing.

Although DCB titles are OA, readers of the free versions are required to access content chapter by chapter, since freely downloadable versions of entire titles are not offered. The decision not to provide that facility was mostly a financial one, as Francis explained:

[It] was an attempt to model a “freemium” sustainability plan whereby readers only able to view a book on their screens would be encouraged to pay a “convenience” fee and buy a downloadable ebook or print version. Freemium approaches avoid having to ask authors to pay for publication, something that risks disenfranchising scholars from less-wealthy institutions.

A related consideration was that books with only free versions do not generally make it into the information supply chain; for instance, vendors like Amazon tend not to list free editions that have no paid counterpart.

Sales of the print/ebook versions of DCB titles have been sufficient to cover their production costs. In general, sales of these titles in print and ebook forms have been comparable to those of non-DCB titles on UMP’s list, with three caveats noted by Francis:

1. During the decade in which DCB titles have existed, UMP and peer presses have seen a steady overall decline in the sales of scholarly books. The fact that DCB titles have sales comparable to traditionally published monographs in the same fields means their sales have been modest.

2. Circumstantial evidence suggests that in the early years of DCB’s existence, libraries were struggling to adapt their acquiring processes to the existence of OA titles, and the profile of DCB grew slowly. Having print titles available may, during that early period, have kept the sales patterns similar to “normal” publications simply because libraries and readers were still adapting.

3. Across the different series within DCB, there are some distinctive patterns that seem to have to do with the topic of specific series. For example, the gaming community engages
with the Landmark Video Games series online more than other communities seem to engage with the other series online, but the Landmark Video Games titles also sell fewer print copies.

In addition to direct sales, DCB derives some income from licensing titles with the CC NC designation for use as reprints or in course packs, in the same manner that any other copyrighted UMP material is licensed. An estimated breakdown of DCB funding sources is presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1.** Estimated sources of funding for DCB in broad categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant funding</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home institution’s support</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and licensing</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author charges</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Going forward, Michigan Publishing hopes to formulate a financial model for its OA titles (whether in DCB or elsewhere) that prioritizes “platinum” OA, that is, free to readers and without publishing charges paid by the author. The experience with DCB provides encouraging evidence that it is possible to publish OA books without using the author-pays model prevalent in journal publishing in the sciences, medicine, and technology. However, this statement must be placed in the context of a constantly shifting landscape around OA and especially efficiencies in the information supply chain that have allowed libraries to identify more easily when an acceptable electronic version is available OA.

**Usage Metrics**

For the commercial print and ebooks versions of DCB titles, the usual sales figures and download/view data from aggregators are available. Usage of the free online versions of DCB titles is tracked via two methods:
• Google Analytics\(^5\) uses a piece of JavaScript code inserted on every relevant webpage that sends usage information to Google, which then makes a variety of detailed reports available to website owners.

• Altmetric for Books\(^6\) (“altmetrics,” originally derived from “article-level metrics”) is the general term for a method of tracking usage of individual (or sets of) digital objects, including not only the tracking of direct Web hits but also citations and mentions in formal scholarship, social media, etc. Altmetric.com offers tracking services for books as well as articles via JavaScript inserted on webpages. This allows a publisher to share usage information with readers by way of a “badge” with links to the details (Figure 1).

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\(^5\) See https://www.google.com/analytics/.

\(^6\) See https://www.altmetric.com/products/books/.
FIGURE 1. Altmetric data for a sample DCB title in the Digital Humanities series. DCB currently uses altmetrics to track only book-level usage; tracking information for individual book chapters is not available.

For Michigan Publishing the utility of both methods of tracking is to “communicat[e] what kinds of impact these works are having in an environment where indicators of engagement have replaced royalty reports as the currency,” as Francis explained:

We are moving toward sending reports to authors and encouraging them to communicate interesting data points with third-party funders (in cases where there are third-party funders). The use of these metrics is new, and we are still in the phase of trying to assess which metrics are the most reliable and indicative of engagement. There is also a lot of work involved in aggregating data from different sources and developing systems to communicate an overall picture—this is still very manual and we are trying to automate as much as possible.

