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Current Status and Reflections on Crowdfunded OA Publishing for Humanities and Social Sciences Monographs: Case Studies of Open Book Publishers and Knowledge Unlatched (Post-print)

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Abstract

[目的/意义] To systematically review the current state of development in crowd-funded open access (OA) publishing for humanities and social sciences monographs, analyze the conflicts arising between OA publications characterized by public welfare attributes and crowdfunding publishing with commercial features, and thereby propose valuable considerations for academic monograph crowdfunding publishing. [方法/过程] From the three fundamental elements of initiators, investors, and crowdfunding platforms, this study examines the crowdfunding models of Open Book Publishers and Knowledge Unlatched, compares their similarities and differences, and explores issues emerging from their competitive relationship. [结果/结论] Currently, academic monograph crowdfunding publishing in European and American countries can be categorized into three models: university-based, crowdfunding operator-based, and OA publisher-based. Knowledge Unlatched is a crowdfunding operator that seeks to generate revenue through premium services to libraries, while Open Book Publishers is an OA publisher that conducts crowdfunding publishing via the internet. The two entities represent a competitive relationship between a large commercial corporation and a non-profit OA publisher, warranting heightened attention regarding the commercial development of OA publications, financial transparency, monopolistic sales models, and review systems.

Full Text

Preamble

The Development Status and Reflections on Crowdfunding OA Publishing of Humanities and Social Sciences Monographs: Taking OpenBookPublishers and KnowledgeUnlatched as Examples

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Abstract:

[Purpose/Significance] This paper examines the development status of crowdfunding OA publishing for humanities and social sciences monographs, analyzing the conflicts arising between OA publications with public welfare characteristics and crowdfunding publishing with commercial features, in order to offer valuable insights for academic monograph crowdfunding publishing. [Method/Process] From the three fundamental elements of initiators, investors, and crowdfunding platforms, this paper analyzes the crowdfunding models of OpenBookPublishers and KnowledgeUnlatched, compares their similarities and differences, and discusses the problems caused by their competition. [Result/Conclusion] Currently, academic monograph crowdfunding publishing in Europe and America is divided into three models: university-based, crowdfunder-based, and OA publisher-based. KnowledgeUnlatched is a crowdfunder that expects to generate revenue through high-quality services to libraries, while OpenBookPublishers is an OA publisher that conducts crowdfunding publishing via the Internet. The two represent a competitive relationship between large commercial companies and non-profit OA publishers, warranting close attention regarding the commercial development of OA publications, financial transparency, monopolistic sales models, and review systems.

Keywords: crowdfunding publishing; humanities and social sciences monographs; OpenBookPublishers; KnowledgeUnlatched; university OA publishers; crowdfunders

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KnowledgeUnlatched (KU), established in 2012, and OpenBookPublishers (OBP), founded in 2008, are active enterprises in the OA academic monograph publishing industry. KU has released over 2,000 monographs, while OBP has published nearly 200, with both companies currently operating successfully. On May 16, 2019, KU announced a new humanities and social sciences (HSS) academic monograph publishing program called Open Research Library (ORL), which aims to promote open access publishing for journals and academic papers. However, OA publishing activities for HSS monographs lag far behind academic journals, primarily due to three reasons: (1) HSS monograph publishing costs are extremely expensive—even with Book Processing Charges (BPC) designed to reduce OA publishing expenses, they remain unaffordable for authors; (2)

HSS scholars rarely receive funding support from research grant organizations; and (3) the academic quality and evaluation mechanisms of OA monographs face greater skepticism and require further improvement.

Consequently, some publishers and universities hope to leverage crowdfunding models to disperse publishing funds, reduce publishing costs and risks, and alleviate authors' financial pressure. ORL aims to unify over 20,000 OA monographs distributed across different open platforms onto a single platform, providing readers with a seamless search experience, helping libraries obtain exclusive services from a range of publishers, and enabling academic institutions to simplify payment processes. On May 21, 2019, OBP issued a statement declaring it would not join the ORL program and criticized ORL, thereby fully publicizing the fierce competitive relationship between KU and OBP. Therefore, this paper analyzes and compares the publishing models of KU and OBP from a crowdfunding perspective, reflecting on the current state of HSS crowdfunding publishing to obtain valuable reference points.

