Sustainable Futures for OA Books: The Open Book Collective

Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM) Project

JUDITH FATHALLAH AND LIVY ONALEE SNYDER

Abstract: This article explains the need for and describes the work of the Open Book Collective (OBC). The OBC is a major output of the Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM) project. The collective will bring together diverse small-to-medium open access (OA) publishers, open publishing service providers, libraries, and other research institutions to create a new, mutually supportive, and interdependent community space and platform designed to sustain the future of OA book publishing. The OBC is founded upon equitable, community-led governance and helping publishers move beyond book processing charges (BPCs). Central to the functioning of the OBC is an online platform that will make it easier for libraries and other potential subscribers to compare, evaluate, and subscribe to different OA publishers and open service providers via membership packages. The OBC supports small-to-medium OA publishers by way of the COPIM philosophy of "scaling small." This allows publishers and other members to operate sustainably and collaboratively while retaining their diverse and singular editorial missions, rather than operating from philosophies centered on economic growth, competition, and monopoly.

Several recent policy milestones in the landscape of open access (OA) publishing have made it clear that funders are committed to making knowledge freely accessible. For example, several global OA policy milestones—including cOAlition S/Plan

S guidelines,[1] the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) mandate,[2] and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) mandate for federally funded research[3]—are insisting on fully open access research by certain dates. Library-funded OA initiatives such as Annual Reviews, Lyrasis's Open Access Community Investment Program (OACIP), scholar-led presses such as punctum books and Open Book Publishers, Knowledge Unlatched, Open Library of Humanities, and University of California Press's Luminos series continue to thrive. And more libraries continue to fund publishers in the United States that are flipping to OA, such as MIT Press opening its full list of 2022 monographs through Direct to Open (D2O), Lever Press's model for liberal arts colleges, and University of Michigan Press's OA model Fund to Mission. Overall, these are positive developments, though books continue to lag behind journals in terms of OA publishing, infrastructure, and distribution. Monographs are more expensive and time consuming to publish, particularly in print form. And while there is evidence that funders and publishers are beginning to prepare for a full transition to OA for books, including the UKRI mandating for the first time that books arising from funded research must be OA by 2024, there is not yet a consensus about how this should be achieved. In particular, there are concerns about a reliance on book processing charges (BPCs), which would exclude many authors and favor larger and more prestigious presses. And an even greater concern, particularly among libraries, is the commercial capture of infrastructure for OA books that is already underway. For instance, Elsevier acquired bepress in 2017; F1000Research was acquired by Taylor & Francis in 2020; and, more recently, Knowledge Unlatched was acquired by Wiley in 2021.[4] The consolidation of research infrastructure by major commercial entities creates a difficult environment for smaller presses to thrive and would risk a future in which OA book publication is increasingly, or even exclusively, dominated by large commercial companies. However, the Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM) project is building something different. The COPIM project

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1. cOAlition S, "Principles and Implementation," Plan S, n.d., https://www.coalition-s.org/addendum-to-the-coalition-s-guidance-on-the-implementation-of-plan-s/principles-and-implementation. This is an agreement between a set of major international funders that "all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in Open Access Journals, on Open Access Platforms, or made immediately available through Open Access Repositories without embargo."

2. UKRI, "UKRI Open Access Policy," August 6, 2021, https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-open-access-policy/. This policy aims to ensure that publications arising from research funded by the UK Research Councils "can be freely accessed, used and built on."

3. Executive Office of the President, Office of Science and Technology Policy, "Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies," August 25, 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/08-2022-OSTP-Public-Access-Memo.pdf. This memorandum instructs federal agencies to update their access policies to make research arising from publicly funded research freely available to the American public, without embargo.

4. "COPIM Statement on the Corporate Acquisition of OA Infrastructure," *Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM)* (blog), December 15, 2021, https://doi.org/10.21428/785a6451.123ec90e.

is funded by Research England Development Fund and the Arcadia Fund, a charity of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin. The project, initiated by ScholarLed members,[5] is guided by the principle of "scaling small."[6] Essentially, scaling small is an alternative to large-scale, commercial approaches to academic publishing by emphasizing a small and diverse ecosystem of publishers, libraries, and nonprofit infrastructure providers. The philosophy of scaling small has guided COPIM's models, systems, and platforms. One of COPIM's major outputs, the Open Book Collective (OBC), is a collectively governed community for mutual aid that also collectively generates revenue for smaller to medium-sized OA initiatives that cannot be acquired or incorporated by for-profit entities.