Lessons Learned

When DCB was started in 2006, the landscape of OA digital publishing programs was smaller. Rather than being a response to peer initiatives or competition, DCB reflected “the sense in 2006/7 that digital publishing was an area where Michigan could forge a distinctive identity,” said Francis. Circumstances at UMP and across the scholarly publishing landscape have altered the role of DCB in UMP’s overall strategy: (1) as UMP has pursued other avenues of OA such as participation in Knowledge Unlatched, DCB’s footprint has shrunk relative to other initiatives; (2) the “focus on self-consciously digital projects for their own sake has become less relevant,” explained Francis, “as digital tools and scholarly methods now are involved in every aspect of the Press’s publishing program.”

That being said, experience gained from DCB has had a substantial impact on Michigan Publishing as an organization. In particular, DCB “has provided a laboratory in which the DLXS platform can be improved and new tools tested,” said Francis. UMP first used DOIs on its DCB

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7 UMP was one of the thirteen publishers, along with Duke University Press, that participated in Knowledge Unlatched’s proof-of-concept pilot of 2013–14. Duke University Press’s experience with Knowledge Unlatched is detailed in another case study of this series.
titles. The altmetrics service that tracks usage of online scholarly resources was first tested at Michigan Publishing on DCB titles, as was the Hypothes.is annotation tool.

Moreover, DCB has provided important data for larger issues in OA publishing. A decade of data, for instance, has established that the “freemium” model, combining freely accessible chapter-by-chapter reading with for-sale full versions, is economically viable and has sufficed to cover the direct costs of production for at least a significant set of books. (The economic viability of purely free OA books, with downloadable PDF and/or ebook formats, cannot be extrapolated from the DCB experience.) DCB titles also were used as the main test set for the Mellon Foundation’s Mapping the Free Ebook Supply Chain, an “an evidence-based study of how free ebooks are discovered and used.” This project included detailed analysis of Google Analytics and Weblog data combined with the gathering of reader comments through deployment of a survey tool linked to each book. Among other findings the study revealed that while Google was the greatest source of traffic, the majority of DCB users who responded to the survey discovered the books through social media mentions, especially on Twitter. Very little usage started in library catalogs, illustrating that libraries and the vendors that supply books to them still need to do a better job of identifying and cataloguing OA editions.\(^8\)

In addition to recognizing DCB as a useful test bed for OA and digital publishing, Francis identified other lessons learned to date from the DCB experience:

- The imprint/series interaction is unwieldy; by stacking up series within an imprint, the imprint’s brand value and potential for direct acquisition was weakened. However, this is not specific to the imprint being digital and OA, as it could have happened to an all-print imprint.
- More authors seem interested in digital affordances than are interested in OA per se, with some exceptions.
- In general, the level of knowledge of OA remains uneven among scholars in the humanities and social sciences.

**Future Plans**

The decision to use the DLXS platform as a storage and delivery mechanism leverages the technical expertise of the University of Michigan Library and provides a greater guarantee of

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future-proofing than would a custom-built platform used only by an individual publisher. However, converting books to the XML format required by DLXS adds overhead compared with using PDF (or, say, EPUB produced as a routine product of the print workflow). There may also be potential issues with retrofitting the platform to accommodate emerging technologies and standards (e.g., DCB books currently do not scale well for small mobile-device screens). But, looking forward, Francis noted, “our experience with DLXS is definitely shaping the way we create Fulcrum, the new Mellon-funded publishing platform that will replace DLXS.” For example, it has shown opportunities for integrating other open-source tools, such as Hypothes.is, into a homegrown platform and has created a tradition of technologists based in library information technology and publishing working together on publishing projects.

