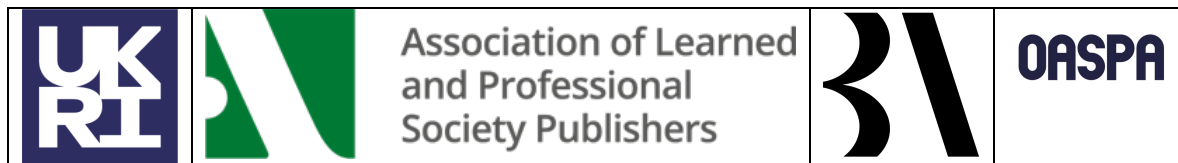


# How to Begin the OA Transition: a guide for smaller and specialist publishers

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informationpower

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Introduction	3
Make the business case for OA	3
Working with publishing partners on OA	4
Strategy	4
Contractual and practical	4
Prepare the ground	5
Identify candidate books	7
Choose one or more revenue models	8
A small note of caution: edited volumes	13
Another small note of caution: retrospective flipping	13
Decide on an OA licence	13
Prepare the book or books	14
Publish or flip the book	15
Promote the book	16
Preserve the book	17
Track and report on title performance	17
APPENDIX: Other articles for the OAPEN Toolkit	21
Books supply chain	21
Metadata and unique identifiers in the book supply chain	26
Ebook file formats	28

# Introduction

A move to Open Access publishing requires a major shift in approach for any publisher, large or small. It involves not only a shift in revenue models: change will be needed in editorial, legal, marketing, metadata, production, rights, and related areas too. Publishers will find themselves in the position of needing to explain to their management boards – and to authors and library customers – why this should be considered and how it is approached. To achieve a successful transition there needs to be a shared understanding between the board, all publishing staff, authors, and customers about the drivers for change, the intended outcomes, and how lessons learned will be shared.

## Make the business case for OA

Let your board know you are thinking about OA book publishing, and keep them informed as your thinking develops. Help them understand why you are thinking about this. You might wish to consider issues such as:

- **Fit with the mission** – Publishing OA makes content available to your constituents *and* a broader audience (e.g. in less well-resourced institutions, in related but separate fields, or from outside academia). For this reason, it greatly increases the usage of the content and drives citations. Without the need to rely on well-known names to sell titles, the field is more equitable and open for early-career researchers to write books. OA can help your titles reach the Global South, and increase your influence globally.
- **Diversifying the business model** – A diverse approach to business models will help make the business more resilient over time.
- **Staying current with publishing practice** – OA is now mature and well established in journal publishing. Book publishing has been a little slower to adopt it, but it is rapidly becoming mainstream. It is likely that other publishers in your field are developing their own OA models, and establishing yourself in the OA space could be a crucial factor in your book programme's long-term success.
- **Incremental change** – A shift to OA can be achieved over time, title by title or series by series. The models and processes can be tested and refined on an ongoing basis while the commitment to OA is maintained at a comfortable level. It's not all or nothing. Nor is there a requirement to rely on one specific OA model. Multiple approaches can be tried in combination or in parallel.
- **Reducing risk** – Selling books requires the investment of considerable sums of money upfront. The publisher takes the risk that this investment will be recovered from sales. This doesn't always happen, and good sales on some titles are relied on to subsidize poor sales on others. With a well-designed OA programme, the necessary income to offset this investment can be guaranteed and managed more effectively from the start.
- **Cash flow** – Return on the publisher's investment in a book is typically received over a period of years. OA income is typically received by the publisher on or before publication.

- **A greater range of viable publications** – OA can facilitate the publication of material which is of high value but has a limited audience.
- **Getting closer to customers** – Small academic publishers tend to be distanced from their customers because they do not sell direct. For a move to OA, developing closer links with libraries is key. While this has resource implications, making those direct links with the end customers can only be a good thing for the business.
- **Supporting authors** – Some authors see OA as desirable for increasing the impact of their work, or for ideological reasons. Research funders increasingly require authors of longform work to publish OA. Offering OA may help attract key titles.

## Working with publishing partners on OA

If you publish your book programme in conjunction with a commercial partner, there are a number of points that you will need to consider.

### Strategy

- You will need to understand your publishing partner's strategy for OA books, and what revenue model/s and licences they support.
- If you have specific requirements for OA licences, these should be agreed with the partner.
- The area is moving quickly, and your partner's strategy and offer will inevitably evolve over time. You will need to maintain regular contact and ensure you are fully updated.
- Your partner should make it clear whether and how your OA books would appear in their collections.
- If OA funding is sourced from libraries, e.g. through collective agreements, you should understand how many libraries/consortial customers the partner has and where these are located.
- You should have a clear understanding with your partner about what levels of profit or surplus may be generated by OA titles. You need to be confident that any potential reputational risk in this area is minimal.
- If your partner's revenue model is such that OA funding cannot be confirmed at the point of commissioning, this needs to be made clear to authors in turn. A strategy for dealing with the publication of a book without full OA funding needs to be in place in collaboration with the partner.

### Contractual and practical

- It should be made clear what the roles and responsibilities will be for each party. When commissioning new titles, it will need to be clear who is responsible for arranging funding.

- Your contract with the partner will need to be explicit about how many OA titles can be accepted. As this is likely to change over time, this is probably best outlined in an Annex with appropriate provisions for variation.
- You and your partner should be clear on the criteria to be used for selecting titles for OA publication.
- If there are potential sensitivities about OA funding sources (for example, pharma funding for medical titles), you and your partner should agree a policy regarding what the parameters should be for accepting, seeking, or acknowledging such funding.
- Your contract should be clear about how any surplus should be allocated between the partners, and how that surplus is calculated in the first place.
- You should document (at a high level) how metadata for your books will be created and shared to optimize the use of digital OA copies and potential print sales.
- You should discuss and agree how your organization will load the books onto your website. Although the OA licence should allow you to do this without reference to the publishing partner, it would be better to have a coordinated approach to making them discoverable. There should be a joined-up approach to acquiring and analysing usage and download statistics.
- You should be clear with your partner about what sort of usage or other metrics you need from them and how (and how frequently) the data is to be delivered.

## Prepare the ground

If you publish independently, some development work will be needed to prepare the ground for OA book publishing.

- *Evolve your communications and marketing* – You'll need to develop an explanation of why you are publishing the book OA that can be used with all internal and external stakeholders (e.g. board, author, editors, customers, and staff). If you are just experimenting rather than committed to a full OA transition, be open and transparent about why this is, what you aim to learn, the timeline, and how you will report on your discoveries. A culture of transparency is highly prized in the OA publishing world. If you plan to experiment with making already-published titles OA – also known as 'flipping' – be clear about how this may differ from your OA strategy for frontlist titles.
- *Evolve your communication and marketing channels* – As well as your usual audience, you will need to market to academic libraries. Marketing channels for this audience include library newsletters, emails through listservs, virtual bookshelves, press releases, dedicated pages for librarians on your website, and social media posts.
  - On your webpage dedicated to librarians, you will want to inform them about the availability of an OA version of the book and also about other versions that are available for purchase.
  - On this page you can make the MARC records for your OA books available in a downloadable format.

Don't forget to let librarians know how they can access your OA books, and which platform they are on e.g. OAPEN, JSTOR, Project Muse, etc.

You can add a submission form allowing librarians to sign up for your librarian-specific newsletters.

