



OSCU

Publishing



Preamble

Open Science Community Utrecht (OSCU) is a grassroots initiative collectivising people to rethink the generation and exchange of knowledge. Founded in 2018, OSCU formed out of desires for greater inclusivity and researcher-led agency at knowledge organisations. At the time, a growing body of literature on Open Science supported reflection on the processes and activities of our institutions. Forming a community recentered expertise and helped more people take part in democratically guiding the direction of these spaces.

Open Science provides a language and grammar for reforming the work within our knowledge organisations and that has proven to take a multiplicity of forms in different locations. The present maturity of Open Science allows us to observe distinct variations, for example, whether Open Science is institutionalised or guided by a non-conventional form of governance. But despite those differences, the shared locus for Open Science is based in a particularly critical activity for researchers: publishing. The [Open Access](#) movement is understood as a precedent to [Open Science](#), and remains an attempt to democratise knowledge, release scholarship from marketisation, and stimulate scientific progress through free exchange.

Articulated in an immediate manner by [Aaron Swartz in 2008](#), Open Access positioned publishing as an ethical act to share academic composition as a means of redistributing power. And we must note that in the intervening years, we have undeniable proof that scholarly publishing is a fount of power. The five major commercial scientific publishers, which have monopolised the market, are among the most [extractive](#) and [impactful](#) companies on the planet. And so, if we are to concur with Swartz, publishing holds just as much potential for bringing about a world of collectivity, conviviality, and abundance.

In reaching its eighth year, OSCU coordinators began to wonder how this collective might contribute to its mission amidst a backdrop of evolving intervening factors: universities adopting and versioning Open Science; wavering public trust in science, elaborate disinformation campaigns, and artificial information; growing need to reestablish knowledge organisations as democratic and accepting places to work; and a preponderance of crises both political and environmental. The act of publishing, as the rooted initiator of Open Science, is not only a mechanism for sharing but also bringing together. Janneke Adema and Sam Moore composed an image of scholarly publishing work as an initiator of [academic citizenship](#), imbuing the people who make up a knowledge organisation with a sense of community.

What's Next: OSCU Publishing



OSCU Publishing is an initiative to support and contextualise cooperatives of academic citizens, i.e. autonomously governed people within and around knowledge organisations in Utrecht, who carry out their own publishing project. The Open Science Community Utrecht provides guidance and consultation, and a degree of social and technical infrastructure to bring a project to fruition. The cooperative itself is responsible for the labour and governance involved in the publishing process, including research, writing, copy editing, review, typesetting, design, and project management.

The project is built from the publishing model Cooperative Open University Publishing, first announced at the Open Science Festival in Rotterdam in 2023. Cooperative Open University Publishing springs from the assertion that publishing projects can now be holistically developed within knowledge organisations due to (1) the current maturity of our digital infrastructure; (2) wider literacy of publishing processes and their ethical implications; (3) new forms and content for scholarly publishing; and (4) an emerging landscape of roles at knowledge organisations – scholars and practitioners with titles such as data stewards, research software engineers, and community managers – who can participate in the publishing process. These factors, in concert with cooperative governance models, alleviate dependence on commercial entities, render publishing as an immediate process, and build new alliances toward knowledge generation.

By putting this model into motion, OSCU Publishing will help bring together communities of practice and empower them toward publishing their work. Researchers will have agency over the publishing workflow and ability to innovate in content and form. OSCU Publishing will assist in placing those projects on a publication platform and collect and catalogue those publications under the OSCU Publishing imprint.

Our first project, organised by OSCU as a proof of concept and guidebook for future endeavors, will begin with an event in September of 2025 in which members of the community will be invited to present brief reflections on the perennial question, “What is Open Science?” Those presentations, and additional reflections, will be composed as brief statements, manifestos, provocations, and rejoinders, and subsequently collected into a book framed by this question. The publication process will be openly documented and made transparent for reproducibility and innovation purposes.

As a community, we can make our work more open and engaged. Together we fulfill the promise of Open Science, enfranchising more people and relocating agency throughout our institutions.

Our Guiding Principles

1. We undertake efforts to support researcher autonomy. For example, authors retain copyright of their writing.
2. We support exploring different forms of publication and peer review, including open and post-publication review.
3. We prioritise inclusivity and equal opportunities to authors. Therefore, we impose no fees on authors.
4. We adhere to [FAIR principles](#) and thereby facilitate persistent identifiers and support versioning for transparency and findability.
5. We are a learning community and will openly document our workflow, governance structures, platforms, and cooperatives. We invite the community to co-develop editorial strategies.

Outro: *Ceci N'est Pas Une Presse*



It is important to note that in undertaking these actions, OSCU is not positioning itself as a press. This is because what it means to be a press in science in 2025 does not correlate with the perspective, mission, and pursuit of OSCU Publishing. A look across the present industry reveals that publishing has become both a fraught and listless act for scientific communities.

Impact factors, author fees, [transformative agreements](#), colour/mineral codes, an unending labyrinth of pressures and fear on the ways in which we might select the venue for our work does significant harm to scientific exploration and communication. As a result, we have an incomprehensible volume of publications, colliding with growing latency in production processes, and a crumbling system for peer review, all of which ensures that our academic contributions will rarely be read or engaged with in a meaningful manner. Scholarly publishing has become a site of [surveillance](#), monopolisation, and control.

It does not have to be this way.

The people at knowledge organisations deserve greater literacy and agency within the processes of publishing. The work of OSCU Publishing is as much to facilitate publishing projects as it is to provide education and accessibility on an activity that is integral to, yet too long alienated from, scholarship.

We assert that by wresting the power of publishing into the hands of the people who act themselves as the infrastructure for science and progress, rather than those who extract from it, we can imagine [mutually beneficial systems](#), rebuild trust between institutions and society, and generate more inclusive and vibrant forms of scholarly exploration and participation.





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Contributors: Hanne Oberman, Daan Ornee,
Gerbrand Koren, Stefan Wouters,
Dan Rudmann