2 Literature Review

The European Union's radical Plan S, released in 2018, further promoted OA publishing. Currently, Europe and America primarily drive progress through practical innovation projects, with universities, publishers, and related enterprises actively involved. KU and OBP are among the more successful enterprises, while some universities with OA publishing experience and substantial funding are also actively conducting similar activities. Academic research mainly includes two aspects: (1) systematic summarization and analysis of OA monograph publishing. F. Dodds reviewed recent OA monograph publishing, concluding that current common methods include BPC, freemium services, print sales, collaboration, institutional funding, donations, and crowdsourcing. Dodds argued that print monograph sales will decline further, with the shortfall being filled by ebook sales, which will surpass print within five years. However, considering funding challenges, OA monograph publishing growth will be slow. Except for a few large publishers and university presses that may still attract top authors and available OA funding, most publishers will face more difficult operating conditions, with more of the publishing industry being replaced by for-profit institutions. G. Sara et al. discussed technical issues in monograph OA publishing, arguing that publishers' slow adoption of DOI affects ebook publishing and the establishment of OA monograph academic evaluation mechanisms, proposing the concept of an "information supply chain"—transforming ebook bibliographic data and related digital content into a standardized organizational network diagram that is easily searchable for readers, while recommending strengthened coordination among all stakeholders to reduce publishing costs beyond support from public welfare institutions and research funds. J. Adema summarized the "Stakeholder Workshop on Open Access and Monographs" convened by Knowledge Exchange in November 2018, exploring perspectives from different stakeholders (funders, policymakers, infrastructure providers, authors,

publishers, universities) and offering recommendations: universities should actively establish interactive mechanisms with HSS scholars to understand their concerns about OA monographs and find balance between OA mandatory publishing policies and incentive policies; publishers should transparently disclose actual OA monograph publishing costs and explore alternative fundraising models to BPC; libraries need to include sustainable demand for OA monographs in their future development goals and discuss charging standards across different publishers to help authors make informed choices. A. Jobmann et al. introduced and analyzed Germany's "National Contact Point Open Access OA2020-DE" project, which designed a business publishing model for HSS OA monographs combining library funding, collaborative consortia, and print sales revenue to develop a sustainable, manageable, and scalable open ebook business model. The model involves specialized information service organizations (SIS), authors, and publishers developing professional reading lists based on OA2020-DE policies, with prices obtained through transparent calculation methods, then crowdfunding through the SIS and library alliance network system, and estimating value-added service sales revenue. If crowdfunding targets are met, OA publishing proceeds; otherwise, non-OA publishing occurs. (2) Case analysis of crowdfunding projects. T. L. Reinsfelder argued that crowdfunding OA publishing models for academic publications can mitigate expensive APC (article processing charges) and BPC fees, analyzing ten crowdfunding publishing projects including KU and OBP, comparing crowdfunding and traditional subscription model prices, with data showing that crowdfunding enables libraries to fund more papers and books. B. Chris introduced three crowdfunding models using library funds: KU, Unglue.it, and Reveal Digital (RD), noting that KU uses library fundraising for publishing monographs and journal articles, Unglue.it obtains monograph publishing funds from individuals and libraries, while RD uses library membership fees for OA collection resources including monographs, journals, newspapers, and special collections on specific topics, without further comparing the three models.