- If you are participating in collective funding initiatives, this is a good place to let librarians know about the opportunity.
- Once you have a collection of OA titles, you can experiment with how you display your titles on this web page: perhaps showcasing most recent releases, forthcoming releases, or most downloaded titles.
- If human resources and budget allow, you could take a booth at library conferences or attend library conferences and engage with librarians.
- If you already have usage statistics from other similar titles, these can show you which institutions are heavy users of your titles, and you can target marketing at them.
- If you are not already working with DOAB or OAPEN, consider describing your peer review process on your website. The [DOAB website](#) states: 'The policies and procedures regarding peer review and licensing should be clearly outlined on the publisher's website. DOAB aims to develop an authoritative list of open access (OA) book publishers and we recommend publishers to follow OASPA's membership guidelines to ensure high standards of OA book publishing. You can consult these requirements here (under "books"):  
<http://oaspa.org/membership/membership-criteria/>'
- *Engage with stakeholders* – Engage with your authors, editors, and staff members about what OA is, why it is important, and how you plan to overcome any challenges. Engage with relevant libraries. Librarians will appreciate advance notice that an author affiliated with their institution will be publishing OA with you, and they may be in a position to support you financially.
  - As part of your stakeholder engagement, you might share some author success stories and can find some here: <https://oabooks-toolkit.org/Open-access-for-books/7555171-author-success-stories>. There are different types of 'success' for authors, and these case studies are perhaps surprising in their number and variety, going beyond greater usage and more equitable access.
  - You could ask your authors to write a blog page or record a podcast about their book. This might include why they have chosen to publish OA.
- *Gather evidence about author views and titles before you begin* – What are author and reader sentiments about OA in your field<sup>1</sup>? Gather usage statistics for similar titles or for the pre-flipped title, ideally by institution and in different geographies.
- Document what you do and why – Document the policy decisions you've taken. This will enable you to establish a clear policy framework and to keep it refreshed as you learn things and as your practices evolve. Check and align with the OASPA OA book publishing requirements. Make sure your processes are documented and visible on your

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<sup>1</sup> Frankl, J., (2023) "Towards an Author-Centered Open Access Monograph Program: Understanding Open Access Cultures in Scholarly Publishing", The Journal of Electronic Publishing 26(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.3998/jep.3332> provides a template for interviews and a survey that any publisher can use to consult with authors and editors.

website, as transparency is important to stakeholders. Peer review processes can be described using the PRISM tool provided by DOAB.

## Identify candidate books

Next, assess your existing and forthcoming titles list to identify titles that will help you move forward on your OA publishing journey.

1. *Consider which existing or forthcoming titles could be 'good' to publish OA because they fit your mission, vision, and values.* You might wish to consider issues such as:
  - Subjects of potential public or policy significance or for which development funding might be secured.
  - Books for which you seek a more global audience or an audience beyond well-resourced academic institutions.
  - Author wishes, including the need to comply with a funder or institutional OA publishing policy. Some useful video and textual case studies of authors who have chosen to publish their books OA are available here: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/library/open-access/books/open-access-monographs-case-studies>.
2. *Consider which titles could be 'practical' to publish OA or to flip to OA.* You might wish to consider issues such as these as you review your forthcoming title list:
  - *Authors* – Authors who are positive about OA and who will be flexible as you climb your learning curve about OA book publishing are ideal, as are those who will communicate well throughout the publishing process. It is also helpful to identify authors who have research funding, who can access financial support for OA book publishing from their employers, and/or who are affiliated with library customers who are strongly supportive of OA publishing. Flipping might be a good option if any authors need to retrospectively comply with an OA publishing policy.
  - *Evidence* – Decide upfront what you need and want to learn and what data you have or need to gather. Consider identifying and monitoring pairs of similar books, where one can be published OA and the other not. Perhaps select books similar to those for which you have good past usage statistics.
  - *Risk* – How many works will be included in the title where there are third-party rights holders? How well a book is expected to do financially? Flipping books that are not expected to make much money is a low-risk way of gaining some OA experience.

# Choose one or more revenue models

When planning to publish OA, there is a need to consider how to generate revenue to cover the costs incurred during the publication process and to make a surplus. A wide array of OA revenue models exists, and these can be deployed individually or in combination. The models are a mix of those that can be applied to individual book titles and those that can be applied at the collection or publisher level.

There is plenty of opportunity to be creative and mix approaches or to develop an entirely new approach that fits your particular circumstances. You will need to consider:

## **Strategic**

- How likely is the model or models to cover your costs, both direct and indirect, and to generate some surplus?
- Will the model operate at title, collection, or portfolio level? This is going to depend on your longer-term ambitions for OA. If you are planning a big move, a collection or full-list level is more useful: you won't want to start from scratch every time. But title-level may be more useful for the first one or two books to get a bit of experience under your belt before getting in too deep.
- How much can you learn? How well would the model or models scale to other titles or collections if you so chose?
- How will the model or models enable you to move closer to library customers? These are key stakeholders in the transition to OA, and so this is a strategic consideration.
- How well does the model or models support your authors to comply with OA mandates? This is probably one of your main drivers, and it can be helpful to track whether these requirements apply to a few authors, a growing minority, or the majority.
- How equitable is the model or models for different authors – for example, authors at different stages of their careers or in different countries?

## **Practical**

- How easy is it to administer? The simpler it is, the less likely it is to go wrong and the easier it is to sell the idea internally.
- Will the book be born OA or will the model retrospectively flip a book to OA? Think carefully about whether you have the metadata and staff to support retrospective conversion, as there are well recorded challenges related to this<sup>2</sup>. The marketing, accounting, reporting, etc. all need to be updated following the book's publication. Also, be careful, as you don't want to annoy those customers who've paid, nor encourage them to hang back from buying other titles to see if they'll become OA in future.

A complete overview of revenue models is provided in Figure 1. Depending on your OA publishing strategy, these approaches could be especially useful:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14679068>



1. Flip one or more titles to OA
  - a. Book Processing Charges (BPCs)
  - b. Digital format freemium
  - c. Print sales with online OA
  - d. Membership model
  - e. Fundraising
  - f. Sponsorship funding
  - g. Crowdfunding
2. Publish some titles or collections OA
  - a. Consortial models (e.g. Bloomsbury Open, Knowledge Unlatched, Opening the Future)
  - b. Book Processing Charges (BPCs)
  - c. Digital format freemium
  - d. Membership model
  - e. Print sales with online OA
3. Switch your entire portfolio to OA
  - a. Consortial models
  - b. Digital format freemium
  - c. Membership model
  - d. Print sales with online OA

Every publisher's context will be unique, and so it is difficult to provide general advice. In a nutshell, the models that are the most promising for starting the transition to OA right now are:

- **Consortial funding** models have many positive aspects. Publishers gain visibility, awareness, and ongoing financial support through a distributed network of supporters. Libraries gain the ability to select the publishers and book collections they want to support through a central platform. Authors do not need to provide funding to support OA publication of the book. At the moment the challenge with consortial funding models mainly concerns their limited availability and scope, as well as potentially slower decision-making about titles to be made OA due to governance and decision-making processes outside the direct control of publishers or authors.
- **BPCs** can work usefully, especially in the short term, because each published title can be priced to cover its direct and indirect costs. There is a growing body of data on how different publishers are pricing their BPCs<sup>3</sup>. This approach can work for funded authors; however, many book authors are unfunded, and many funders, librarians, and publishers are increasingly concerned about the equity of this model.

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<sup>3</sup> OpenAPC has been set up to track expenditure on journal APCs and is used by over 400 contributing institutions around the world. As of May 2024 61 institutions had also contributed BPC data for books. See <https://treemaps.openapc.net/apcdata/bpc/>.

