Open Access Monographs: Perspectives and Approaches

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To quote a *Scholarly Kitchen* blog post from May 2016, "... the [open access] monograph is very much with us now and... is almost certainly going to be a bigger part of scholarly communications in the next few years." There are many ways to organize, approach, and implement this type of publication. This session examined the landscape of open access (OA) monographs from several different perspectives, and described some publishers' approaches in publishing them.

The session started with a brief introduction by the moderator reinforcing the fact that the OA movement is strong and growing, and pointed out that this type of research output is the primary product in the humanities and social sciences. The many different funding and organizational models for producing OA monographs were also briefly described and led to three questions for the speakers to address: 1) What does this landscape look like now and how is it evolving? 2) How do various players, especially university and society publishers, approach the task of publishing OA monographs? 3) How does a publisher actually implement the publication of OA monograph?

Robert Prior started by giving a brief history of why OA is important in the sciences, going back to the Budapest Open Access Initiative in 2002. He contrasted the different approaches that traditional journals and books take toward topics like author compensation, peer review, impact metrics, electronic-only publication, and differences among fields in their funding sources and primary research output.

He then described MIT Press's history with publishing OA titles, which started in 1995 and has evolved from experimentation to pressure from authors to publish OA. A number of recommendations were given as a conclusion, including accepting that your content will be pirated, carefully curating the content and process, and the importance of building a portfolio of publications with OA solidly in the mix.

Jason Colman focused on Michigan Publishing's efforts to solve three key problems in OA monograph publishing: cost, discoverability, and the complexities of preserving digital scholarship. There are three enterprises that Michigan Publishing is involved in that Colman used to examine these problems. The first is Maize Books, an in-house imprint that publishes 15 books per year with 3–6 month publication schedules. These books are OA, print-on-demand (POD), have minimal editorial intervention and peer review, and are considered a complement to traditional peer-reviewed monographs, not a substitute.

The second enterprise Colman described was Lever Press. This is a collaboration between Michigan Publishing and Amherst College Press that produces OA, peer-reviewed monographs primarily for the liberal arts. This collaborative model is funded by the Lever Press pledging institutions (mostly small liberal arts colleges) and is designed to remove barriers to authors at institutions with fewer resources.

The final, most recent enterprise that Jason discussed was Fulcrum. This project supports OA, digital-first publications with the goals of being flexible, durable, and discoverable. Fulcrum publications are preserved on open-source library infrastructure, and integrated with key metrics technologies.

Mike Friedman's presentation zeroed in on the American Meteorological Society's (AMS) newly relaunched monograph program that is much more journal-like than the old-style, traditional book approach. The new monograph program is designed to be fully OA, with journal-like submission, peer review, and continuous publication based on individual chapters or manuscripts that are published as they are ready, rather than waiting for a whole book of content.

His detailed presentation showed how the production process was defined to allow fast publication online with a POD option when the monograph was complete. He also discussed how the monographs differ from special themed collections of journal articles. The conclusion identified three challenges that AMS is now engaged in: 1) Educating authors about the value of OA monographs; 2) indexing the monographs properly so they are discoverable; and 3) demonstrating the impact they can have in building the authority and using monographs as an attractive publishing option for authors.

In this session, Prior, Colman, and Friedman provided a wide variety of information about OA monographs from broad approaches to specific implementation details that gave an excellent overview about what is involved in publishing these often overlooked publications.