Domestic research also divides into two aspects: (1) summarization and analysis of European and American practical projects. Wei Rui et al. analyzed the business-publishing models of 20 OA publishing projects including OBP, categorizing them into six models: institutional funding, OA publishing cost payment, collaborative publishing, hybrid content publishing, free content + value-added services, and other methods. Zheng Wenyi et al. argued that HSS publishing models divide into four types: freemium, crowdfunding, library funding, and faculty title subsidies, categorizing KU under library funding models. Wei Jingqiu et al. considered KU a crowdfunding model. Li Jin and Sheng Xiaoping argued that the optimal combination of elements for academic book OA publishing models includes authors, non-profit publishers, documentation organizations or institutions, and public funders achieving sustainable and healthy development of academic book OA publishing through reasonable division of labor and close cooperation. Zhu Benjun et al. discussed three models for open access books: "traditional publishing-digitization-open access model," "online OA publishing-

open access model,” and “self-archiving-open access model.” Zhang Jianzhong and Xia Yamei analyzed the Freemium model, arguing that it embodies Internet era characteristics, integrates cutting-edge technologies, and represents an important future path for monograph publishing. Wei Rui investigated and analyzed theoretical research and practical progress related to the European Open Access Publishing Network (OAPEN) from operational mechanisms, publishing models, service methods, and collaborative projects. Ning Shenghong analyzed KU’s mission, operations, management, economics, law, and achievements. (2) Reflections on commercial crowdfunding publishing models. Ren Xiang affirmed KU’s crowdfunding model, arguing that it enables direct dialogue between the fundamental product of monograph publishing—content—and the ultimate funding source—library budgets. Ma Ruijie pointed out that crowdfunding publishing may lead to cultural monopoly rather than cultural diversity, and that replacing topic selection with crowdfunding to reduce publishing risks may more likely result in popular culture flooding and widening knowledge gaps. Wang Hui and Xu Lifang argued that although Unglue.it’s crowdfunding publishing business uses new Internet crowdfunding models, its thinking has not broken away from traditional publishing models.

In summary, Europe and America have launched numerous practical projects, with enhanced cooperation between university presses and libraries, and both for-profit companies and OA publishers actively organizing and participating, accumulating considerable publishing experience. Domestic research primarily focuses on summarizing and analyzing foreign projects, exploring various OA publishing models from different perspectives, with inconsistent categorization of KU—some consider it a crowdfunding model, others a library funding model—while foreign scholars generally agree that KU and OBP have crowdfunding characteristics. This paper argues that KU engages in fundraising activities directly targeting libraries, possessing crowdfunding properties. The literature review reveals two important issues: First, there is a lack of systematic comparative research on OA monograph crowdfunding publishing projects, preventing understanding of each project’s advantages and disadvantages, and failing to provide theoretical basis for libraries, publishers, and policy decision-makers to make choices. Second, while some papers reflect on crowdfunding publishing, they treat books merely as commercial products. However, HSS monograph crowdfunding OA publishing primarily utilizes public and public welfare funds, a 特殊性 that leads to skepticism about related commercial activities.

3 Overview of HSS Monograph Crowdfunding OA Publishing Development

From a crowdfunding perspective, the three fundamental elements of crowdfunding projects are initiators, investors, and crowdfunding platforms. In commercial crowdfunding publishing, initiators are generally authors or publishers with works but lacking publishing funds, investors are netizens who see book business opportunities or have personal intentions, and both parties rely on

crowdfunding platforms to conduct activities, with platforms responsible for review, organization, and policy formulation.

4 KU and OBP Crowdfunding Operating Mechanisms

Currently, from the perspective of operator attributes, Europe and America have three crowdfunding models: university-based, crowdfunder-based, and OA publisher-based.

The university model refers to projects organized by universities, mainly in two forms: (1) Inter-university collaborative projects using their own influence, such as the TOME (Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem) project launched in 2017 by the Association of American Universities, the Association of Research Libraries, and the Association of American University Presses, and the Lever Press project launched in 2013 by the Oberlin Group of Liberal Arts College Libraries. (2) Independent university organizations with good publishing experience and funding, with participation from other universities, such as the Luminos project launched by the University of California Press in 2015. Fundraising primarily uses a reward-based approach, collecting different membership fees according to library tier standards, with members enjoying purchase discounts. Additionally, university funds, foundation support, and Freemium sales fees for print/upgrade-to-electronic versions are important income sources.