This article will explain how the OBC has grown from the values and ambitions of ScholarLed to the COPIM project as well as how the OBC will offer a concrete way for libraries and smaller presses to come together in order to realize a vision for OA book publishing that emphasizes non-competitive collaboration at scales that are conducive to the flourishing of bibliodiversity.[7] It will also discuss the needs that led to the development of the OBC, the processes by which we arrived at the development of the OBC, and the governance structures we have designed. We also describe the membership criteria of the OBC and our hopes for our launch.

Why the OBC is Needed

As government bodies such as UKRI and the OSTP move toward mandating OA monographs, the OA landscape's reliance on BPCs risks driving this positive change in the wrong direction. Relatedly, there is a significant danger that OA initiatives and infrastructure will be rapidly acquired by major corporations via the processes of platform capitalism.[8] Platform capitalism, a term popularized by Nick Srnicek in his

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5. Formed in 2018, ScholarLed is a consortium of scholar-led, not-for-profit, open access book publishers that are key partners in the international COPIM project and includes Mattering Press, meson press, Open Book Publishers, punctum books, African Minds, and mediastudies.press.

6. Janneke Adema and Samuel A. Moore, "Scaling Small; Or How to Envision New Relationalities for Knowledge Production," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture,* 16, no. 1 (2021): 27–45, https://dio.org/10.16997/wpcc.918.

7. Bibliodiversity indicates a commitment to epistemic pluralism and situated knowledges, which means we actively support different and multiple publishing forms, languages, formats, practices, cultures, and (experimental) genres in book publishing. We disseminate works in multiple languages and encourage maximum accessibility of publications while doing outreach to underserved readerships, publishers, libraries, and communities. We also promote a bibliodiverse publishing ecosystem, meaning one consisting of different types of publishers and infrastructures, in response to the ongoing homogenization and privatization of publishing cultures and infrastructures. For more information, see the OBC's governance documents: Eileen A. Fradenburg Joy, Janneke Adema, and COPIM, "Open Book Collective: Our Organisational Model," *Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM)* (blog), September 2, 2022, https://doi.org/10.21428/785a6451.13890eb3.DO

8. Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

book *Platform Capitalism*, describes the ways that for-profit companies monopolize and extract the value of platform data before redeploying it for profit. Sarah Lamdan describes how "data cartels" such as the amalgamated Reed Elsevier LexisNexis (RELX) skim information from academics' and other users' activities, selling both raw and packaged data to a wide range of institutions for purposes of monitoring, surveillance, and marketing.[9] Indeed, this is already happening across the OA landscape in a variety of ways, including the acquisition of OA initiatives such as Knowledge Unlatched, bepress, and F1000 by Wiley, Elsevier, and Taylor & Francis, respectively.[10] For-profit companies answer to their shareholders, not the communities that they serve. In illustration of how platform capitalism can work specifically in the OA landscape, Samuel Moore writes:

> Open access is now key to the business strategies of large commercial publishers who have figured out how to monetise subscription content, open access content and data analytics . . . user interaction data is made available—what Julie E. Cohen terms a biopolitical public domain—in a way that allows publishers to amass and exploit it for financial gain.[11]

At COPIM, we have repeatedly argued that "the infrastructure we rely on to publish and disseminate OA books should itself be open and owned and governed by the research communities that use it."[12] Corporate acquisition leads to consolidated monopolies. At COPIM, we believe that diverse, sustainable networks of small-to-medium OA publishers must not just survive but thrive in order to maintain a healthy landscape for OA book publishing. Central to COPIM's ethos is "scaling small," a philosophy that is in opposition to the pressure for publishers and organizations to "scale up," to produce more and more in an effort to both increase profit margins and to also monopolize the market.[13] Scaling small, in contrast, fosters an environment in which nonprofit publishers of whatever size, with a range of business models, can transition to OA at a manageable cost through mutually collaborative efforts that are sustainable. In the article "Scaling Small; Or How to Envision New Relationalities for Knowledge Production," Janneke Adema and Samuel Moore argue that scaling small "eschews standard

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9. Sarah Lamdan, *Data Cartels: The Companies That Control and Monopolize Our Information* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2022).

