

Open access challenges for humanities books

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April 2022 | Fiesole Retreat, Athens

Challenges in extending OA to humanities monographs

Culture and trust	✓✓✓
Third-party rights	✓
Distribution and visibility	✓✓
Funding and cost	?

Current approaches to OA books

Model	Example publishers / service providers
Book processing charge (BPC) / Open access fee	Bloomsbury, Brill, CUP, De Gruyter, OUP, Manchester University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, Routledge, Stockholm University Press, UCL Press, University of California Press (Luminos)
Delayed/ 'retrospective' OA	Bloomsbury, Brill, CUP, De Gruyter, Routledge
Freemium	CUP, OECD, Open Book Publishers, OpenEdition, Open Humanities Press, Punctum Books
Institutional subsidy / New University Presses (NUP)	Lever Press, UCL Press, University of Huddersfield Press, White Rose Press
Library Membership	Open Book Publishers, Punctum Books, University of California Press (Luminos)
Library Consortium	De Gruyter, Knowledge Unlatched, Transcript
Subscribe to Open (backlist)	Central European University Press, Liverpool University Press, MIT Press, University of Michigan Press
Crowdfunding	Unglue.it (typically in collaboration with publishers, e.g., CUP, OBP), self-published authors

The OA funding dilemma for monographs

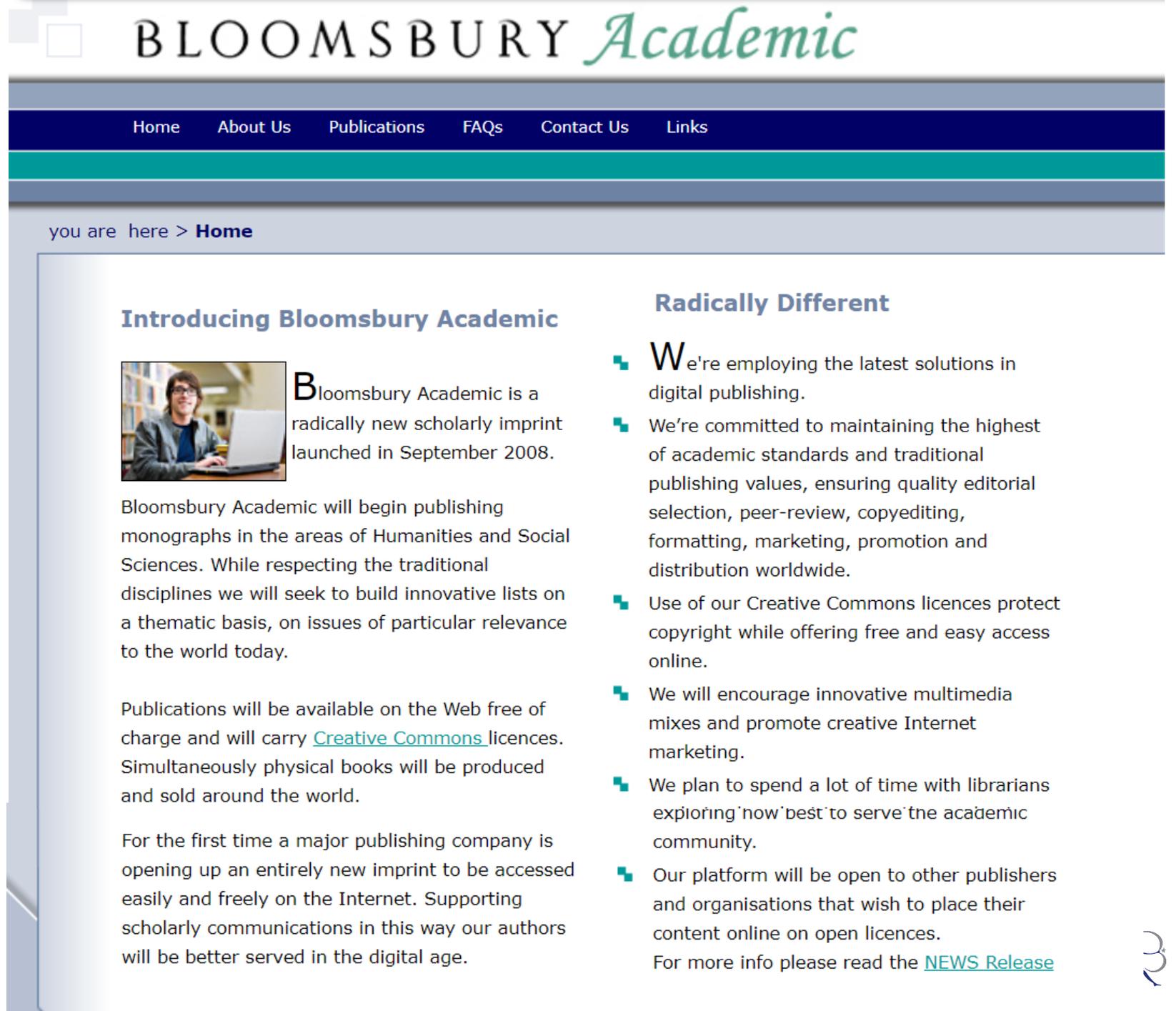
Higher costs to produce...