**APPENDIX.** Published titles in the series of DCB, as of February 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series Name</th>
<th>No. of Titles</th>
<th>Rubric*</th>
<th>Notes†</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21st Century Prose</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Dormant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best of Technology Writing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DH/DC</td>
<td>Transferred to another press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Humanities</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>DH/DC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editorial Theory and Literary Criticism</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Existed prior to creation of DCB; now dormant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landmark Video Games</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DH/DC</td>
<td>Titles commissioned by series editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Media World</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>DH/DC</td>
<td>Have individual series editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Public Scholarship</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Have individual series editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetland Digital Rhetoric Collaborative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>DH/DC</td>
<td>Titles emerge from an annual book competition¶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies of the Imagination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DH/DC</td>
<td>Ceased publication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* DH/DC = digital humanities / digital culture.
† Some series have slowed (dormant) or stopped (ceased), but UMP plans to find ways to amplify the active series and make the rest of DCB a “legacy” imprint.
Open Access Case Study: Humanities Open Book Program, University of North Texas

BY THE AUPresses Digital Publishing Committee, 2016–17

KEYWORDS: grant; reissued books; digitization; library/press partnership

AUPresses Digital Publishing Committee, 2016–17

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Acknowledgments: The committee acknowledges with gratitude the significant contributions to this case study made by committee member SYLVIA MENDOZA and by KEVIN HAWKINS, assistant dean for scholarly communication at University of North Texas Libraries.

September 2017

Overview

The **HUMANITIES OPEN BOOK PROGRAM** (www.neh.gov/grants/odh/humanities-open-book-program) is the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s effort that encourages publishers, in partnership with other organizations, to give a second life to out-of-print books. Publishers are asked to identify outstanding out-of-print books in the humanities, and the program covers the costs of securing rights and making the books available as ebooks (EPUB 3.0.1 or a later version) for free in perpetuity under a Creative Commons (CC) license. Through these efforts, the NEH and the Mellon Foundation hope to learn more about the costs and benefits of providing digitized books free to the public.

This case study describes a two-year grant of $95,599 (for the period from January 1, 2016, to December 31, 2017) awarded to the University of North Texas (UNT) in partnership with the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Texas State Historical Association. The grant, managed by UNT Libraries, funds the creation of a group of ebooks related to Texas and Oklahoma. The grant’s project director is Kevin Hawkins, assistant dean for scholarly communication at UNT Libraries. UNT Press, whose director reports to the dean of UNT Libraries, has participated in the grant, although most work on the grant has been carried out by Hawkins and other staff of UNT Libraries. A timeline of work completed for the grant is provided in an appendix.

Project Mission

The goal of the project is to broaden access to 146 books selected by grant participants for their relevance to the histories of Texas and Oklahoma. The grant includes funding for the creation of ebooks for these previously published titles. Funding goes toward rights clearance, scanning and optical character recognition (OCR) if required, and creation of EPUB 3.0.1 and Kindle files. The files will be hosted on UNT Libraries’ servers and, as required by the grant program, made available with CC licenses. The grant also includes funding to prepare certain titles selected by the participating organizations for print-on-demand (POD) sales. UNT’s grant application did not ask for funding to host or maintain (preserve and curate) the content.

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1 Cornell University Press has a project funded by the Humanities Open Book Program that is detailed in another case study of this series.
Product Strategy

Content Selection

The books to be digitized and reissued in OA were nominated by the following organizations participating in the grant:

- Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS)
- Texas State Historical Association (TSHA)
- UNT Press
- UNT Libraries

UNT Libraries had two sources for nominating books. First, UNT Libraries host the Portal to Texas History, a digital library containing more than half a million digitized objects contributed by 240 Texas libraries, museums, and historical societies. Second, UNT Libraries have an imprint called Aquiline Books, a fee-for-service program for the UNT community that publishes both new and revised works of scholarship.

Participants nominated books related to Texas history or Oklahoma history that they most wanted to make freely available to the public but that were out of print or for which there was no plan to reprint. Titles were chosen for their perceived interest to readers; OHS selected twenty-eight titles, TSHA selected eight, and UNT Press selected sixty-six, all published on behalf of the Texas Folklore Society.