The OA publisher model refers to projects organized by OA-qualified publishers, generally non-profit organizations with social public welfare funding support. OBP is currently the UK's largest independent OA academic monograph publisher and a typical representative of this model. Fundraising methods include both rewards and donations. Libraries are reward-based investors with membership purchase discounts. Donations involve individuals, charitable organizations, academic groups, volunteers, etc., while public welfare publishing funds and Freemium sales from print/upgrade-to-electronic versions are also important income sources.

The crowdfunder model refers to projects organized by for-profit companies with obvious commercial characteristics. Crowdfunders are neither publishers nor universities but intermediaries connecting libraries and publishers—a special type of distributor. KU is a multinational crowdfunder with headquarters registered in Germany (originally in the UK) and branches in the US, UK, and Australia. This model primarily obtains funding from libraries, representing a delicate balance between what library collectives are willing to pay and what publisher collectives are willing to accept. Freemium sales from print/upgrade-to-electronic versions are also important income sources.

Generally, university-based models have smaller scale and lower publishing volume, with publishing funds primarily resolved within the university scope (including author grants) for academic exchange and dissemination purposes, involving fewer stakeholders, less commercial atmosphere, and unquestionable business intentions. However, crowdfunders and OA publishers have less pure

business intentions than universities. KU hopes to obtain higher revenue through high-quality services to libraries. OBP uses various crowdfunding methods and mobilizes more social public welfare funds to avoid publishing project losses. Therefore, these two publishing models involve commercial activities and easily attract attention and questioning.

4.1 KU's Crowdfunding Operating Model

KU's three fundamental elements are shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]:

KU's initiators are generally publishers. With authors' consent, publishers recommend works to KU, with both first editions and reprints eligible for application. Publishers' recommended lists are then submitted to the KU Select Committee (currently composed of over 180 librarians worldwide) for review and voting to determine the final crowdfunding list.

KU's investors are basically university libraries. As of May 4, 2020, there were over 600 library members, including 248 in the US, 85 in the UK, 67 in Germany, 45 in France, 29 in Canada, 28 in Australia, and other EU countries plus a few Asian universities. Membership fees come in two types: non-fixed fees, where publishing costs are shared among investors; and fixed fees, where KU collaborates with different publishers to produce books and journals in specific academic fields. For example, KU partners with Routledge to publish "African Studies" monographs at \$4,865/year, publishing 50 monographs annually with a 3-year membership requirement. KU also collaborates with Iberoamericana Vervuert, Peter Lang, and De Gruyter to publish French and Spanish HSS monographs, with membership prices inversely proportional to member numbers: \$5,765/year when 16 members are recruited, dropping to \$2,310/year with 40 members, publishing 12 monographs annually with a 3-year membership requirement.

KU's crowdfunding platform is the core element connecting libraries and publishers. Main information available from the website includes: (1) business objectives, policies, vision, and guidelines; (2) investor promotion information, describing various high-quality service content to libraries through numerous webpages; (3) publisher promotion information, with over 100 publishers currently participating in KU's crowdfunding projects; (4) introduction to the latest ORL project; (5) processing of crowdfunding results, with ebooks distributed through KU linked to the newly developed ORL website, providing PDF online reading and downloading; (6) community cooperation information, with KU having established a vast cooperative network spanning libraries, publishers, open platforms, and various alliances worldwide.

4.2 OBP's Crowdfunding Operating Model

OBP's three fundamental elements are shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]:

OBP's initiators are generally authors who submit proposals to OBP. Manuscripts must be first editions. The publisher reviews author proposals, and upon approval, authors must submit manuscripts within 12 months. After receiving manuscripts, OBP commissions at least two experts for peer review to determine the final crowdfunding list.

OBP's investors include libraries, foundation committees, and donors. As of May 4, 2020, there were 172 library members, mostly universities, including 59 in the US, 55 in the UK, and 34 in the EU, with no Asian countries. Library membership fees are fixed at \$500/year, with approximately 20 monographs and textbooks published annually. Other investors include: (1) individuals purchasing print or upgraded electronic monographs to donate to preferred libraries; (2) basic publishing fee donors at £25/page, £600/chapter, or £5,000/book, with institutional donors receiving purchase discounts; (3) volunteer services primarily in marketing, editing, and text processing; (4) encouragement and assistance for authors to apply for public welfare publishing funds—if authors cannot obtain funding, they may need to undertake some editorial work.