... but less direct funding in the system

So, how might a model work that doesn't load all the cost onto individual books/authors/institutions?

Back in 2008...

Bloomsbury pioneered a freemium OA model based on selling the print and making digital editions OA.



The screenshot shows the Bloomsbury Academic website homepage. At the top, the logo "BLOOMSBURY Academic" is displayed in a serif font, with "Academic" in a green script. Below the logo is a dark blue navigation bar with white text for "Home", "About Us", "Publications", "FAQs", "Contact Us", and "Links". A teal horizontal bar is positioned below the navigation bar. Underneath, a light grey breadcrumb trail reads "you are here > Home". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features a section titled "Introducing Bloomsbury Academic" with a small photo of a man at a computer. The right column is titled "Radically Different" and contains a list of six bullet points, each marked with a teal square icon. A small logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the page.

BLOOMSBURY Academic

Home About Us Publications FAQs Contact Us Links

you are here > Home

Introducing Bloomsbury Academic



Bloomsbury Academic is a radically new scholarly imprint launched in September 2008.

Bloomsbury Academic will begin publishing monographs in the areas of Humanities and Social Sciences. While respecting the traditional disciplines we will seek to build innovative lists on a thematic basis, on issues of particular relevance to the world today.

Publications will be available on the Web free of charge and will carry [Creative Commons](#) licences. Simultaneously physical books will be produced and sold around the world.

For the first time a major publishing company is opening up an entirely new imprint to be accessed easily and freely on the Internet. Supporting scholarly communications in this way our authors will be better served in the digital age.

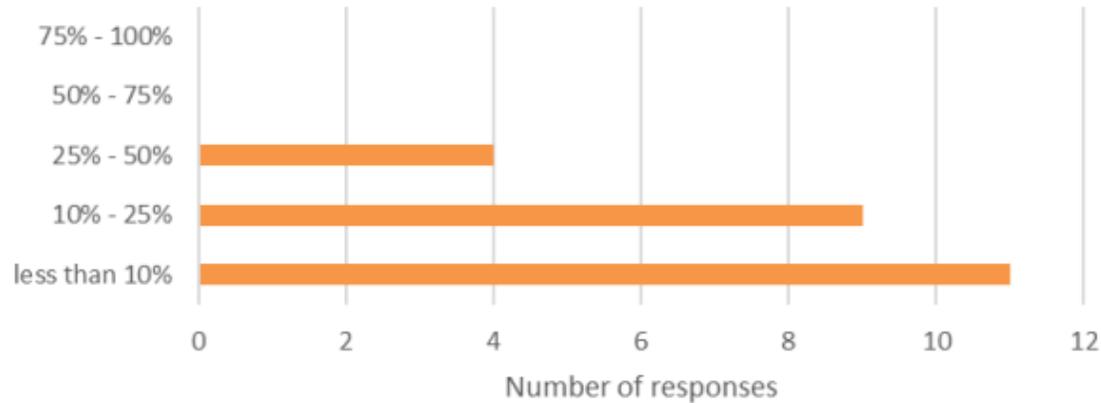
Radically Different

- We're employing the latest solutions in digital publishing.
- We're committed to maintaining the highest of academic standards and traditional publishing values, ensuring quality editorial selection, peer-review, copyediting, formatting, marketing, promotion and distribution worldwide.
- Use of our Creative Commons licences protect copyright while offering free and easy access online.
- We will encourage innovative multimedia mixes and promote creative Internet marketing.
- We plan to spend a lot of time with librarians exploring 'how' best to serve the academic community.
- Our platform will be open to other publishers and organisations that wish to place their content online on open licences. For more info please read the [NEWS Release](#)

...digital has come a long way since then

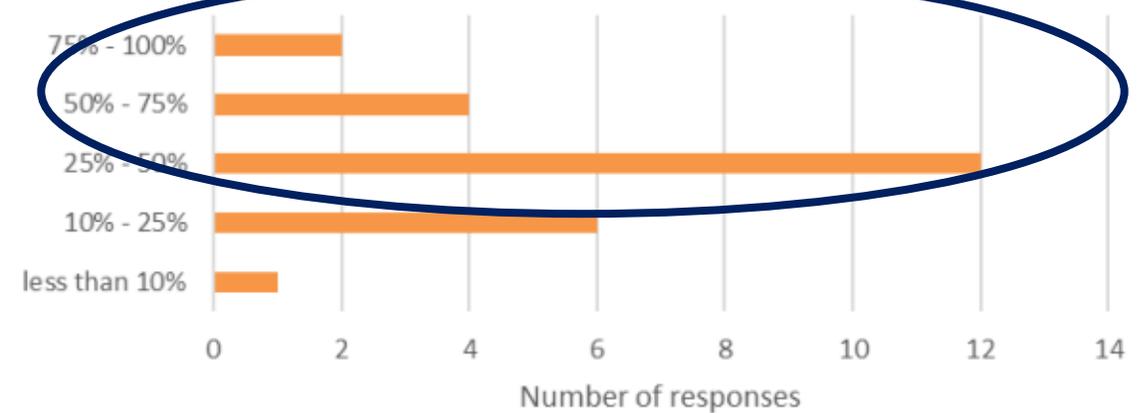
2015

What was the proportion of digital sales in 2015 in relation to total sales?



