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*Ubiquity Press*

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*University of California Press*

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Innovation in Open Access Monographs, Archives, and Journals

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David Parker, Head of Editorial, Alexander Street Press

Moderated by Rick Anderson, University of Utah

The following is a transcript of a live presentation at the 2015 Charleston Library Conference.

Rick Anderson: So, first we’re going to hear from Alison Mudditt, who is the director of the University of California Press, and she’s going to talk about the UC Press’s new and very exciting monograph publishing program called Luminos. Then we will hear from Brian Hole, who is the founder and CEO of Ubiquity Press, and he’s going to discuss the way in which Ubiquity Press provides a platform on which others can innovate with openness; and the third speaker will be David Parker, who is head of editorial at Alexander Street Press, and he’s going to describe an interesting new initiative in open access for archival materials. Following him, I’ll make a couple of very brief synthesizing remarks and then we’ll open up the remainder of the time for a discussion. Alison.

Alison Mudditt: Thank you. Okay, so I’m so excited to be here to talk about one of my favorite topics, the open digital feature of the monograph, and I would like to acknowledge that there are a lot of interesting things really happening in this space. I’m going to focus on what we’ve been doing at UC Press with our Luminos program, and there are a lot of really interesting other programs out there that are happening at university presses here in the US. So, we started thinking really seriously about open access at UC Press a few years ago, as we started to think about the digital future beyond books and journals, and we really saw this and saw open access as integral to that future. It is in perfect alignment with our mission as a university press, both to democratize access to content and also to increase the impact of the scholarship that we publish. But, as we started to think about monographs, we kept on stepping back to a series of crises; depending on who you spoke to, it was either the crisis of the monograph itself or the crisis of the humanities or even the crisis of the university press. And so we really wanted to unpack that to better understand what we were dealing with, as we tried to think about models for dealing with monographs. That said, the one thing that was really clear to us was that the monograph remains a vitally important vehicle for scholarly communication in the humanities and the humanistic social sciences. And so, as we thought about the monograph, we wanted to make sure that we were not only preserving the monograph but also reinvigorating it with more open digital models.

As a starting point we sort of looked across the landscape at what was happening in open access and we thought about what this told us about what may or may not work for monographs; and the first conclusion—this is a pretty obvious one to many people but I think it is worth underlining—was that the hybrid models that were being developed were really developed for STM journals and for fields primarily in the life sciences where there are large research grants that pay the cost of publication. This brought us up against one of the first challenges for books, given (1) they were expensive, and (2) they are in fields that don’t have those grants. There were no obvious funding sources—certainly no single funding sources in the underfunded humanities and social sciences that were really going to be able to cover the costs of publication in the way article processing charges (APCs) have begun to for gold OA journals.

The next challenge, and this is really more as we started talking to faculty, is a whole series of cultural concerns about moving to a digital open
access model for monographs; and yes, there is an attachment to printed books, but I think there’s a great discussion of this in Geoff Crossick’s recent Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) report on the landscape for open access monographs, and he talks about an attachment to the materiality of the book, the visual grammar that is created through things like footnotes and indexes and all the other apparatuses of book publication, all things that haven’t really been well-captured by the digital form at this point in time.

Next, a key concern, particularly among junior faculty, as you might imagine, is the question as to whether the digital open access book will have the same legitimacy, promotion, and tenure as the traditional print monograph. And then I think, finally, an added complexity of monographs is that we are looking to move to digital and open access at the same time, and if you think back to journals, by the time mandates became a big deal and open access became more of an issue for journals, digital had been the norm of publication for a decade or more. I would say with monographs we’re really grappling with both of those two things simultaneously.

As we started to think about what we wanted to do in the monograph space, the first thing that we set out to do was to really think about a model that would address what we identified, now respected as the two primary concerns of monographs. The first concern is that the presses and libraries in the current model are under increasing financial strain, whether you want to call the model broken or not, but certainly under increasing financial strain. And the second is the issue of access. As a university press, we believe that we have a responsibility to disseminate the scholarship we publish as widely as possible, certainly to all who are interested, ideally to all would profit from it, but very definitely we want to be represented in the 300 or so research libraries in the West who can afford to buy monographs these days. At the same time we wanted to make sure that we preserved what really works so well about the monograph, and one of the things that we have been very careful to do in the Luminos model is to make it clear and to ensure that an open access monograph is exactly the same as any other UC Press monograph in the important areas of selection, peer review, approval by our editorial committee, and the editorial development of the book.