10. "COPIM Statement."

11. Samuel Moore, "Without Stronger Academic Governance, Covid-19 Will Concentrate the Corporate Control of Academic Publishing," *LSE Impact Blog* (blog), London School of Economics and Political Science, April 17, 2020, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2020/04/17/without-stronger-academic-governance-covid-19-will-concentrate-the-corporate-control-of-academic-publishing/.

12. Moore.

13. Adema and Moore, "Scaling Small," 16.

approaches to organizational growth that tend to flatten community diversity through economies of scale. Instead, it puts forward the idea that scale can be nurtured through intentional collaborations between community-driven projects that promote a bibliodiverse ecosystem while providing resilience through resource sharing and other kinds of collaboration."[14] Scaling small not only allows publishers and open infrastructure providers to operate collaboratively at reasonably sustainable levels but also enables them to retain their uniquely diverse missions and values.

Another necessary aspect of the OBC's work involves assisting publishers in moving away from BPCs. BPCs are fees paid by an author, their institution, and/or their funder to a publisher to make their book OA. BPCs are often prohibitively expensive. For example, at the time of writing, the charge for a monograph of up to four hundred pages published by Springer Nature, Palgrave Macmillan, or Apress is £11,000/EURO 13,000/US$15,000.[15] The Open APC, an initiative of Bielefeld University Library, has published data on BPCs by institution and year since 2014, and £10,000 is not an uncommon estimate.[16] BPCs are unreliable and unsustainable, as academics and thus publishers are reliant on an unpredictable funding landscape. Moreover, they are highly inequitable. Many scholars will be denied the opportunity to publish, and those who do publish will likely be established researchers from wealthy institutions on permanent contracts.[17] High BPCs also serve to consolidate the dominance and reach of large commercial publishers within the OA space, leading to a lack of bibliodiversity and the entrenchment of systemic inequities within academia. Despite the increasing diversity of scholarly forms, monographs remain a crucial and central form for serious argument.[18] It is difficult for researchers to progress in their careers without a strong record of monograph publication, particularly in the arts and humanities.[19] The exclusion of early career academics in more tenuous positions from OA monograph publication will lead to a stultification of academic fields, put niche subjects at risk, and contribute to the inequities in academic publishing that privilege authors, readers, wealthy institutions, and the Global North. We expect the publishers who will become part of the OBC to share our vision of a better OA landscape. As the OBC offers a new source of

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14. Adema and Moore.

15. Springer Nature, "Open Access Books Pricing," accessed July 8, 2022, https://www.springernature.com/gp/open-research/journals-books/books/pricing.

16. Open APC, "OA Monograph Charges (BPCs)," accessed August 24, 2022, https://treemaps.openapc.net/apcdata/bpc/#institution/FWF%20-%20Austrian%20Science%20Fund/v.

17. Springer Nature, Ros Pyne, Christina Emery, Mithu Lucraft, and Anna Sophia Pinck, "The Future of Open Access Books: Findings from a Global Survey of Academic Book Authors," Figshare, June 18, 2019, 14, https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.8166599.v1.

18. Tom Hill, "Four Reports on the OA Monograph: Review," *Learned Publishing* 33, no. 3 (2020): 345–47, https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1311.