UNT Libraries chose nineteen historically noteworthy titles and twenty titles with heavy usage from the Portal to Texas History. In addition, the grant included funding for an additional five out-of-print titles by UNT faculty members to be reissued under UNT Libraries’ Aquiline Books imprint. UNT faculty did not respond to an open call to have their out-of-print books converted to ebooks with grant funding, but UNT Libraries staff approached eligible authors and found exactly five who were interested in making their out-of-print books available in OA. (There turned out to be fewer out-of-print books by UNT faculty than expected.)

In the end, 139 volumes (including a five-volume set) were made available as ebooks.

As required by the Humanities Open Book Program, nominated titles were reviewed for their appropriateness to the grant by an advisory board convened by Hawkins. Because the books came from a variety of sources and were previously published, peer review was not consistent.
across the group. The titles from UNT Press were published on behalf of the Texas Folklore Society, which manages its own review process. Of the five UNT faculty reprints, four were previously published by US-based university presses, with expected peer-review processes. The fifth was published by Peter Lang in a series that is labeled as peer reviewed. Most of the TSHA titles are editions of primary-source material, but the introductions were peer reviewed. OHS staff is not aware of any peer review that took place on the backlist titles that they selected. Titles from the Portal to Texas History largely come from various small publishers in Texas, so it is unlikely that any of them were originally peer reviewed.

**Formats**

While most titles nominated by UNT Libraries were already available online as scanned page images with searchable text (driven by OCR) through the Portal to Texas History, all books included in the grant project have since been made available in this format in one of three platforms hosted at UNT: the Portal to Texas History, Gateway to Oklahoma History, and/or UNT Digital Library. The vendor supplied EPUB 3.0.1 and Kindle-compatible files from the scanned page images and OCR text or, in a few cases, from a print-ready PDF. These other files have now also been made available for download on UNT Libraries’ platforms. Before posting the files online, Hawkins validated EPUB files using epubcheck but only spot-checked for conversion errors that were not detected by epubcheck. Hawkins offered each publisher the opportunity to check its titles more thoroughly. UNT Press and OHS each chose to look at one sample title and approved the conversions. POD files of select titles will also be created.

UNT Libraries have catalogued the digital versions of these books, linking both to the scanned versions and to the downloadable ebooks. MARC records have been added both to the UNT library catalog and to WorldCat. The catalog records are available for other libraries to add to their local catalog. The online versions include Dublin Core metadata created by UNT Libraries, and the libraries’ online platforms are all optimized for search engines to improve discovery.

**License Regime**

The titles included in the grant project came from various organizations with different sets of rights, so a mixture of CC licenses was required to accommodate the variations.

While OHS nominated titles with varying numbers of authors, it gave up on clearing rights on single- and dual-author works and instead chose to send for digitization only multi-author
works, for which OHS still owns the copyright (as works for hire). OHS decided to use a CC BY-NC-ND license (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives) for the ebooks of these titles. The copyright holder of all the titles selected by UNT Press is the Texas Folklore Society. In consultation with that society, UNT Press also chose CC BY-NC-ND, one of the more restrictive licenses, for the included titles.

The rights for the titles to be released by TSHA are slightly more complex. TSHA selected CC BY-NC-ND for the in-copyright introductions to reprints of primary-source material, whereas the reprinted texts themselves carry a CC Public Domain Mark. For other works of scholarship, TSHA chose a license based on how recently the work was published and how much latitude it felt was appropriate to give readers exercising the rights under the license.

Complex, too, are the rights for the titles selected by UNT Libraries. The titles to be released by the Portal to Texas History are in two categories and require two different licenses. Those works that are in the public domain are licensed under a CC Public Domain Mark. For other titles UNT Libraries sought permission from the museum, library, or historical society that contributed the titles in order to make them available under CC BY but did not receive responses to all requests. UNT Libraries recommended to the UNT faculty authors of the five out-of-print titles any CC license except a ShareAlike license because these licenses do not allow, without permission from the rights holder, works to be used in compilations that include material without a compatible provision. The five authors chose various licenses.