As we started to think then about business models, we really identified the fact that this is a problem that libraries and publishers are unable to solve on their own, and so we moved back to thinking about collaborative ways to address the problem. The business model that we developed is one that really shares the cost of publication among the people that we identify as the key stakeholders. You’ll see that there is an author’s contribution to that—you know, what in the journals’ world has become known as an article processing charge (APC). We are assuming that comes from the author’s institution but at the same time recognize that not all institutions are able to fund this. There’s also a library subsidy that comes from a mention model that I’ll talk about more in a moment. But there is continuing subsidy from UC Press; we always support all of the monographs we publish, and then there are print editions available and so we are hoping to generate revenue from printed titles.

Since we are at a library conference, why don’t we dive a little deeper into the library venture model. It is kind of, you know, in many ways, an NPR-type model. We have four levels of membership. Membership is, of course, completely optional for all libraries and there are different levels of benefits for libraries at each of the four levels. So one benefit that is consistent across all of them is that faculty at the library and institutions will all receive a discount on that title publication fee to publish within Luminos. And so the library revenue that we generate is used in two ways: the first is to help support the publication costs of the books that are published in the Luminos program and anything that’s left from that goes into a waiver fund which we are using to support authors at institutions that genuinely cannot afford the cost of the publication.

So, we’re at a point now where we’ve published the first six books in the series, and that has all happened over the last couple of months, so there’s not a lot of data to report at this time. It’s
very early days, but the data is of course all available on the websites and you can see exactly how many uses and downloads on this there have been. We’ve had a great reception from libraries. We’ve signed up a good number of library members and had a really positive response from authors and I think there are really two ways that the model has really resonated among our authors. The first is among authors who want to be read and not simply published; and the immediacy of being able to see the dialogue and those kinds of things has really been great for authors. And the second is among the increasing number of humanists and social scientists who are doing multiform work and being able to reflect this fact in their publications in a way that the traditional monograph doesn’t allow them to. So that said, I’m really excited about what we’ve done with Luminos so far and I’m really ambitious about where we could take it. I do think that there are some pretty big issues for us to address if we really want to move open access forward, and these go beyond simply proclaiming the benefits of open access. I think the first and perhaps most difficult one is winning over faculty opinion. We all—libraries and publishers—spend a lot of time in rooms like this talking about open access. There is a really important group of stakeholders who are not here and involved in this discussion and we have very, very different points of view; but you know, the root of this is the entrenched value system, where the newer publication is most important in the career of any academic and they, like we are, human, and most of them will choose prestige over the ideals of OA, and so there are some really significant changes that must happen there, which I think we all have to accept, that will take a really long time.

The next challenge for monographs, I think, are issues to do with licensing and rights. We’ve adopted a pretty open approach, offering any of the Creative Commons licenses for monographs. The OA purists argue anything that is not CC-BY isn’t real open access, but I think for us to really move forward with monographs we have to be a little more open-minded than that, and then there’s the technology issue. I think the experience of reading a digital open access monograph has to become a lot closer to the experience of reading a physical book for it to become an acceptable alternative.

Finally, there are the issues around business models and funding. I think that we’re doing a lot to really scaffold together what we can with Luminos and to start to address some of the real issues of moving to a digital open access model for monographs, ones that go well beyond how we pay for them. At the same time, I think, for us to see OA ventures scale in the way that many of us would like them to, there’s going to have to be some pretty significant top-down change to the financing of these models. So, in conclusion, I hope and think that we are making a real contribution with Luminos, along with many other publishers in this space, to try and develop sustainable models, and I hope we’re demonstrating that open access models can not only be just as good as but perhaps better than the traditional monograph. Thank you.

Brian Hole: Good afternoon, everybody. So, there’s a background to this slide (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Hole’s first slide in his presentation.](https://example.com/hole-slides.png)

I was asked originally to talk about what the state of open access was when I first came into it. So, this slide symbolizes that. I used to work at one of the large publishers and left there to go back to University College London (UCL) to get my PhD and discovered at that point that publishers weren’t as loved as I thought they had been. I’m blabbering and so forth. I also found that open access was a big issue, and because of my publishing experience I was asked to help out with some of the smaller journals that operated on
campus, and we looked at all the opportunities to get them published in open access and we couldn’t find anything that cost us less than $20,000 a year for publishing print books. And that was the genesis for setting up Ubiquity Press. So I found out that open access was out there, but especially in humanities no one could quite yet reach it and at the same time I was doing my research. I’m an archaeologist so I was working up in India a lot of the time and very, very few people could access it, even if it was supposed to be open access through programs like Canary and so forth which are very where with all programs but in reality don’t reach more than 10 or 20% of people. So that was a real driver for us to set up the company and get moving.