19. See Martin Paul Eve, *Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies and the Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

revenue for OA publishing, as well as the support of a collective of publishers, service providers,[20] and libraries, without the expectation that they should "scale up" their business models, we enable them to continue and plan for publications that they consider important and valuable but would otherwise not be economically feasible.[21]

The OBC collective has been developed in collaboration with the stakeholders we serve: small-to-medium OA publishers, librarians, and open infrastructure providers. It is a not-for-profit in the UK, in the process of applying to become a registered charity, that brings together these stakeholders and other supporters to collectively support a more equitable, more sustainable model of open book publishing. These values are:

- the care and curation of high-quality academic books;
- a commitment to bibliodiversity;
- collaboration and resource sharing over competition;
- networked community-building over profit-driven centralization;
- horizontal working relationships over exclusive hierarchization; and
- growing and safeguarding open accessibility to, and reuse of, academic books for global readers without technical or economic barriers.

The OBC enables publishing initiatives to retain their diverse and individual character while benefiting from the economies of scale and mutual support of being part of a collective. This means that we support diversity of content including niche subjects, experimental books, linguistic diversity, and a diversity of publication models provided that publishers are committed to moving away from BPCs.

There are other models for supporting and sustaining OA books already operating in the UK, US, and European landscape. For example, Knowledge Unlatched collects funds from libraries and other knowledge institutions and passes them on to publishers and OA initiatives, allowing new books and journals to be published OA and previously closed titles to be reissued OA. We have already noted our concern regarding the corporate acquisition of Knowledge Unlatched and, moreover, the aims by its own account to become a "central open access platform," at odds with the OBC's values.[22] Opening the Future is a new revenue model for increasing the production of OA books by university

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20. Service Providers refers to Open Publishing Service Providers and collectives of such. See discussion later for a more detailed description.

21. For more information, see Lucy Barnes, "'Scaling Small': A Strategy to Support Scholar-Led, Open Access Book Publishing," Zenodo, September 6, 2021, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5566398; and Adema and Moore, "Scaling Small."

22. Rick Anderson, "Knowledge Unlatched Announces Transformation: An Interview with Sven Fund," *Scholarly Kitchen*, October 9, 2017, https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2017/10/09/knowledge-unlatched-announces-transformation-interview-sven-fund/.

publishers, pioneered by our colleagues at COPIM, and initial university press partners in this program include Liverpool University Press and Central European University Press. The program has just fewer than sixty subscribing university library members so far. With this model, libraries sign up to subscribe to a special selection of a publisher's closed backlist at a special price, and the publishers then use the subscription membership fees to publish future frontlist books OA. This has the advantage of dividing the cost between multiple institutions so that no single library bears a disproportionate burden. If the revenue target is exceeded, the surplus can go toward funding infrastructure projects devoted to enhancing open book dissemination. This is a useful model for many presses, and some presses that are using it could be eligible to join the OBC—but it will only work for publishers who have backlists. The OBC supports born native OA and digital-first publishers as well as more traditional ones. Many presses use piecemeal business models, with some institutional support, some donations, some support from advertisers, and some from income hybrid publishing models. A hybrid publishing model might involve, for instance, making e-books free on publication while selling hard copies or rights related to publication such as translation rights. The problem with all of these models is that none of them are particularly reliable or allow publishers to plan sufficiently. The OBC aims to help small publishers establish more sustainable revenue streams with a higher degree of security. The OBC is thus unique in utilizing a collective funding model to support a diverse range of publishers by a diverse range of library supporters, as well as in offering pre-selected or bespoke packages to libraries. By directing this support toward publishers, collectives, and infrastructure providers, we seek as a collective to create a fairer and more sustainable ecosystem for OA books, rather than simply making particular books OA.

The OBC serves several important functions for our university library members. Throughout our engagement with academic librarians, we have learned that although many libraries and institutions are keen to support OA initiatives and some even have budget lines for that purpose, there are many hurdles confronting them, many of which the OBC aims to address. For example, librarians often do not have the time and staff power to sort through the diverse array of OA initiatives to potentially support, and to compare their quality and their relevance to, their research and learning communities. OA books often lack comprehensive, high-quality, readable metadata,[23] which makes it difficult for librarians to find them and to integrate the acquisition of OA books into

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23. For more information, see Joe Deville, "Sketching a Direction of Travel: An Update from Work Package 2," *Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM)* (blog), October 22, 2020, https://doi.org/10.21428/785a6451. a0537c6d; and Elli Gerakopoulou and Dan Rudmann, "WP2 Workshop in Partnership with University of Michigan, MPublishing, and Lyrasis," *Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM)* (blog), May 25, 2020, https://doi.org/10.21428/785a6451.c6005f3a.