**Preservation Plan**

The repository behind the Portal to Texas History, Gateway to Oklahoma History, and UNT Digital Library is preparing for Trusted Repositories Audit & Certification (TRAC) by the Center for Research Libraries, a process that includes producing extensive documentation preservation plans.\(^2\) Documents are available through UNT Libraries.\(^3\)

**Partners and Platforms**

A major part of the grant was preparing the request for proposal (RFP) to select a vendor that would create the ebook files. The source material was varied: mostly scans of hard-copy books,

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\(^3\) See http://www.library.unt.edu/digital-libraries/trusted-digital-repository.
with a few print-ready PDFs. In preparing the grant application, informal bids for conversion to EPUB 3.0.1 and Kindle formats were gathered from outside vendors, and Hawkins averaged these bids for the grant application budget. A formal RFP was issued after the grant was awarded.

The RFP process took longer than expected. The plan was to issue the RFP in July 2016, review responses in August 2016, and have the digitization completed in January 2017. Instead, the RFP was issued in September 2016, responses were reviewed in November, the RFP was issued in January 2017, with the work finished in April. Hawkins wrote the stated requirements for the RFP, which UNT’s procurement office rewrote to follow the standard form for RFPs. After considerable back and forth to get the details right, the RFP was issued, with responses evaluated by a committee of staff from UNT Libraries, taking into account not only cost but the promised timeline, the clarity and completeness of the vendor’s response, and also the quality of the samples sent as requested in the RFP.

Both the scanned versions created by UNT Libraries and the ebooks created by the vendor are disseminated on platforms provided by UNT Libraries. Titles from OHS are available through Gateway to Oklahoma History. The five UNT faculty-authored titles are available through UNT Digital Library and advertised on UNT Libraries’ website. All others are available through the Portal to Texas History. All partners have contributed to advertising the collection of titles.

**Funding Model and Financials**

Given that the project is wholly grant funded and the titles were all published previously, there is no formal business model.

UNT ended up spending only $19,326.15 on ebook conversion, which is significantly less than the $43,783 budgeted for 146 books. A separate call for bids is still planned to adjust scans of the titles selected for POD. Since the projected cost for this POD adjustment is below $5,000, a formal RFP will not be required by UNT.

The grant included support for staff time at UNT Libraries, UNT Press, OHS, and TSHA to promote the availability of the ebooks. Publicity for the reissued books included targeted mass emails, banners on websites, press releases to local newspapers, organizational newsletter write-
ups, and announcements through the social media platforms of Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These various marketing efforts will continue throughout 2017.

Expenses related to the project not covered by the grant are absorbed by UNT Libraries, which had already invested in the repository behind the Gateway to Oklahoma History, Portal to Texas History, and UNT Digital Library. There is no dedicated funding to maintain the content supported by the grant. UNT Libraries will simply cover this cost as they do for other hosted content.

A select group of titles will be prepared for POD sales. UNT Press and TSHA will make their own arrangements for POD, whereas UNT Libraries will arrange to sell certain titles for which they have rights, likely using POD services offered by Amazon or Barnes and Noble. For the five faculty-authored books reissued through Aquiline Books, none of the authors was interested in paying to have a custom cover design for their reprint through POD.

Ebooks might also be sold through one or more channels, which could possibly increase print sales in the long run. UNT Press, OHS, TSHA, and the five faculty authors will make their own arrangements to sell ebooks if they choose to. For other titles, UNT Libraries might sell them through the Kindle store, Barnes and Noble, and/or the iBooks store. This has yet to be decided.

Revenue from POD or the sale of ebooks will be handled differently depending on the participating organization and depending on the royalty arrangement in place. For the five faculty-authored works, any revenue will go to the author.

Usage Metrics
Usage statistics (number of uses per month and source of traffic) are automatically collected for books made available online in the Gateway to Oklahoma History, Portal to Texas History, and UNT Digital Library. Participants will be interested in seeing how usage of the ebook versions compares with that of the versions with scanned page images.