And so what we did was we set up and we aimed to be as low-cost or as cost efficient as possible. So we set up an APC of around 10% that would beat the other publishers and we did that by using open source software for our platform, by being just very, very cost-conscious from the beginning and that was really, really critical in the humanities so we eventually got to the point then where we had a lot of success with humanities journals because we worked more with them, and societies and libraries were willing to pay the charges that we were asking for because we were very transparent about it. We were saying, “We’re not spending money on our expensive yacht.” It’s actually going into everything like running our office, building our platform, doing the typesetting, and so on. That was very critical.

And then what we did was we took the platform and we decided to open it up and let other presses use it as well, because we’d become a fairly successful, smaller, growing open access publisher in our own right, with books and monographs and things like that, so we opened up the platform and decided to let university presses take advantage of it and other societies; and what we do generally is they use the platform, the software, they run the front office of the press, and we offer everything else in terms of the infrastructure, editorial support, typesetting, copy, and all that kind of thing, and what we aim to do is to de-risk university publishing for them, make it sustainable, and provide a solution to university presses so they can take on big publishers. And we do things, we push things automatically to use our repository and build our user base up as well-shared between all of the universities, peer review, that kind of thing. And that has taken off very well also.

I’ll just point out three quick case studies. Because our platform is extremely cost-efficient and allows others to take it with low risk and allows them to innovate on top of it so in a way we’ve done our bit, now we’re trying to get other people to come up with new business models in open access, try out new things, because when open access is operated successfully it won’t just be done in one particular way. It won’t just be an APC model; there can be lots of different approaches depending on different disciplines and situations that will work.

So, the first of those—and Alison has already talked a little bit about University of California Press using the platform—UC Press uses it for Collabro, which is a large journal that they launched, where because the fees we charge are quite low they are able to charge a little bit more for staff and things like paying peer reviewers and really iterate around that model and try and come up with a solution that fits the academic community and some of the problems they’ve been having not being rewarded by larger publishers, and so on. And plus the Luminos platform that Alison’s just mentioned, and then another one is the Open Library of Humanities, once again addressing the fact that this would not be extensive in the humanities, but if you offer things at a reasonable value, then libraries, for example, are probably going to be willing to contribute and back you. The Open Library of Humanities has a library membership model for journal publishing, which has taken off extremely well. I imagine most people here will have been involved in that at some point by now. Another one—I can mention about 10 or 20 different things—but the other one that I’m going to bring up that you might have seen recently is the initiative called LingOA which is from the linguistics community, and essentially what happens there is they built up a large fund to be able to pay the APCs for journals in the linguistics
community that want to go fully open access. So, we have journals who negotiate with their publishers to see if they will be allowed to go open access. If they’re not allowed, they leave those publishers and come across to the platform. And LingOA is an initiative that is backed by the Dutch government and universities and they put together a fund to pay these fees for five years. There’ve been a few recent high-profile moves on that same space.

So, the aim of all of that is, then, that we try to make a community of all these initiatives working together. The end of this slide (Figure 2) is to talk about the importance of teamwork.

John’s Horn swallows doing crazy things. Okay so for some reason I can’t play it. What that was really just showing is that we are actually very, very ambitious about the platform and we don’t want to stop with just ten presses working together. We want to get up into the hundreds and we want those presses to be very successful so we want to see journals moving away from publishers who don’t want to support them in an open access business model. They should come over and start working with the presses that do have the ability to support them and then together we can form an agreement about what infrastructure we should have. Thank you.

David Parker: This would be a really easy platform to take a dive off of. So, I’m David. I’m with Alexander Street. Our model at Alexander Street is making silent voices heard, and a big part of that for us is bringing new archived content to the scholarly community. We see these dusty boxes of archives and we see opportunity. Digitizing them has been in our DNA for long time. Open access, though, was a new initiative we wanted to engage in, and so we started looking at the landscape of current initiatives in archival open access publishing, and largely two models appeared. The first, government or institution funded, and we know that that is wonderful for OA but it is also constrained by limited dollars. And then we also saw the sales threshold model that Reveal Digital and others have popularized. We really like this model. We believe it’s a great way to bring archives to open access but the challenge with the sales threshold mode is that it is delayed indefinitely. You establish a target of, say, $500,000 and you gotta get there. It could take two years, it could take five years, it could take ten years. So, we wanted to embrace a model or try a model that would do something a little different. We also, when talking to faculty and talking to the complex mix of rights holders we deal with, realized that we were running up a big challenge, which is that some of the rights holders we deal with are never going to go open access. Some of them are definitely going to go open access. Faculty, however, when they experience our content, regardless of whether it’s open access or not, they want it on a unified single platform.
Which brings me to our new initiative launching early in 2016: Anthropology Fieldwork Online. So what I want you to imagine is the world’s biggest database of field research notes all in one place. If you think about the twentieth century, it was seminal for anthropology in defining how the discipline was going to operate through the practice of ethnography. So, early in the century folks like Bronislaw Malinowski wrote these great ethnographies. Later on, people like Margaret Mead wrote ethnographies, which progressed the practice of the discipline, and for that 250-page monograph you have now that they’ve written, underneath it are boxes and boxes and boxes of fabulous field notes, and when you start diving into the—if you’re geeky anthropologist like I am—you love it. You’re thinking, “Wow, how can we bring this to life?” But, again, you deal with these complex rights. We have institutions, individuals, we’ve been in the basement of spouses of deceased anthropologists looking at their notes; it’s a really interesting, complex web of content rights that we have to navigate, and again we have to get all of this material digital, discoverable, on a single platform, and when possible, open.