their workflows and catalogs.[24] The OBC aims to play a major role in supporting OA book publishers in improving the quality of their metadata, via its partnership with Thoth, another COPIM output.[25] Thoth is an open, metadata management platform that ingests and makes more readily exportable book metadata. Publisher members of the OBC are encouraged to use Thoth to manage their metadata, which allows their books to be featured in an OBC collective catalog of works. As Saman Goudarzi, Heather Staines, and Kaitlin Thaney argue, metadata management is a vital but often forgotten part of the OA book publishing process:

> Distribution for a typical non-OA digital monograph routinely touches many third party systems, such as EBSCO or Amazon. These suppliers create or augment metadata generated by the publisher to improve discoverability by populating feeds intended for retail channels and library systems. Presses that underestimate the importance of this process do so at their peril as a lack of robust metadata can impede discovery and use of open content. Items with a $0 price can be difficult to ingest into aggregator platforms.[26]

The OBC likewise supports the infrastructures of OA publishing more broadly. Our "service provider" members also offer membership packages via the OBC platform, enabling libraries to support them. Service providers consist of those organizations and initiatives that provide the vital but often underappreciated backbone to OA publishing, helping improve the discoverability, accessibility, and availability of OA books. A prominent example would be the Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB), which is a free discovery service backed by the Open Access Publishing in European Networks (OAPEN) Foundation. DOAB's database indexes and provides access to scholarly peer-reviewed OA monographs, along with open metadata. DOAB's services exist because of supporting library members.[27]

The OBC platform will allow librarians and OA researchers to compare the offerings of OA publishers and service providers for local and global relevance and provides the evidence and data they need to justify their OA investments to institutional budget holders. The OBC's membership criteria, co-designed and co-developed by consulting members in the OA community, require OA publishers and OA service providers to evidence high standards in their application. For example, service providers must have

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24. Hill, "Four Reports."
25. For more information, see https://thoth.pub.
26. Saman Goudarzi, Heather Staines, and Kaitlin Thaney, "Future of Open Scholarship: Open Monograph Ecosystem Impact Analysis," Zenodo, August 1, 2021, p. 8, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5151804.
27. For more information about the DOAB library membership program, see https://www.doabooks.org/en/librarians/how-to-become-a-doab-supporter.

all, or at least a large majority, of the software required to run the infrastructure, and/or software solutions should be available under an open-source license. An example of criteria for publishers is providing transparency about their peer review process, editing, and production in their applications. Through the membership, the OBC will ensure the quality for publishers and service providers.

These are some of the ways the OBC meets the practical needs of our members. Above all, though, the OBC exists to serve the vision of an OA publishing landscape that is community-led, accessible, bibliodiverse, anti-monopoly, and mutually supportive. All of our operations at the pragmatic level are ultimately in service of this vision.

How the OBC Works

A critical part of the OBC is its online platform that allows potential users to discover, compare, and primarily support different OA book publishers and other OA book initiatives. With ease, the platform makes it possible to find and evaluate the values, mission, and aims of a wide range of OA book initiatives, including the content and services they offer. For OA academic publishers and infrastructure providers, the OBC's platform provides a space to promote their publishing activities and to manage the funding they receive from libraries and other knowledge institutions. And for libraries and other knowledge institutions who are interested in supporting OA book initiatives, the platform does not emphasize individual book titles or bundles of book titles; rather, it offers membership programs tied to publisher collectives, individual publishers, and/or publishing service providers (see Figure 1). In addition to creating a portfolio of OA initiatives to support, it is also possible to choose the length of support spanning from an annual to a multi-year basis. By becoming members of the OBC, funders enter into an empowering and strategic co-ownership of the OBC that allows them to participate in an ongoing (r)evolution of OA publishing and its dissemination.