- **Print sales with online OA** models are widely deployed. Offering this option requires minimal inventory capacity or risk, as print can be provided on demand.
- **Green OA** models are a compromise on many accounts as the book needs to be sold in traditional ways to cover costs, and the author's unpublished manuscript is made available OA with a reuse licence. The OA version may compete with sales. However, this model can be a functional solution in the short term for enabling compliance with OA mandates while other approaches to funding OA book publishing are tested.
- **Digital format freemium** models are where the publisher provides one digital format OA and sells other digital formats. These models are widely deployed, although attention needs to be paid to ensure the OA version does not undermine sales. Some freemium models, for example, only offer 'view' access to an HTML version of the OA book with a restrictive licence, so that it is difficult to download a copy and transfer it to an e-reader (e.g. OpenEdition) or share it.

Types of revenue models that are available are outlined in Table 1.

Revenue models for OA Books	
Earned revenue models	Short Description
Advertising	A demand-side model that consists of advertisements, contextual links, and/or product placement within the OA monograph or on the publisher's website.
Book Processing Charge	A demand-side model in which publishers charge the author or his/her employer/funder a fee upon acceptance of the book for publication.
Cross subsidies	A supply-side model, in which funding for OA monographs comes from revenues from the publisher's commercial activities such as service provision, institutional funding, sale of translation rights, or profits from other non-OA publications.
Crowdfunding from individuals	A demand-side model, in which the publisher organizes crowdfunding campaigns pitching monographs online to readers.
Embargoed/delayed OA	A demand-side model, in which a monograph becomes OA only after a delay or embargo period, during which only priced editions are available.
Endowments	A supply-side or third-party model, in which the publisher builds or receives an endowment or subvention (for example as a part of a start-up grant) and uses annual interest to cover its expenses.
Fundraising (donations and grants)	A demand-side model, in which the publisher solicits donations, periodically or continuously, from individuals or foundations.
Digital format freemium	A demand-side model in which the OA edition is in one digital format (e.g. HTML) and the priced edition in other digital formats (e.g. EPUB, PDF, MOBI) that may be easier to use and thus have a higher value for customers.
Print sales with online OA	A demand-side model that uses the dual formats of digital and print, which are priced by 'media preference'. The priced version could be a print edition while the online version is offered as OA.
Third-party licensing	A supply-side business model, in which the publisher licenses some of its OA content to third-party distributors and uses some of the revenue to support the costs of OA publishing (the publisher might make the content available for commercial distribution under a separate licence).

Traditional Sales + Green OA	A model where the author's accepted manuscript is made available through a repository. This can be used in conjunction with an embargo or without one. The publisher can still sell access to the final book, although some sales may be compromised because of the availability of the free draft version.
<b>Embedded institutional support</b>	
Library-based publishing	A supply-side model, in which the press collaborates with the university library, sharing resources to make OA financially feasible.
Subsidy model	A supply-side model, in which a university/faculty/research centre and/or library subsidizes a university press directly or indirectly (financially or through facilities, equipment, or personnel, i.e. in-kind institutional support).
<b>Third-party subsidies</b>	
Grants	A third-party business model, in which an institution (learned society, not-for-profit organization, or foundation) subsidizes OA publications, in whole or part, directly or indirectly (financially or through facilities, equipment, or personnel i.e. in-kind institutional support).
Liberation	A third-party model for books that have already been published/are on backlists. Sponsors (foundations or governments) buy the copyright for books and then make them OA.
<b>Consortial models</b>	
Library crowdfunding	A model in which an intermediating platform connects many purchasers with the option to 'unlock' or 'unlatch' a title.
Membership fees	A supply-side model, in which distinct user groups create a platform for economic exchange that provides each group with the benefits of a large network.
Shared infrastructure	A supply-side model, which entails sharing infrastructure and resources.
Subscribe-to-open	A model where libraries subscribe to have access to content. After subscriptions reach a certain threshold, the content becomes openly available to all readers.

Figure 1: Classification of revenue models (adapted and cited from Penier, Eve & Grady 2020). These models can be used alone or in combination.

## A small note of caution: edited volumes

We encourage you to try to find an OA revenue model or models that work at the title, collection, or portfolio level. There are extra practical challenges if your revenue models are different for each of the chapters in your book.

If you really must have different revenue models for different chapters then:

- Make sure your book AND chapters each have a DOI, as this will help you to concatenate usage statistics from different platforms.
- Create and broadcast appropriate metadata at both book AND chapter level. Prepare to do some manual heavy lifting as many supply-chain partners won't be able to accept chapter-level metadata.
- Ensure there is a clear licence at the book AND chapter level and that this information is conveyed in the metadata and on the full text.
- Be prepared to measure usage and report at both the chapter level and the book level. You may have different organizations providing funding for the different chapters. You will have customers interested in the whole title. Authors might need information about their chapter for reporting to their academic institutions or funders.

## Another small note of caution: retrospective flipping

When there is any change to the status of a book title, a resubmission of metadata takes place. Or does it?

While commercial changes (e.g. changes to territorial rights, pricing, and prices for specific business models) are automatically updated throughout the supply chain, OA status changes and licences are not automatically updated throughout the supply chain. Indeed, many data recipients in the scholarly supply chain do not accept any updates.

This situation may change over time, but right now it means that retrospectively flipped OA books are not uniformly discoverable and available across all platforms used by libraries and universities. This inconsistency has been highlighted as a problem by both librarians and publishers, with publishers noting the additional effort to keep OA metadata updated and librarians frustrated by conflicting information around titles' OA status in their discovery tools.

## Decide on an OA licence

An important aspect of OA publishing is open licensing. To be open, a book needs to be freely available with reuse rights, and the open licence communicates what reuse rights are available.

Open licensing is not synonymous with Creative Commons licensing, but the Creative Commons licence framework is very widely deployed around the world and is likely to be the most efficient option. There is a handy tool to help you select a Creative Commons licence: <https://chooser-beta.creativecommons.org/>.

It is essential to understand the ramifications of the different options and to factor in the author's preference, norms in the discipline area, and any requirements mandated by the employer or funder. Furthermore, the preferred licence may also vary across disciplines.

There is extensive literature about open licensing choices and preferences. We will not repeat this discussion, but publishers need to understand the different options:

- An 'attribution' (CC-BY) licence only requires that the source material and author are cited.
- Adding a 'noncommercial' (NC) clause to the CC BY licence prevents commercial reuse of the work.
- Another option is adding a 'no derivatives' (ND) clause to the CC BY licence to prevent derivative works – such as translations – that incorporate part or all of the publication from being created and shared without permission.

Note that NC and ND clauses do not rule out the material being used in this way – they simply mean that permission from the rightsholder is required. This could allow income to be generated from licensing commercial uses, for example, or could enable you to exercise quality control over translations. However, these clauses may not fit with funder requirements, so they need to be chosen with care and advance permission may be needed from the funder; otherwise your author may find themselves noncompliant and ineligible for future research funding. If it is planned to include third-party materials in your books, then these may need to be licensed in new ways. UKRI has published a guide on managing third-party copyright in open access publishing under UK law<sup>4</sup>.

