ABSTRACT

The OAN financial model is designed to support open scholarly communication infrastructure beyond the scope of traditional packages (e.g., journals or books), projects, or platforms—a model that requires an ongoing infrastructure component to support the creation and distribution of open research and scholarship and to encourage more affordable education, which can be a direct outcome of OA publishing. Our ultimate goal is to develop a collective funding approach that is fair and open and that fully sustains the infrastructure needed to support the full life-cycle for communication of the scholarly record, including new and evolving forms of research output. Simply put, we intend to Make Knowledge Public.

INTRODUCING THE OPEN ACCESS NETWORK

Sharing, curating, and preserving scholarship are imperative for the advancement of research. The ready availability of scholarly publications is central to teaching and learning and optimizes opportunities for innovation and development across higher education and beyond. Deep fundamental changes to the scholarly communication system are needed not only to respond to the numerous funding crises in higher education and to encourage emerging and new forms and formats of scholarship, but also to foster and deepen the connections between the academy and the wider public. Only an approach to scholarly communication that builds collective and collaborative alliances among institutions and that engages a range of stakeholders can provide a fair and equitable path to truly open and sustainable forms of scholarship.

The Open Access Network (OAN) offers a bold new model to support scholarly communication, not by becoming a scholarly publisher ourselves or by developing our own preservation archive, but rather by supporting the work and the infrastructure of others. In adopting this strategy, the OAN can be both incremental and forward-thinking: we propose a phased approach that seeks to open up current forms of scholarship (e.g., journals, monographs) while simultaneously establishing the infrastructure and development across higher education and beyond. Deep fundamental changes to the scholarly communication system are needed not only to respond to the numerous funding crises in higher education and to encourage emerging and new forms and formats of scholarship, but also to foster and deepen the connections between the academy and the wider public. Only an approach to scholarly communication that builds collective and collaborative alliances among institutions and that engages a range of stakeholders can provide a fair and equitable path to truly open and sustainable forms of scholarship.

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FINANCIAL MODEL

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FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

The OAN will not host any projects or services itself. Instead, the monies collected by the OAN will go to support the scholarly communication infrastructure itself, whatever the form, format, platform, product, or project. Each project by each partnership will appear listed on the OAN funding contribution and distribution site, which will look familiar to those who use crowdsourced funding sites already. Funding through the OAN (which will provide tools for institutions, foundations, organizations, companies, and individuals) can be designated on a project-by-project basis, on a discipline-by-discipline basis, in support at the level of an area of study (humanities or social sciences), or both, by contribution to the general fund. Because all projects are in certain ways unique, we will not list publicly the amount needed to fund any given individual project.

TRANSPARENCY

Transparency between and among the partners as to the annual project-specific costs is a requirement for OAN funding and so these costs are also known in advance. The OAN, being built on project-level financial information could prove difficult to explain succinctly in a public forum and might open up projects to unjustified criticism. We do not want to put societies or presses in the position of having to justify why, for example, they employ a managing editor or pay a vendor for XML markup. We have every reason to believe the partnerships, since they will involve stakeholders from different sectors of the scholarly communication system, will strive to keep costs as low as possible.

KEY POINTS

• We are looking to institutions, not necessarily to their libraries, to fund this model. Our emphasis is on OA’s direct educational and societal benefits, particularly in supporting lifelong learning and the social and economic growth that results from ongoing access to research and scholarship.

• We are looking for participation from the entire higher education community, from small community colleges and large research universities alike, eventually at global scale.

• Our approach looks to fund the entire scholarly communication infrastructure, not simply certain types of research output, supporting both current and new modes of communication.

• We are suggesting bringing together societies and university presses, libraries, and institutions in collaborative ways that have not been tried before, at least not at scale.

• We are focusing in the first instance on HSS. Both underfunded and accustomed to paying nothing to publish, scholars in HSS disciplines require a different approach for OA to work for them.

• Our plan is not bound by national borders but can be adapted, with regional modifications, in all countries by those looking for a more equitable and sustainable OA model.

ABOUT THE OAN


FOR MORE INFORMATION


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Securing funding from the OAN is comparatively easy. Academic institutions and scholarly societies own the bulk of their scholarly property or quality presses come together in partnership to apply for funds through a lightweight screening process. Partners must meet these minimum criteria:

• Collaboration between at least one scholarly society or university press (e.g., department, library) and one scholarly society or university press

• A two-year roadmap that includes plans for growth and production development and that outlines an increased positive impact on the scholarly communication ecosystem

• Financial transparency between the partners and with the OAN administrators detailing costs and processes

• An explicit plan for archiving and preservation

• A clear memorandum of understanding between partners that stipulates procedures for modifying, amending, or terminating the partnership

The funds dispensed by the OAN are used to provide direct financial support for the distribution, access, and long-term archival preservation infrastructure of those partnerships and their publications, projects, and platforms.

Once a proposal has received funding, an annual audit will be conducted and a report submitted. Funding sites already. Funding through the OAN (which will provide tools for institutions, foundations, organizations, companies, and individuals) can be designated on a project-by-project basis, on a discipline-by-discipline basis, in support at the level of an area of study (humanities or social sciences), or both, by contribution to the general fund. Because all projects are in certain ways unique, we will not list publicly the amount needed to fund any given individual project.

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To acknowledge the investment many institutions are already making in OA publications, projects, and platforms, we have factored into the funding formula the option for an institution to reduce its annual payment by the (self-reported) amount that that institution already spends on other HSS OA initiatives. (The numerous examples of such initiatives include APCs for HSS articles in fully OA journals, the Open Library of the Humanities, Knowledge Unlatched, Luminos, Lever, campus-published journals, open educational resources, discipline-specific repositories for HSS content, digital humanities projects, and so on.) Acknowledgement of these local OA priorities underscores the importance of institutional support for OA infrastructure whether regional, national, or global.

The remaining balance of the institutional annual fee is that spent directly on OA-supported projects is dispersed to OAN partner projects across subject disciplines, geographic regions, or publishing formats, in accordance with institutional, funder, or individual donor priorities. Funds are then distributed to cover the costs of the partners’ publications, platforms, and projects, providing direct support for the infrastructure and resources needed for the creation, curation, distribution, and long-term archival preservation of scholarly content. Examples of OAN-supported projects include high-impact-society- and university-press-published journals, discipline-specific open access monograph and series, open educational resources, discipline-specific repositories, and innovative digital projects and platforms.