The members comprise a variety of OA presses:

- Born OA presses, meaning their entire catalog is OA, and who either don't levy BPCs or are aiming to lessen their reliance on such. OA presses included in this category could be independent, scholar-led, library-based, and university-based publishers, including new university publishers (NUPs) as well as more established university publishers, whose entire catalog of books is OA.
- Hybrid presses (university-based or not) who have a non-OA backlist but want to transition their frontlist to 80% to 100% OA and to also lessen their reliance on BPCs at the same time.

How does it work?

Libraries and other supporters select the membership programmes they want to pay to join

Publishers and service providers receive membership income from the OBC, less fees

Offer packages

Support packages

Generate quotes & contracts

Process revenue

Receive benefits

Publishers and service providers offer membership programmes via the OBC

The OBC platform generates quotations and consolidated contracts, and collects membership programmes revenue and processing fees

Libraries receive public recognition of support for OA publishing, as well as annual reports and other benefits offered by publishers/service providers

Figure 1. Diagram of the OBC workflow. Publishers and service providers offer membership programs on the OBC platform enabling libraries and other institutions to more easily provide financial support to open access initiatives.

- Open publishing service providers (and collectives of such) who build open infrastructure for repositories, discovery channels, catalogs, indexes, usage metrics, metadata management, preservation, and the like for integrating OA books with global knowledge systems, and who also develop software and platforms for the creation and dissemination of OA books.
- Libraries and library consortia, library membership organizations, and other knowledge organizations that financially support the publishers and publishing service providers of the OBC.

Overall, each member will align with criteria based on the OBC's mission and principles as well as specific standards reviewed and revised as necessary by the OBC's Membership Committee with ratification by the OBC's Board of Stewards.[28]

The OBC's business model is distributive and sources small annual contributions from a network of institutions, which enables a highly cost-effective method of funding for OA books and OA service providers that is more durable than is presently the case. All OBC fees will be communicated openly and transparently on the platform website,

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28. See more about the Membership Committee in the section on "Governance."

and, as a UK registered charity, all income retained by the OBC will be used to cover our costs and to support the wider open access book publishing ecosystem. Specifically, the OBC retains 10% of the income paid by a library or other supporter and a 12.5% fee for new subscribing members. The price for new subscribers is slightly higher because of the labor involved with generating new subscriptions. While a percentage of the income is distributed to running costs for the OBC, the Development Fund also sources funding tied to membership programs.

The OBC's Development Fund is an aspect of the OBC that is highly unique compared with other library-funded OA programs. The Development Fund will be used to help individual OBC members sustain and/or expand their capabilities and operations and to enable the incubation and seed-funding of new, bottom-up OA books initiatives through small grants. These grants will assist OA book publishers, open publishing service providers, and other OA book initiatives needing assistance in developing their operations in order to be more sustainable, to better meet the technical and other standards of the larger open knowledge community, and to also offer innovative services and tools to that community.

Another distinctive resource, unlike other library-funded OA platforms, will be the toolkits offered by the OBC. Created in tandem with other work packages in the COPIM project, these toolkits will assist OA publishers and publishing service providers to further develop and innovate their operations. For instance, the OBC toolkits will offer guidance to presses committed to investing in OA at different stages and will include showing them how to generate and manage metadata, ensure the preservation of digital books, and navigate various discovery systems. These toolkits are also applicable to institutions planning to launch new OA presses as well as small publishers aspiring to rise to higher levels of professionalism and the continuous improvement of their business practices. The toolkits exist as one of the OBC's community-led ventures with strong public service values as stated in the OBC's mission "to broaden the reach and impact of OA initiatives through mutual support, in order to help single OA initiatives to go further than any of them could achieve on their own."[29]

The range of benefits that the OBC offers, particularly the Development Fund and toolkits, is part of a larger movement. Rather than the OBC hosting a "portfolio" of initiatives to possibly fund, the mutual aid and support empowers libraries and other knowledge institutions, publishers, and publishing service providers to collaborate through a consortial funding model for OA books that is distinct from other OA platforms that source library funding.

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29. Joy, Adema, and COPIM, "Open Book Collective."