## Prepare the book or books

- Evolve your business plan – If the online version will be OA and you will sell print, then tease apart your online fixed costs (e.g. typesetting, editing, metadata, cover design, and royalties) from your additional print costs (e.g. paper, distribution).
- Evolve your author agreement – Have a signed OA publishing agreement with your author<sup>5</sup>. Remember that you may need to sign a contract addendum if the book is

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/publications/guidance-on-managing-copyright-under-ukri-open-access-policy/>

<sup>5</sup> Templates are available in the indispensable *Clark's Publishing Agreements: A Book of Precedents* by Lynette Owen and published by Bloomsbury.

already on your forthcoming title list; if you are learning as you go, this may need to be an iterative process. Be transparent with authors and help them make informed choices. Authors will need to understand their employer and funder policies and how publishing with you can help them to comply<sup>6</sup>. In particular, discuss the end-user licence with them and ensure they understand what this means.

- Gather identifiers for authors and their employers and funders, as you will need these to report effectively to stakeholders<sup>7</sup>.
- Acknowledgements – Include acknowledgements of any funding for the underpinning research in the book and/or financial contributions towards the book's OA publishing costs.
- Prepare the metadata – Use the latest version of ONIX. MARC records are only helpful if you deliver books directly to libraries and not through a channel or platform.
  - Much as you would for any book, you should describe the content, which helps prospective buyers and readers to find and assess the title.
  - Include keywords (including any discipline-specific keywords) and subject classifications. Thema is the minimum, but BISAC might be helpful in a US environment.
  - Make sure that you describe all aspects of the book. If possible, provide metadata at the chapter level as well as the title level.
  - Ensure you include the correct OA licence.
  - When it comes to pricing, do not use zero pricing to indicate the OA status.
  - For detailed guidance on OA books, refer to EDItEUR's FAQs: [Open Access monographs in ONIX for Books](#).

## Publish or flip the book

- Open licence – Make sure the open licence is included in the file metadata of the full text of the book as well as in the bibliographic or product metadata. Although the book supply chain usually has the bibliographic metadata accompanying the file, they can

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<sup>6</sup> In February 2024 Jisc launched an OA for Books tool to offer an easy way to understand open access policies in order to help authors and research organisations make decisions about publishing in compliance with mandates and policies. <https://openpolicyfinder.jisc.ac.uk/oa-books>

<sup>7</sup> The OA Switchboard is building a [solution for books](#). This has the potential to make the process much easier for all stakeholders.

occasionally become separated. Including the licence in the full-text ensures there is no confusion about the OA status of the title.

- Unique identifiers – Assign separate ISBNs for the OA version and any other ebook or print versions. Make sure every digital version has its own DOI. A unique DOI is critical for tracking the usage and citations of individual books and chapters: it ensures that each book is easily identifiable across platforms, improving the accuracy of performance metrics. If you are flipping a book to OA, then assign a different ISBN to the OA version to avoid confusion, because the supply chain may not reflect the flip very quickly and you might be accused of selling OA content.
- Metadata – ONIX metadata is key for communicating to the book supply chain. Commercial service providers can help you produce and distribute ONIX metadata for OA and non-OA titles to the supply chain. You might consider using the Thoth platform, which is optimized for OA. See <https://thoth.pub/>.
- Platforms – Decide how you will disseminate the book and make it available to readers. You may want to host the book yourself, but this can be an expensive long-term commitment, and you should not rely on this as your sole channel. Multiple channels give you much more reach, but there is also more administration, and you'll need to integrate data from different usage reports. The OAPEN Library is a key place to host OA books. When hosting the OA books on your own platform, consider joining the Directory of Open Access Books. Using channels such as EBSCO, JSTOR, MUSE, and Proquest can increase discoverability and usage in the scholarly community.
- Discovery – It is important for your OA books to be discoverable via DOAB. DOAB does not host books; however, there are many ways to ensure your book is visible there – see <https://www.doabooks.org/en/publishers/doab-trusted-platform-network>. DOAB will ensure that your OA books are correctly highlighted in all the relevant scholarly communication systems.
- Notify stakeholders – You should certainly let the author know that their book is published, and it's also a good idea to notify any funders or libraries who contributed to the costs of OA publishing.

## Promote the book

You'll need to market an OA book slightly differently from traditional books. It's especially important to ensure that librarians become aware that you have published a book OA so that they can encourage readers and also support you financially by buying a print or premium digital copy of the book.

Market your OA books broadly. OA books reach readers outside academia via social media and promotion within the personal and professional networks of authors and engaged readers. You are a bridge to broader engagement with scholarship, and OA content is a powerful enabler.



# Preserve the book

In addition to providing access, one of the key post-publication tasks for publishers is to ensure that published materials are securely preserved for future generations. With printed books, this is typically achieved through a legal deposit route. Digital books may also be preserved through one, or preferably multiple, preservation service providers. It is important that publishers ensure immediate and comprehensive deposit of preservation copies in trusted archives. All books, including OA books, are vulnerable to being lost in future unless robust precautions are taken today.

Ensuring the preservation of digital publications can serve as part of a publisher's disaster recovery strategy and is also a compelling selling point when appealing to authors, commissioning content, or securing agreements and subscriptions. The UKRI Open Access policy, for example, requires that publishers participate in [CLOCKSS](#), [Portico](#), or an equivalent preservation organization/initiative for research articles. OAPEN, Thoth, and many other hosting platforms enable publishers to push OA books to preservation service providers. For more information, please see [https://clockss.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Clockss\\_Guide\\_WEB.pdf](https://clockss.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Clockss_Guide_WEB.pdf).

A **trusted archive** has demonstrated its ability to preserve content and its usability in the long term. This can be demonstrated through means such as:

- Relevant certification including peer review by library experts (e.g. CRL TRAC audit, ISO:16363)
- Demonstrated mandate and funding
- A demonstrated track record of preserving academic content
- Clear, transparent documented agreements, workflows, and processes to ensure long-term access to the repository's contents
- Open provision of information about their holdings on their websites, and via the KEEPERS registry (for content with an ISSN)
- A succession plan so it is clear what happens to content if the archive goes under.

Library customers are keenly interested in a publisher's digital preservation arrangements and often require this in sales or OA funding agreements. Model language is available<sup>8</sup>.

## Track and report on title performance

When a book or chapter is published OA, traditional metrics like sales numbers are less relevant for assessing performance. Instead, reliable usage data becomes the primary metric. Other performance indicators, such as citations, are also important, though they take longer to accrue. Altmetrics, which track social media and news mentions, can provide immediate insights but are often fleeting.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://liblicense.crl.edu/resources/digital-preservation/>

Usage data offers authors, publishers, funders, and academic libraries quantitative measures of impact and serves as a key feedback mechanism to gauge the reach and readership of an OA title. Stakeholders use this data in various ways:

1. Authors: Usage metrics allow authors to measure the reach of their work, demonstrating the readership and engagement of their OA books on a global scale.
2. Libraries: Usage data is vital for librarians to measure OA books' return on investment (ROI). By dividing the cost of acquiring or funding a book by the number of unique item requests, libraries can calculate cost-per-use, providing an evidence-based benchmark for collection development. As more libraries contribute to collective funding models for OA, they are increasingly interested not only in usage by members of their institution but also in global usage data, helping them align their investments with institutional missions, such as the goal of knowledge sharing. Librarians depend on usage data to assess the relevance of OA books they have funded, guiding future investments in OA titles by understanding their users' needs and usage patterns.
3. Funders: Although funders may not historically have focused on usage data, global usage figures are becoming increasingly important in evaluating the impact of OA books they have funded. Tracking usage data helps funders assess the broader reach of the research they support.
4. Publishers: Usage data provides publishers with essential information about the OA books they publish: for example, which institutions use your books and which do not. It will also give insight into the global uptake. This information can assist you in directing your marketing efforts.