OBP's crowdfunding platform's main information includes: (1) business policies, objectives, vision, and guidelines; (2) processing of crowdfunding results, with the OBP website serving as the storage platform for OA publications, where PDF, HTML, and XML formats can be read and downloaded online, while ebook formats (EPUB and MOBI) are low-cost, print versions can be sold on commercial platforms like Amazon and Google, free ebooks have links on OpenEdition, DOAB, Worldreader, and Unglue.it, and textbooks have links on MERLOT, OpenTextbook Library, and College OpenTextbooks; (3) investor promotion information, introducing library membership systems and materials needed for authors to apply for publishing funds, including various awards received by OBP's OA monographs to help authors improve application success rates and donor rights introduction; (4) community cooperation information, primarily collaboration with other publishers and open platforms; (5) open-source software development, with OBP participating in various free software development projects for publishers, such as XML publishing software and OA monograph usage statistics.

4.3 Current Development Status of KU and OBP

KU's ORL and OBP's COPIM (Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs) are the two companies' recently promoted projects.

ORL mainly includes three aspects: (1) integrating over 20,000 OA books distributed across different open platforms globally onto a unified platform to optimize search quality and provide users with seamless retrieval experiences; (2) channeling all transactions between libraries and publishers through ORL's unified central hub to facilitate payments from libraries/universities to OA publishers and reduce transaction and management costs; (3) providing personalized services for libraries, with a tiered membership system: basic member-

ship at \$1,200/year and premium membership at \$2,400/year, requiring three-year contracts. Basic membership services include personalized COUNTER5 usage statistics, listing on the ORL support list, and providing suggestions for ORL development, while premium membership adds personalized library micro-homepages, personalized content display, and customized MARC records.

OBP's COPIIM hopes to expand and maintain its business through cooperation with other OA publishers. In 2018, OBP formed the ScholarLed alliance with four non-profit OA publishers: Mattering Press, Meson Press, Open Humanities Press, and Punctum Books. On June 14, 2019, ScholarLed, together with several other academic institutions, launched the COPIIM project, which received £2.2 million in funding from Research England (part of UK Research and Innovation). COPIIM's main objectives include: (1) developing a more equitable non-BPC commercial publishing model for sustainable economic development; (2) researching new infrastructure for technical management of digital books and metadata; (3) enhancing peer review protocols within communities before and after publication; (4) exploring new publishing models supporting early-career scholars; (5) establishing new collaborative publishing and editing models combining multi-modal and digital approaches.

4.4 Analysis of Similarities and Differences Between KU and OBP Operations

KU was originally registered in the UK as a non-profit company but later relocated to Germany, changing its business nature. Its official website does not display “not-for-profit” designation, making it a large multinational corporation. OBP is currently the UK's largest independent academic monograph OA publisher, officially identified as a “non-profit” social enterprise on its website.

4.4.1 Operational Overlap

- (1) KU and OBP have highly similar business scopes, primarily publishing English-language HSS academic monographs via OA. As of August 29, 2020, KU had distributed over 2,000 OA monographs across 41 disciplines, while OBP had published 173 monographs across 23 disciplines. OBP's 21 disciplines (except Cinema and Digital Humanities) overlap with KU's publications. KU's disciplinary classification is more detailed, with multiple sub-disciplines under the 41 disciplines. Table 1 compares the top 5 disciplines by publication volume at OBP with corresponding KU disciplines, showing that OBP publishes most in language, history, politics, religion, and philosophy, but far fewer than KU. KU also publishes a small number of STEM disciplines and over 30 OA journals, while OBP publishes a few textbooks.
- (2) KU and OBP have high library membership overlap. Both companies' library members primarily come from English-speaking countries. Among OBP's 59 US members, 46 are also KU members. Among the eight Ivy

League universities, none participate in OBP alone—Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Cornell are members of both, while Columbia participates in neither. The University of California system institutions are members of both. Among OBP's 55 UK members, 39 are also KU members, including prestigious universities like Cambridge, Imperial College, Durham, and Warwick, while Oxford participates in neither.