Governance

The issue of good community governance for open access scholarly communications projects has come to prominence over the past few years, and this again is partly related to the corporate buyout of OA infrastructure. In addition to guarding against such acquisitions, collective OA books projects must have governance structures in place that are resilient, responsive to their stakeholders, and yet flexible and situated enough to meet the needs of their particular community or communities.[30] The design of our governance structure has proved a complex challenge in the development of the OBC, whose stakeholders include librarians, publishers, and infrastructure providers who, while sharing in our overarching vision for the maximization and flourishing of OA books, necessarily bring different perspectives, needs, and challenges that may conflict at times. The political theorist Chantal Mouffe has criticized the "illusion that we can finally dispense with the notion of antagonism" as part of an "evasion of the political,"[31] and the choice and enaction of various governance models are necessarily political and require a commitment to nurturing dissension within a framework of shared principles and objectives. As one of us has written previously:

> How should a collective be governed? . . . The terms of the question seem almost contradictory: a "collective" implies equity, collegiality, co-operation and a lack of organized hierarchy, whilst "governed" suggests top-down management structures, or the imposition of rules and regulations by a select group over a larger majority. Obviously, the latter model would not be in line with the values of [our project] yet at the same time, we needed to find a way that the different groups of stakeholders could be effectively organized to work together and get the most out of the platform in a mutually beneficial arrangement.[32]

We approached the development of our governance policy as a communal, iterative process. Between 2020 and 2022, COPIM held a series of workshops including participants of the ScholarLed publishing group, university librarians, DOAB, Jisc, and colleagues from the Humanities Commons Working Group established by the COPIM project. In addition, we conducted research into the governance of similar community-led projects.

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30. Patrick Hart, Janneke Adema, and COPIM, "Towards Better Practices for the Community Governance of Open Infrastructures," Zenodo, May 10, 2022, https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6535460.
31. Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), 2.
32. Judith Fathallah, "Collective Governance: An Update from the Open Book Collective Work Package," *Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM)* (blog), October 11, 2021, https://doi.org/10.21428/785a6451.f47c5c51.

The OBC is a UK charity, registered with the Charity Commission. This safeguards against acquisition by for-profit corporations and ensures that the organization will be run in accordance with charity law and our founding values. The OBC follows an "Association" organizational model. This allows all members to participate in the OBC's governance and decision-making processes, as opposed to appointed trustees who are not elected from the membership having all of the decision-making authority. Moreover, the OBC trustees—whom we have styled as Stewards in keeping with our ethos of community care—are partly selected from the members of the OBC and represent our stakeholder groups, which we call caucuses. Essentially, the OBC organization and its governance is made up of three bodies:

• The General Assembly of Custodians (GAC)
• The Board of Stewards (BoS)
• The Membership Committee (MC)

The General Assembly of Custodians is open to all of our members. We choose the term *custodian* to reflect our ethics of care: a custodian is one who safeguards and guides an enterprise, ensuring it grows and endures in keeping with its values. Members may opt to be Full Custodians, who have binding votes in elections and other matters, or Associate Members, who have opted out of casting binding votes and may only act in an advisory capacity with non-binding voting privileges. While we hope as many members as possible will opt to be Full Custodians, we do recognize that some may not have the capacity to commit to full participation in governance. Custodians will be allocated to one of our three caucuses: Publishers, Libraries, and Open Publishing Services Providers, and each Full Custodian member has one vote in OBC elections. Each caucus elects nominated members to serve on the Board of Stewards, ensuring fair representation. Self-nomination is acceptable.