The COUNTER Code of Practice is the essential standard and ensures that usage is measured and reported consistently across platforms, allowing librarians and stakeholders to make valid comparisons. COUNTER also maintains a [registry](#) of compliant platforms for transparency.

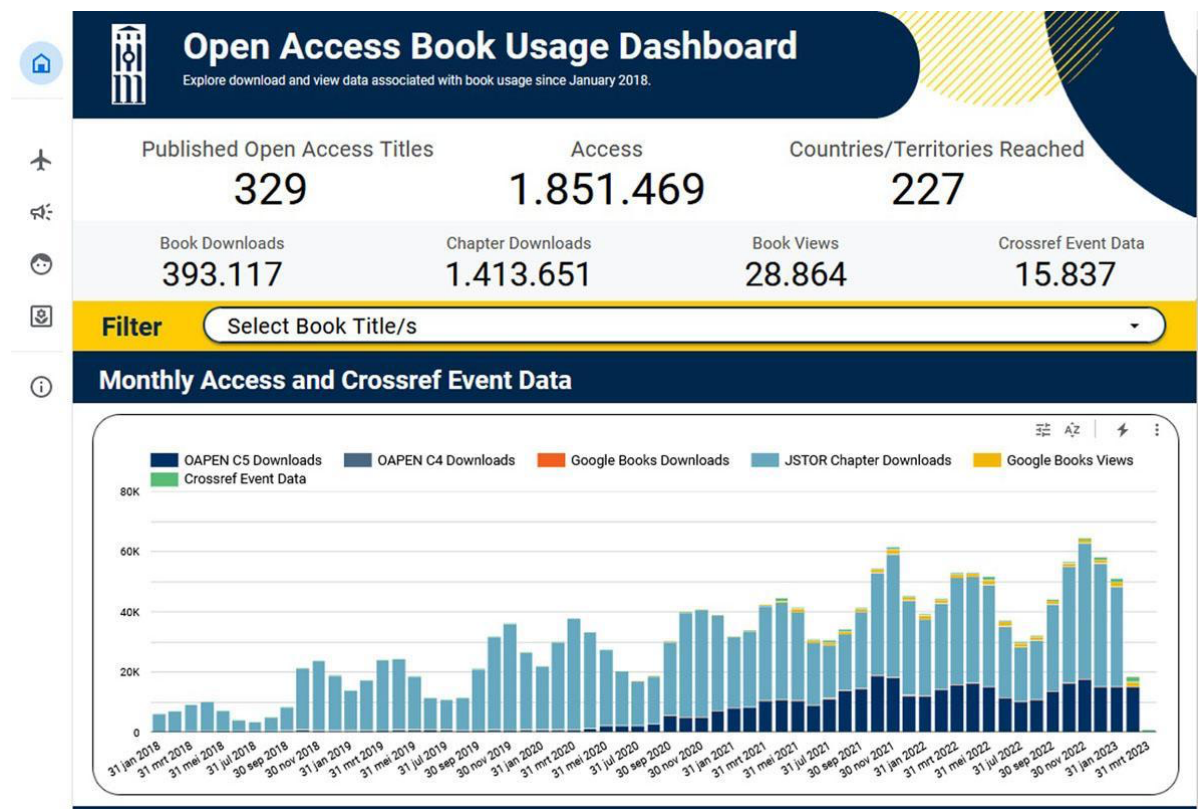
Until recently, usage reports primarily focused on the usage within individual institutions. However, the need for global usage data has grown as libraries, funders, and authors become more invested in OA. Libraries, for instance, want to know how the OA books they support are being used globally beyond just their own institution.

COUNTER's new Global Item Reports, optimized for OA, provide a standardized method for reporting global usage. These reports offer credible, comparable OA metrics across platforms, capturing the total global usage of content, including OA materials, without breaking it down by institution. This helps stakeholders evaluate the broader impact of OA on research dissemination and underscores the increased visibility that open access provides.

Global Item Reports, where available, show a worldwide picture of usage, both by users who are logged in to institutions and those who are not. This information helps publishers to understand how usage varies by platform, subject, country, and titles; to make better publishing decisions; and to explain the value of open-access publishing to stakeholders.

COUNTER Release 5.1, effective from January 2025, includes a recommendation to implement Global Item Reports, though they are not yet mandatory for COUNTER compliance. Publishers should encourage their platform providers to adopt these reports to more accurately reflect the global performance of OA books and provide stakeholders with comprehensive usage data. OA titles are often distributed across multiple platforms. In this fragmented reporting landscape, it is essential to have a unique DOI for each OA publication. It is difficult to track and understand a book's performance across different distribution platforms without these identifiers.

Not all platforms provide COUNTER-compliant data. This variation makes it challenging to consolidate and compare usage across different platforms. For example, the University of [Michigan Press dashboard](#) lists usage data from various sources, including OAPEN Library downloads, Google Books views, JSTOR chapter downloads, and Crossref Event Data. Each platform reports different usage numbers for the same period, making comparisons complicated.



**Figure** University of Michigan Press dashboard

Comparing usage statistics between OA books requires caution as download statistics can vary significantly depending on the language or scientific discipline of the book.

OAPEN provides the Book Analytics Service, which aggregates standardized usage data from various sources, including OAPEN, Google Books, Crossref Event Data, and JSTOR, and provides publishers with a dashboard overview.

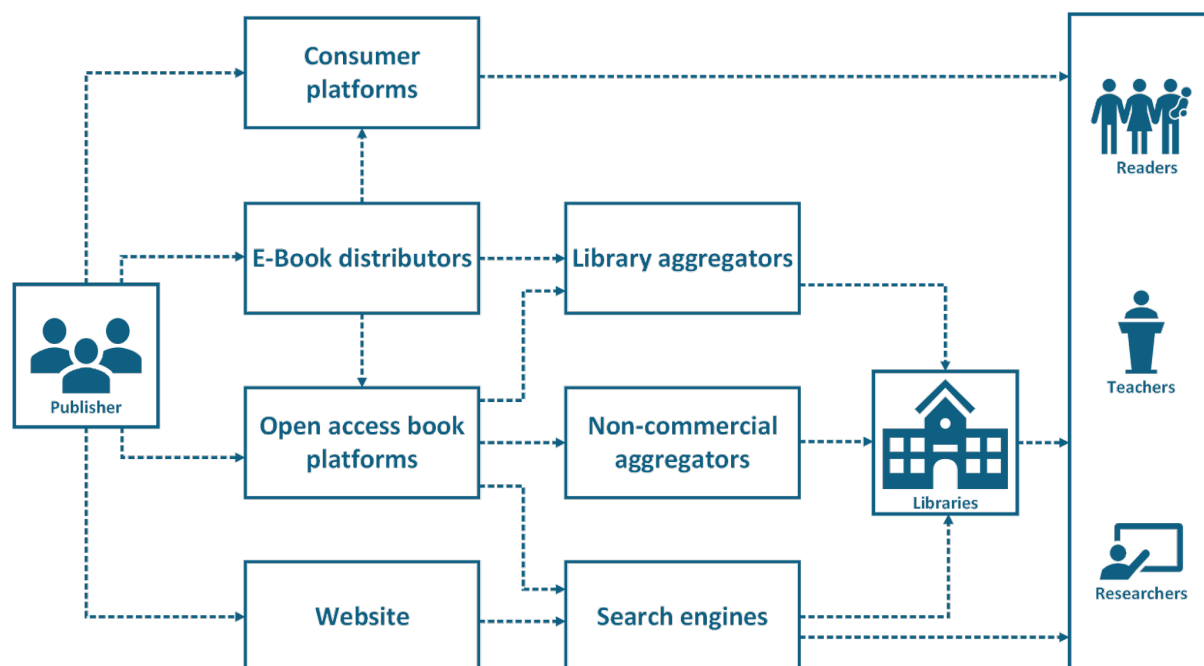
As OA grows, the demand for comprehensive global usage reports will only increase, benefiting authors, funders, libraries, publishers, and other stakeholders. Publishers should ensure their books are available from COUNTER-compliant platforms and encourage their platform providers or publishing partners to adopt COUNTER's Global Item Reports. By fostering multi-platform compliance, publishers can provide a more complete picture of the reach and impact of OA titles.

