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OAPEN-UK: exploring the challenges of the Open Access scholarly monograph

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The academic monograph is under threat. Increased costs and lower print runs are impacting on the principle means by which researchers share their knowledge and disseminate their findings. The gold standard for academic excellence in many disciplines, the effective dissemination of the monograph has major implications for the UK's research base and its international standing.

JISC Collections is embarking on a new project called OAPEN-UK to explore the issues impacting upon the publishing of scholarly monographs in the humanities and social sciences. Funded by JISC and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the project is taking a collaborative and real time approach to exploring the challenges, risks and potential opportunities of unfettered online access to scholarly monographs.

The project is linked to Open Access Publishing in European Networks (OAPEN), a hybrid publishing initiative that started in 2008 and combines Open Access (OA) and traditional print publishing. The OAPEN (<http://www.oapen.org>) initiative recognised that if OA monograph publishing is to work at an international level, it needs to incorporate and take account of the processes and attitudes at a national level. OAPEN-UK is one of the national pilots; a pilot is also taking place in Netherlands.

Professor David House, Chair of JISC Collections and the OAPEN-UK Steering Group, said: "It's in all our interests to have a vibrant and innovative humanities and social science research environment. But for this we need to have scholarly communications models that match the rapidly-changing demands of the twenty-first century. This project is taking some bold and imaginative steps to look over the horizon and to explore what our future models will look like. We hope OAPEN-UK will be a stepping stone towards informed decision making by a wide range of stakeholders."

The Pilot

Berg Publishers, Liverpool University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, Taylor & Francis and University Wales Press are all project partners in OAPEN-UK. Each has submitted pairs of similar monographs for the project pilot. A title from each pair has been randomly placed in either the Experimental Group or the Control Group.

- The Experimental Group titles are available in OA under a Creative Commons licence and can be downloaded in PDF from the OAPEN Library platform. They are also available in Google Book Search as 100% previews. In addition, the Palgrave and Taylor & Francis titles will be available on their own platforms.

- The Control Group titles are available as e-books for sale under the publishers normal licensing and route to market models.

MARC records are being made available for the 30 titles in the experimental group through OAPEN Library in addition to the many other titles on the OAPEN Library platform (<http://oapen.org/metadataexports?page=intro>). The OAPEN Library is included in WorldCat from OCLC, Primo Central from Ex Libris and Summon from Serials Solutions. Institutional Repository managers are also being contacted to offer the experimental group titles to the appropriate Repositories.

The control group titles will be made available through the publishers' standard routes – their platforms and aggregators. It is business as usual with these titles. All control group titles are available in Google Book Search as 10% previews.

Print copies of the experimental and control group titles are available to libraries and individual users to purchase. Links from the OAPEN Library, Google Book Search and the publishers' website to purchase print copies of the experimental group titles are available. The purchase of print copies of the control group titles is the same as usual.

The pilot will, over the next three years, gather and compare sales and usage data for each group. The resulting data will provide an invaluable evidence base for the use of monographs under contrasting modes of access.

The research proposal

The research strand of the project will investigate whether an OA model for scholarly monographs could take hold in the minds of humanities and social sciences scholars, what funding policies and technical processes would need to be developed to support an open access model and what the impacts of an OA model would be on key stakeholders.

The research element of the project focuses on three main questions.

1. How does the general research environment - policies, systems, technical products, attitudes and so forth - need to change if OA monographs are to become more common? This will be explored through a series of focus groups, interviews and surveys with various stakeholder groups.
2. What is the measurable impact of choosing to publish a monograph in open access on sales, usage and citations? This will be established by comparing data for the matched pairs of books.
3. How has participation in the project affected attitudes towards OA monograph publishing? This will be examined using an annual benchmarking survey, which tracks the opinions of all those who come into contact with the project and its findings.

The first phase of the research begins in November with a round of focus groups for researchers, librarians, repository managers, research managers and publishers.

More information on the pilot is available at:
<http://oopen-uk.jiscebooks.org/pilot/>

The full research plan is available at:
<http://oopen-uk.jiscebooks.org/overview/research-plan/>

Dates and information about attending the focus groups is available at:
<http://oopen-uk.jiscebooks.org/events/>

For further information on OAPEN-UK please contact Caren Milloy, Head of Projects at c.milloy@jisc-collections.ac.uk

Caren Milloy and Graham Stone will be presenting a breakout session, which will discuss the project and look at the outcomes of the first phase of research at the 35th UKSG Annual Conference at the SECC, Glasgow from 26-28 March 2012.