So, how are we going to do it? We’re launching Anthropology Commons. Anthropology Commons—think of a coin, Anthropological Fieldwork Online is on one side of the coin; flip the coin over—that’s Anthropology Commons; and both of them are discoverable, searchable, on one platform, on two sides of a coin. There are three ways we’re making content open access via the Anthropology Commons. The first is, from every sale we make of Anthropological Fieldwork Online, we are contributing 10% to sponsoring open access content in the Commons. The second model is our delayed OA model, and these are from some of the archives that have said to us, “We have a mission to sustain. We need to generate some revenue, but after a certain period of time we are willing to go open access.” So, that’s five years in our model. Five years of sellables in Anthropological Fieldwork Online and then the content moves over into the Anthropology Commons. And finally is the third model, sponsored content, and that’s where our 10% is going but also, many of the archives that we’ve spoken to say they would be willing to underwrite digitization and evince costs so that content can be immediately open access. Also, many of the archives participating in the delayed model have told us they would like to kick back a bit of the royalty to the sponsorship pool.

So how does this work in practice? How many of you know who these folks are (see Figure 3)?

Any of these folks? One or two hands. But, again, you’re not geeky anthropologists like me. So these are examples of archives, or part of the anthropologists that we are targeting in looking at the archives to bring the content to life. So, for example, Ruth Benedict. If this works out for us, we believe it will, we’re very close to an agreement, this would appear immediately in our sponsored content. We are underwriting the cost of bringing all of her archival content that is immediately available to open access, and it is fascinating stuff. Bronislaw Malinowski is the granddaddy. In my first anthro course I had to read Argonauts of the Southern [or Western] Pacific, I can’t remember now. That will be delayed OA. And then Max Gluckman, he’s the founder of the Manchester School of Anthropology, and his content is coming via the Royal Anthropological Institute, and they have to earn a royalty, so it would be always in that sellable part of the Anthropology Fieldwork Online, but again 10% is going over into
sponsoring content. So that is our model. That is an example of how Anthropology Fieldwork Online and Anthropology Commons function together online like two sides of the coin.

So last, the future of open access archives. I should’ve written from my perspective not from our perspective, but you know the Library of Congress has said that less than 10% of their content is now digital let alone open access, and if the Library of Congress is less than 10% I think we can assume that the rest of the world’s archives are about 2%. And part of this is that archives don’t benefit from the need to publish behind open access journals and monographs.

You saw my comment earlier in the slide (Figure 4) that archives don’t seek tenure so funding isn’t always flowing towards getting archives open and digital, but on the other hand I think that makes it an opportunity for innovation because it’s not constrained by the various publisher models that define how things are going with journals and monographs, notwithstanding the great new initiatives of my copanelists. So, I do think we’re in a time of opportunity for new models in open access archives. I’m a big fan of Ray Kurzweil. A lot of people think he’s nuts. He said that in less than 50 or so years the pace of technology innovation and biology innovation will make it so that none of us have to die. It’s “the singularity,” he calls it, and in a lot of ways he’s crazy, that doesn’t make any sense, but Ray says that the reason we think he’s crazy is because we look at everything in a linear change model but really change is exponential, especially with technology, so he says that if you take a step back and you look at the pace of change in its exponential nature, you’ll see that it’s really moving way faster than you realize, and I believe that is the case with open access archives. I think we are just on the cutting edge of it and there’s going to be a lot more great new innovation. My last note: Anthropology Commons is only the beginning for us. Stay tuned and see what we do in other areas at Alexander Street. Thank you.

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Figure 4. Hole’s fourth slide: Open access archive landscape . . . from our perspective.