## APPENDIX: Other articles for the OAPEN Toolkit

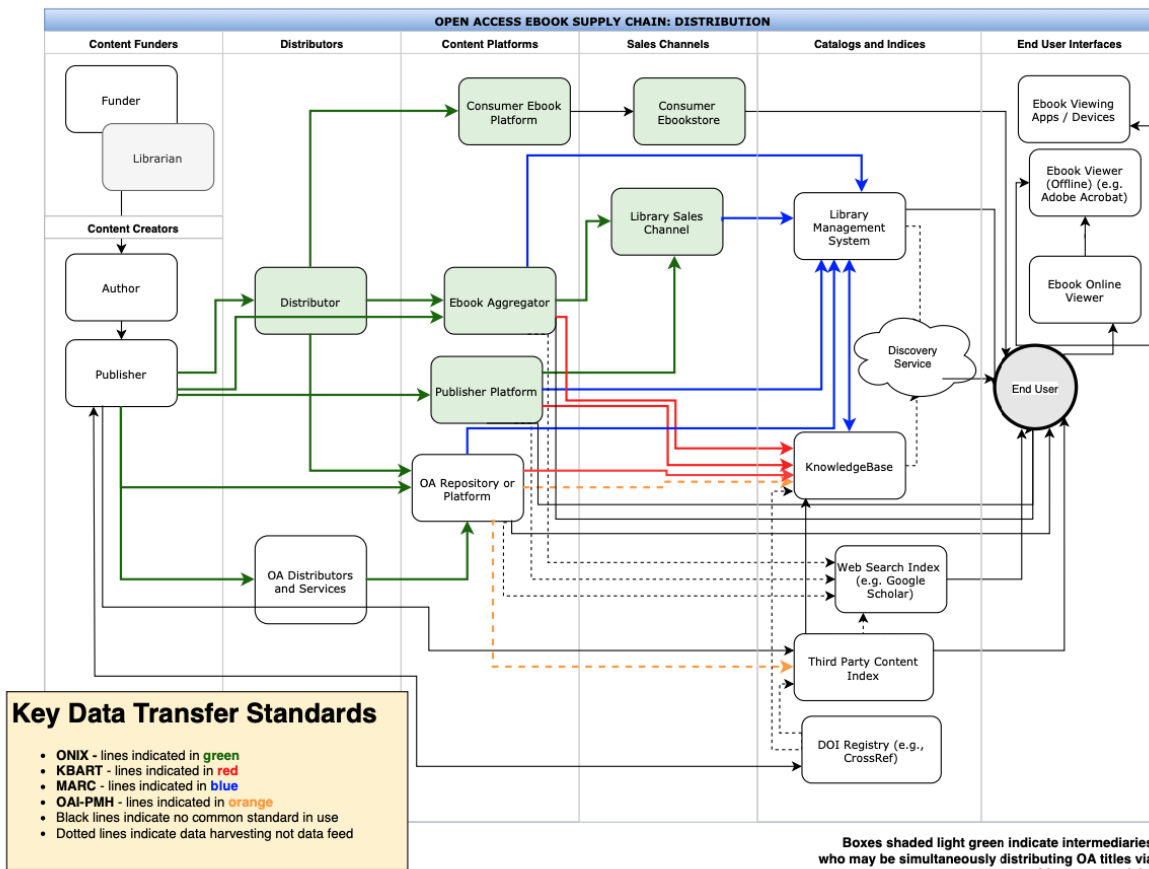
### Books supply chain

A basic shared understanding between stakeholders about what the book supply chain is, how it operates, and what changes are needed is one fundamental building block. We therefore offer a basic introduction here and a fuller guide in the toolkit.

The Clarke and Ricci [Open Access Mapping Report](#) provides an excellent overview of the OA supply chain, which we have used as a basis for a simplified mapping to show the flow of digital book files and metadata to the readers from a publisher:



**Figure** Simplified supply chain mapping based on Clarke & Ricci 2021

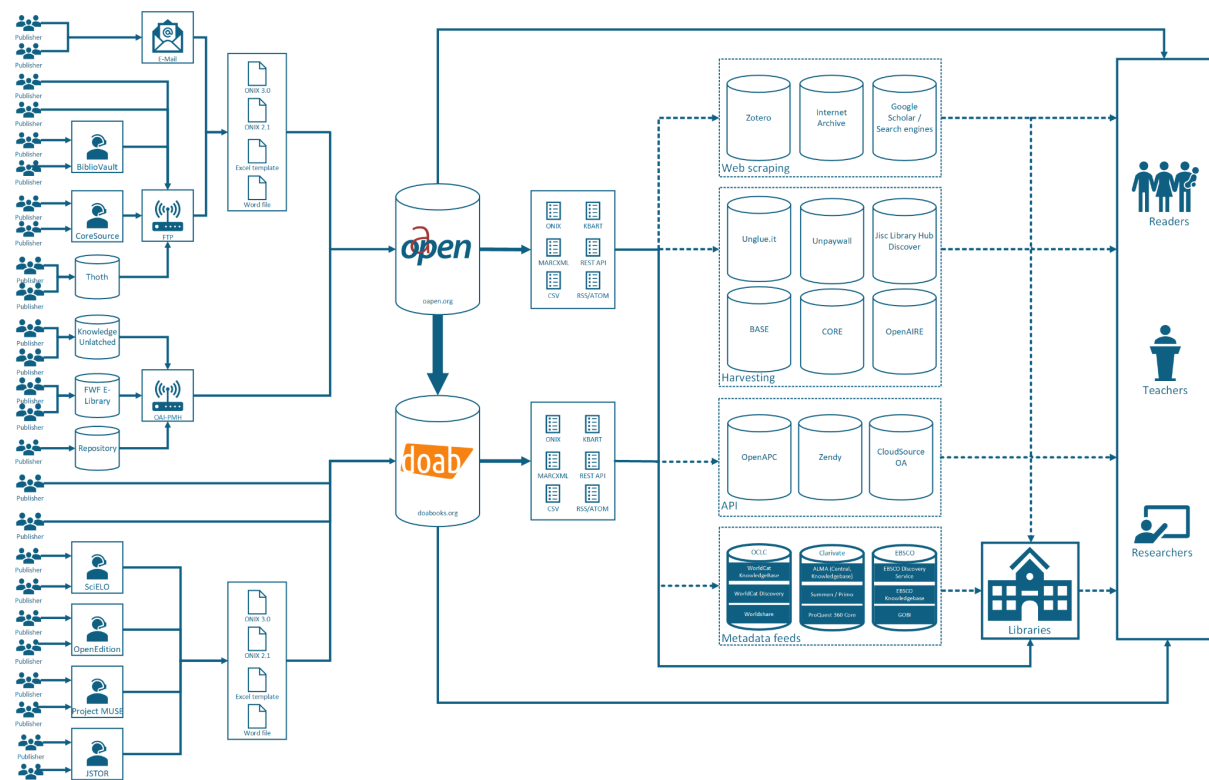
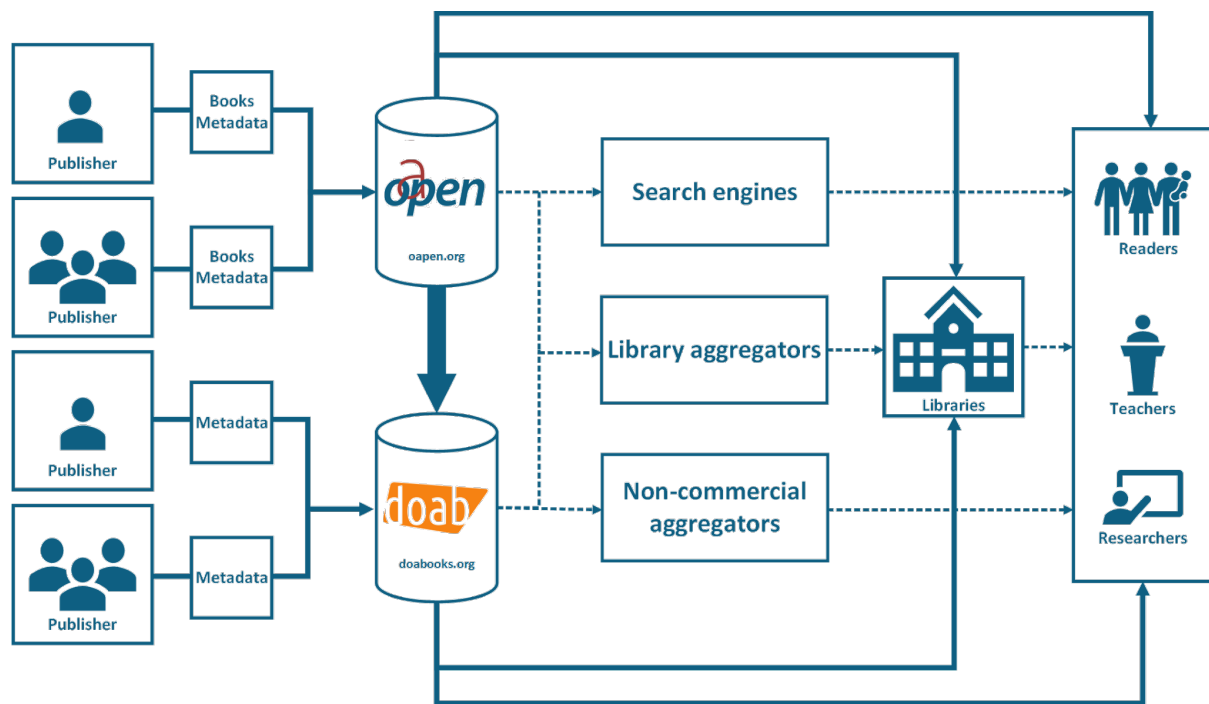