2020

What was the proportion of digital sales in 2020 in relation to total sales?



Views on print and digital monographs

...while we are ready to incorporate new means of scholarly production and publication, we also believe that **there is much about the print monograph that should not be lost in our digital future.**

'The Future of the Monograph in the Digital Era', Michael A. Elliott, 2015

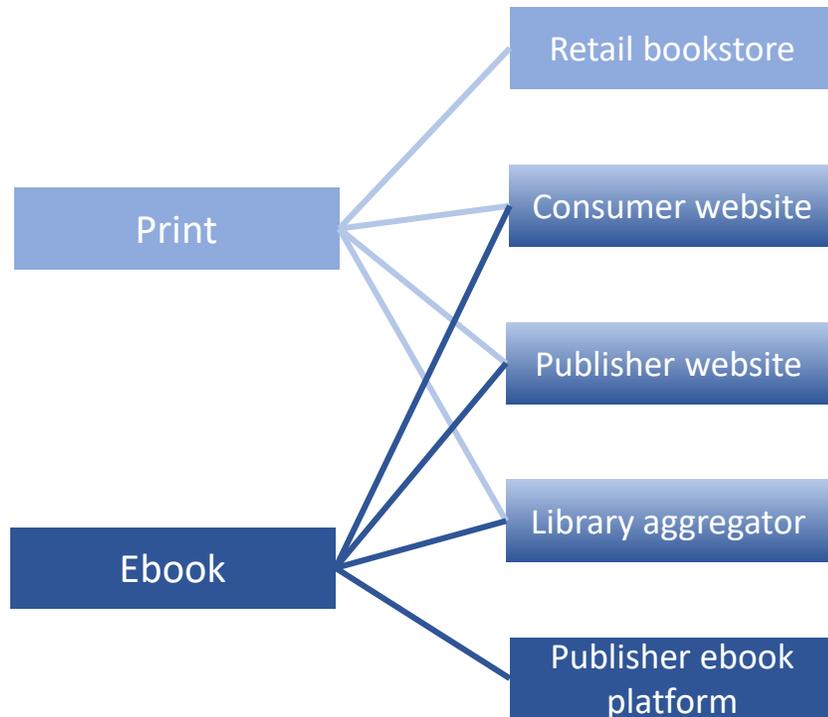
[On the impact of COVID]: **19 out of 25 presses included a reference to the decline in print sales and to increased digital sales and/or usage.** Six respondents used the term 'acceleration' when describing the impact of Covid upon an existing trend.

'Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Monographs', OICP, 2021

Results indicate **an interest in coexisting print and digital formats** [...] print is generally preferred for reading, with digital for quick reading and searching.

'Researchers' Perspectives on the Purpose and Value of the Monograph', OUP & CUP, 2019

Academic book sales routes (simplified!)



the supply chain for academic books is inherently more complex, and thus more costly, than that for journals. It has to encompass retail as well as library sales and cope with the absence of regular repeat subscriptions, the continuing dominance of print alongside e-books [...] huge volumes of titles in front-lists and back-lists, and low volumes of sales per title.

'The supply chain for academic books',
Michael Jubb and Richard Fisher, 2017

What about funders?

Publishers have been a long way ahead of funders on OA books

It's critical that funders understand how different monographs are from research articles...

...because funder intervention is likely to be necessary for us substantially to scale up OA book publishing

Some final thoughts

- Models for OA books are likely to need to bring together multiple funding sources to be sustainable (e.g. print + library contribution + funder contribution).
- All these models are likely to be complex; that adds cost, as does the diversity of models.
- In order to enable equitable OA for all authors, it's likely that versions of a subscribe to open model will be needed – how sustainable will those library contributions be in face of future budget cuts?
- Developing the systems and infrastructure to enable new OA models and publishing will incur costs for all involved.
- Given the shifting current dynamics, whatever we develop now will probably need to be re-worked and re-imagined in a decade's time.

The role of the monograph

In HSS, a monograph does more than report on the results of research; it is part of the research.

Researchers' Perspectives on the Purpose and Value of the Monograph,
OUP & CUP, 2019

At their best, monographs provoke debate, can shift paradigms, and provide a focal point for research.

Monographs and Open Access,
Geoffrey Crossick, 2015