Lessons Learned
A few tasks relating to the grant project have required staff time that UNT Libraries did not think to write into the grant, such as time spent by library staff reviewing responses to the RFP.
Future Plans

Because EPUB conversion costs came in far under budget, the project director proposed to the NEH a non-cost extension of the grant through December 2019, to allow time to digitize thirty-two additional titles from the collection of UNT Libraries and to publicize them at a regional scholarly meeting planned to be held at UNT in 2019. The extension was granted. These additional books, first published by a defunct publisher and now in the public domain, will, like the 139 already available, also relate to Texas history and will be made available by UNT Libraries.

Appendix

Timeline of work completed through June 2017 for UNT's grant from the Humanities Open Book Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2016</td>
<td>UNT Libraries announced the availability of subventions for up to five humanities books to be reissued under the Aquiline Books imprint.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January–June 2016</td>
<td>For books nominated by the Portal to Texas History, a library staff member who works with Portal to Texas History partners contacted rights holders to ask for permission to convert their works to EPUB and to license them under CC BY. If necessary, UNT Libraries would agree to a more restrictive license for the EPUB versions. OHS cleared the rights with authors for twenty-two books to be digitized and verified that OHS has digital rights to embedded images.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>UNT Libraries found five UNT faculty members with an out-of-print book who accepted the offer of a publishing subvention.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May–June 2016</td>
<td>TSHA and OHS shipped a paper copy of each book not already digitized by UNT Libraries to UNT Libraries’ Digital Projects Unit for scanning, OCR processing, and adding to the Gateway to Oklahoma History or the Portal to Texas History.</td>
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Paper copies of the five faculty-authored books selected by UNT Libraries were acquired and lent to UNT Libraries’ Digital Projects Unit for scanning and adding to UNT Digital Library.

The project director began preparing an RFP for vendors to convert page scans to EPUB format.

| July 2016 | The project director drew up versions of an agreement signed by TSHA and OHS, giving UNT Libraries the right to disseminate their ebooks under the licenses they had specified. Participants decided whether to assign ISBNs to the ebooks for any of their titles and to have the conversion vendor insert these into the metadata of the ebooks. OHS decided to use some grant funds to buy a block of ISBNs to assign to its titles. TSHA decided not to offer any ebooks for sale. |
| July–August 2016 | Books not previously digitized were scanned and metadata were created (taking 124.4 hours). All except the five faculty-authored books were made available online by the end of August in the Portal to Texas History or the Gateway to Oklahoma History as scanned page images with searchable OCR. |
| September 2016 | The RFP for EPUB conversion was issued. The document included a representative sample of page images and OCR from scanning and metadata created during digitization. |
| November 2016 | Responses to the EPUB RFP were reviewed in the first half of November. A vendor for ebook conversion was chosen in late November, and the purchase requisition was adjusted downward to reflect the accepted bid price. |
| January 2017 | Scanned versions of the five faculty-authored books were made available online (delayed due to university-mandated rebranding for the Aquiline Books imprint). UNT Procurement Services issued the RFP for EPUB conversion to the vendor chosen in November, and the project director uploaded all digitized files for the vendor shortly thereafter. |
| January–April 2017 | The vendor created and delivered ebook files. The project director used epubcheck to validate the files for |
conformance with the RFP specifications and performed quality control.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>April–May 2017</td>
<td>UNT Libraries staff added all books to the UNT library catalog. UNT Libraries created a bundle of MARC records and a collection in OCLC WorldShare to make it easy for other libraries to include these titles in their catalogs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| May 2017      | UNT Libraries staff added EPUB files as separate items available in the Gateway to Oklahoma History, Portal to Texas History, and/or UNT Digital Library.  
UNT Libraries began to market the collection. |
| June 2017     | UNT Press publicized the collection of books on June 20 through Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram and posted a press release on the UNT Press website on June 27.  
On June 28, TSHA included a story about the collection for the July 2017 issue of *TSHA News*, an email newsletter. |