Clarke & Ricci OA Books Supply chain mapping

The supply chain for books fundamentally differs from the journal supply chain in some crucial ways:

- The book supply chain is **distributed**. By this we mean that copies of the full text of books and their metadata are distributed, as opposed to redirection technologies directing the user to a master version, as happens in the journal supply chain. Books are distributed to consumption and discovery partners such as aggregators, book stores, distributors, library platforms, repositories, sales channels, etc. Publishers may also make the books and metadata available on their own websites, but these will not be the primary way they are accessed, very visible, or greatly used.
- **Print remains important for book publishers**, and the digital book supply chain partially overlaps with the print book supply chain. There are a large number of points of communication between these supply chains which vary by region, country, language, discipline and customer type, often exposing and selling print alongside digital books.
- **There are separate supply chains for different types of customers**. The channels through which individuals purchase books overlap with, but are also distinct from, the channels through which libraries purchase them.

- **There are many intermediaries between publishers and customers**, and influence comes via international and national standards organizations (e.g. EDItEUR, BIC, BISG, NISO).
- The **data requirements of supply chain partners are complicated and opaque**, sometimes by design to protect an intermediary's business interests, and it is not widely understood how data supplied by the publisher or by another intermediary is transformed and displayed to any particular group of users or customers.
- **Metadata is the lifeblood of this system**. Publishers and libraries often outsource services such as metadata creation and provision to third parties, which can improve standards but can also lead to confusion about who owns and/or controls the metadata.
- When there is any **change to the status of a book title**, a resubmission of metadata takes place.
  - **Commercial changes are automatically updated throughout the supply chain** (e.g. changes to territorial rights, pricing, prices for specific business models).
  - **OA status changes and licences are not automatically updated throughout the supply chain**. Indeed, we found that a number of data recipients in the scholarly supply chain do not accept any updates.
  - **OA books are therefore not uniformly discoverable and available across all platforms used by libraries and universities**. This inconsistency has been highlighted as a problem by both librarians and publishers, with publishers noting the additional effort to keep OA metadata updated and librarians frustrated by conflicting information around titles' OA status in their discovery tools.
- **While publishers will make a concerted effort to get journals indexed in discovery services, and there are well trodden paths to doing so, there is less impetus and fewer obvious mechanisms to get book programs indexed in the same way**. The drivers for publishers are not strong: sales of paywalled books are not hugely driven by citations, and although usage of OA books is considered important, it doesn't yet drive acquisitions. Unlike journals, where driving usage and citations is key to the health of the journal, they are less crucial for books.
- **A new ecosystem of OA book services has emerged and operates with the established supply chain**. Key elements of this ecosystem include DOAB, which indexes and facilitates discovery of and access to scholarly, peer-reviewed OA books, and the OAPEN Library, which hosts, disseminates, and facilitates the preservation of OA books. These have become important services for normalizing and disseminating metadata to a wide array of discovery and indexing services. Their position in the supply chain is described in this **Figure**:



**Figure** New OA ecosystem services

- **Most publishers make OA books available beyond the OA-specific and library-specific supply chains.** For many, this is a case of ensuring maximum visibility for all



titles, regardless of business model, but it can also be an option to generate additional revenues, for example through print. Amazon in particular has been mentioned as both a book discovery portal and a sales channel in addition to the 'Big four' ebook vendors (EBSCO, ProQuest, Project Muse, JSTOR). Difficulties can arise when the ebook is both OA and available on a paid-for commercial platform for individual use. In theory, this should not be a problem, but consumer-facing commercial platforms are not well set up for OA. Instead, they may not accept an OA title or might mask its OA status.