The Board of Stewards oversees the primary functions of the OBC as well as its values and mission. This includes accountability to the UK Charity Commission and, by extension, to the public. The Board of Stewards will also be populated by external experts in open access. To balance fair changeover with continuity of experience, the Board of Stewards will be populated by a process of staggered elections. Stewards serve one-, two- or three-year terms, which may be voluntarily renewed for a maximum of six years. The Membership Committee, as the name suggests, is responsible for assessing and approving applications for membership to the OBC. We think it is important not to have a simple tick-box list through which potential members are accepted or rejected. Rather, we have created a list of criteria that make space for potential members to explain how their OA books initiatives align with our mission, values, and goals and how their strategic planning will be connected to financial support from the OBC.
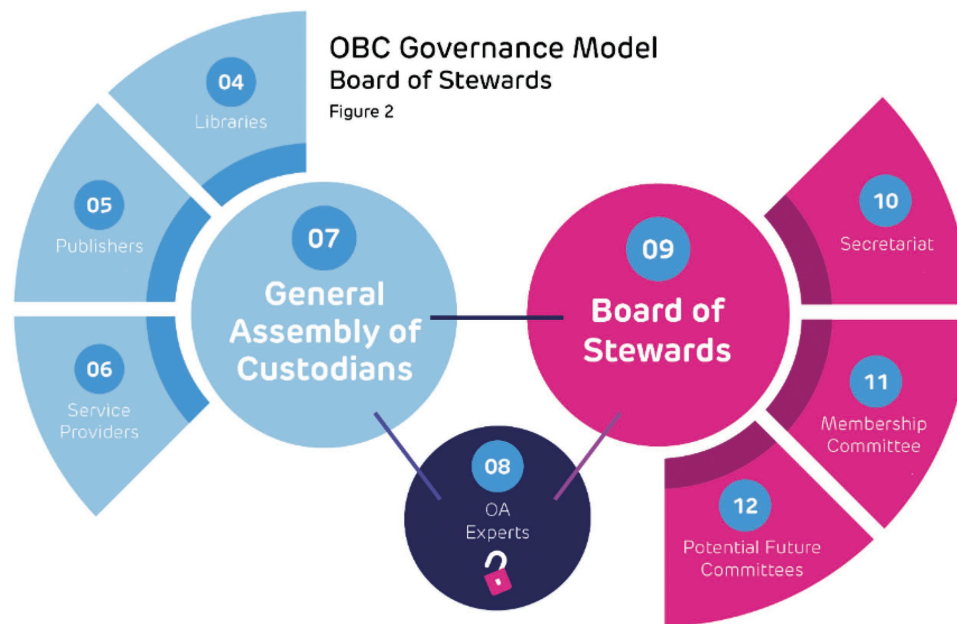
Figure 2. An illustration of the OBC's governance model for the OBC. Members of the OBC can opt in to participate in the governance. The governance of the OBC consists of three primary governance bodies: the General Assembly of Custodians (GAC), the Board of Stewards (BoS), and the Membership Committee (MC).

We require presses to have plans in place for the conversion for 80% to 100% of their frontlist to OA and to provide a roadmap for achieving this in consultation with the OBC. This forms an important part of their application. The Membership Committee is similarly populated via representatives from caucuses (nominated and self-nominated), plus external OA experts to ensure impartiality and guard against the dominance of any one caucus. The Board of Stewards may in time form additional subcommittees, as the work of the OBC requires. The basic governance structure of the OBC can be envisaged as in Figure 2.

Ultimately, effective governance of a collective is and should be a work in progress. We believe this model, while primarily containing an element of hierarchization, balances efficiency with balanced representation, equity, and the active, ongoing invitation to participation to our entire membership. We hope it is flexible enough to enable reflexive learning as the OBC develops.

Conclusion: Plans for the Future

In December 2022, the OBC officially launched. Currently, the OBC's members include African Minds, mediastudies.press, Mattering Press, Open Book Publishers, punctum

books, and the White Horse Press, as well as infrastructure providers DOAB, OAPEN, and Thoth. The OBC continues to develop a strong core collective of publisher and open infrastructure builder members, librarians, and OA experts drawn from the larger landscape of open scholarly communications. At the same time, our first few years will be a period of ongoing reflexive practice, as our new members and governors reflect on and continually improve how our aims and values are supported by our praxis. The OBC's future plans, should funding be available, include the expansion of our networks more globally, including Europe, South America, and Africa, supporting the creation of multi-lingual and multi-format books. The OBC Development Fund is to be used for incubating and supporting new community-led OA initiatives that share our values. We also hope to enhance an OBC Information Hub, which builds on and extends resources such as providing tools and advice for publishers, librarians, infrastructure providers, and other stakeholders who share our vision for the future of OA books.

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