- **The costs of including books in multiple platforms can be challenging for smaller and specialist publishers.** Steps to maximize the discoverability and visibility of OA content can be especially problematic, as the costs incurred and time required generate no additional revenue.
- **Library vendors also incur costs to ingest OA titles and make these discoverable in library systems.** Some vendors make a minimal charge for their curation and inclusion, but as the numbers of OA titles rise there is a risk that these vendors will sideline OA titles.
- **Retrospective OA can cause confusion in the supply chain** and needs to be carefully managed through clear communication with all outlets and updated ONIX feeds indicating the date a title became OA. Some publishers will issue a new ISBN for the OA version, which can mitigate these issues, as long as it is clear that this is a new version of an already published title and the commercially available version is removed from sale where appropriate. However, many of the intermediaries in the library supply chain do not accept metadata updates, so this model is inherently prone to error and **OA titles may be available for sale even when the publisher has correctly updated their data feeds to show it is OA.**
- **The hierarchy and relationship between chapters, books, and collections needs careful management.** Ideally, each chapter would have its own metadata and associated DOI to enable the chapters to be discoverable in just the same way that journal articles are.
- **For many publishers, chapter-level metadata is too complex to manage without additional systems and resources – either in-house or outsourced – which are difficult or impossible to afford.** Many digital distribution systems have only recently supported chapter-level metadata, and not all do so. Some intermediaries break the book into chapters and apply their own DOIs, but not all do. Further, library systems do not always work well at a chapter level either, and the additional complexities of managing the book at both a chapter and a title level can be burdensome.
- **Collections are traditionally used by publishers and aggregators to group book titles together as packages for sale, and by librarians to select books to acquire.** Whilst it is possible to include OA titles in a paid-for collection, this is cited by librarians as causing more confusion than benefit. Library infrastructure and workflows do not appear to support consortial funding models for OA books very well. Inclusion of a title in a collection can be transient, so unless careful attention is made to update the collection and associated title metadata and keep track of all collections, there can be confusion. Further complications can arise where chapters within a title are made OA, and that title is included in one or more collections.

- **Support infrastructure for facilitating OA funding transactions between libraries and journal publishers is nascent for books.** These services support library drivers such as affordability and compliance with funder mandates as well as the financial arrangements that will underpin the transition to OA.
- **Publishers in transition to OA also need to understand things that are specific to OA publishing.** Examples include OA licences and rights management or the requirement that authors and their institutions report on OA compliance to employers and/or funders.

The ebook supply chain relies on the full-text of the ebook to be hosted on the platforms where the book is to be accessed or bought. This means that when a book is published, or when there are changes to its contents (errata, updates), the full-text file is distributed to the network of channel partners, along with the associated metadata. If the open access status or the licence changes, the metadata will be resupplied, but not the full-text file.

## Metadata and unique identifiers in the book supply chain

At the heart of the book supply chain communication is metadata, and this metadata drives discoverability. For *publishers* the metadata standard is ONIX – an international, machine-readable, standard adopted globally across the book industry. ONIX is used to describe the book and its table of contents, format(s), levels of accessibility, subject classification, author(s), author(s) affiliation, funder details, publication date, on-sale date, key selling points, related products, changes in price etc. Publishers supply book ONIX to the supply chain, either directly to their partners or through their distributors and intermediaries.

Participants in the ebook supply chain rely on ONIX feeds for updates and new information, and ONIX has been expanded to accommodate OA-specific metadata. Unfortunately, the lack of consistency and opacity around which data elements are used by consumption and discovery partners, and which of these are exposed to end users, means that information essential for OA is eliminated as a book passes through the supply chain. This is particularly prevalent where publishers utilize commercial platforms for additional format sales and discovery (e.g. consumer-facing Amazon Kindle) or where acceptance rules for OA content are not available and/or understood (e.g. applying a £0.00 or £0.01 price to – incorrectly – signal a book is OA).

The ONIX standard is well documented and accommodates key OA information. The ediTeur organization which manages the ONIX standard cite<sup>9</sup> the key differences in ONIX requirements for OA books:

- Crediting funding bodies
- Providing a link to the OA licence
- Providing an ‘open access statement’ and flag.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.editeur.org/11/Books/>

The implementation of OA-specific ONIX data fields according to the documented standard has not been consistently applied by publishers, sometimes even within a publisher. One data aggregator commented that very few publishers had implemented OA in ONIX successfully. The most common problems arise where data is missing, inconsistent, or not updated in the case of retrospective OA. There are additional problems when publishers do not follow the recommended licence descriptor formats, e.g. incorrect use of hyphens in denoting applicable OA licences, so that their metadata is not fully machine-readable. Additional problems may arise when metadata is converted from one format to the next, such as the conversion from ONIX to MARC.

Whilst the consumer-oriented ebook marketplace relies on ONIX, librarians rely on MARC records for their library catalogues and KBART records for their discovery systems. MARC comes with its own specifications for OA books (National Acquisitions Group & Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium 2021). Specialist organizations manage the matching of publisher-created ONIX and other feeds into a normalized flow of MARC and KBART records, ensuring consistency and accuracy for their customers. These organizations bear the brunt of the wide range of ONIX implementations by publishers and are crucial to streamlined library catalogue management. Some publishers also produce MARC records, often working with one of these organizations, but these tend to be larger publishers who offer their ebooks from their own platforms. The layering of MARC and ONIX-driven supply chains, overlapping and sometimes translating from one to the other, can lead to inconsistencies or conflicts in the data, further confusing the picture.

Additionally, there are aggregators that work with the files and metadata to create highly indexed specialist databases. These services rely on XML submissions, often using the BITS standard<sup>10</sup>, but this relies on publishers having the means to create the book files in XML as well as technical expertise to create the BITS file. For most small/medium-sized publishers that is unlikely to be a core competency.

The metadata in the book supply chain should contain unique identifiers, because identifiers are crucial for enabling seamless interoperability and integration between various infrastructures, significantly streamlining these processes. Apart from identifiers for books and chapters, it is important to discern people and organizations. Furthermore, information about funding will play an increasingly important role.

Which unique identifiers to use?

- People, and especially authors, should be identified using ORCID (which stands for Open Researcher and Contributor ID) <https://orcid.org/>
- Research funders and grants are identified via the Open Funder Registry – <https://www.crossref.org/services/funder-registry/>
- Employing organizations are identified by ROR – <https://ror.org/>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://jats.nlm.nih.gov/extensions/bits/>

Identification on book level is the International Standard Book Number (ISBN), which identifies the registrant as well as the specific title, edition, and format ([ISBN](#)). We suggest using separate ISBNs for the print, closed access, and OA formats of a book. This helps to distinguish how each edition performs, which is helpful not just for the publisher, but also for other stakeholders. In addition, digital objects such as the OA version of a book and the chapters should be identified using a DOI<sup>11</sup>, short for digital object identifier: a persistent identifier or handle used to identify objects uniquely, standardized by the International Organization for Standardization ([ISO](#)).

In an ideal case, these identifiers link to and enhance each other. The DOI record of an open access book will also contain the ISBNs of other editions, and the DOIs for the chapters. Also visible on the DOI record are authors of the chapters and editors of the book, who can be identified through their ORCID, and these ORCID records display the affiliation to research performing organizations through ROR.

## Ebook file formats

The Portable Document Format (PDF) is probably the best-known file format used in scholarly communication. It was designed to make sure that documents, independent of application software, hardware, and operating systems, always look the same. In the case of ebooks, PDF files tend to closely mimic a paper book.

EPUB®<sup>12</sup> is a distribution and interchange format for digital publications and documents. The EPUB format provides a means of representing, packaging, and encoding structured and semantically enhanced web content — including HTML, CSS, SVG, and other resources — for distribution in a single-file container. EPUB 3 is used throughout the ebook commercial supply chain, but unless care is taken to indicate the location of page numbers in the print version, it can be difficult for readers to navigate using page references found in citations. For this reason, the PDF is often supplied alongside the EPUB for indexing purposes, or directly in the case of services such as OAPEN. OAPEN's collection is less than 5% EPUB. This duality of files further complicates the publisher resources needed to maximize reach into the scholarly supply chain.

Note that these formats are for access to the book, and specific preservation formats also exist (i.e. PDF/a and the forthcoming EPUB/a where the a stands for archival copy).

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<sup>11</sup> Certain platforms mint separate DOIs for existing titles; which Crossref terms as a "conflict" – <https://www.crossref.org/documentation/reports/conflict-report/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.w3.org/TR/epub-33/>