- (3) KU and OBP share overlapping partners. Both are members of multiple open publishing cooperation alliances, such as OPERAS (European Research Infrastructure for the development of open scholarly communication in the social sciences and humanities), a collaboration of 40 organizations from 16 countries primarily active in Europe, where KU and OBP are ordinary members.
- (4) KU and OBP display similar visions on their websites. KU's vision is to establish a sustainable OA publishing market where all readers worldwide can freely access academic content. OBP's vision is to believe that knowledge should be available to all and strive to create a digital book world where all readers can freely access all research results.

4.4.2 Operational Differences

- (1) Investor fee differences. KU's membership fees far exceed OBP's. KU's fees represent compromise prices negotiated between libraries and publishers, with KU as an intermediary facing no publishing fund losses. OBP's library membership fee is fixed at \$500/year, with other income from public welfare funds and sales. OBP's official blog provided financial income reports for 2015 and 2019 (Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]), with 2015 calculated in US dollars and 2019 in pounds sterling. In 2015, total income was \$197,900, with 16% from library membership fees, 42% from donations and public welfare publishing funds, and 42% from Freemium sales of print and upgraded ebooks. In 2020, total income increased to £186,800 (equivalent to \$248,200), with 23% from library membership fees, 32% from donations and public welfare funds, and 44% from sales. The two-year data shows library membership income increasing, donation and public welfare fund proportions decreasing, and Freemium sales remaining basically balanced.
- (2) Different business policies. KU's investors are primarily libraries, which are given full decision-making power over crowdfunding reading lists. OBP's initiators are authors, with publishers conducting expert peer review—similar to traditional publishing pre-publication review processes—making libraries only one type of investor. Public welfare publishing funds applied for by authors are the most important funding source. However, as library membership fees continue to increase, OBP recognizes that libraries should occupy a more important position, with

COPIM's business policies specifically emphasizing the need to establish sustainable cooperation with libraries.

- (3) Different free content for OA publications. First, KU's publications include both first editions and reprints, while OBP only publishes first editions. Second, KU only provides PDF as a free format, while OBP provides free PDF, XML, and HTML formats, with EPUB and MOBI formats costing only a few dollars.
- (4) Different future development goals. KU aims to aggregate OA monographs from different open platforms onto one platform, establishing a world-class social cooperation network connecting libraries and publishers, locking in stakeholders, and increasing sales through high-quality services. OBP hopes to unite with other OA publishers to establish an OA monograph publishing alliance that can operate independently while enhancing collaboration.

5 Reflections on OBP and KU Models

Both KU and OBP have initiators who are authors or publishers, similar to commercial crowdfunding publishing initiators. Their investors are libraries, universities, public welfare organizations, research funding agencies, and donors—different from commercial crowdfunding publishing investors—determining that KU and OBP's publications have public welfare characteristics. However, the close relationship between crowdfunding and economics creates contradictions between public welfare and profit. Additionally, KU and OBP have highly overlapping business scopes and investors, but KU's operational scale far exceeds OBP's, making their commercial competition relationship complex.

5.1 Can Public Welfare Cultural Products Generate Revenue Through Large-Scale Commercial Development?

Due to technological development and funding limitations, OA publications are currently stored on different open platforms. Through the international cooperation project ORL, KU conducts large-scale aggregation and commercial development of OA publications from different platforms to earn user service fees, a business model that raises questions. First, crowdfunding OA academic monograph publishing funds primarily come from investors with public and public welfare funds. ORL's large-scale processing of free OA monographs and subsequent charging to library members effectively channels public and public welfare funds to large commercial companies, increasing financial burdens for libraries that could otherwise access resources for free. Second, by providing basic free services to the academic community, ORL rapidly dominates OA monograph publishing, locking in users and stakeholders, thereby reducing competitiveness of highly overlapping publishers and harming interests of non-profit OA publishers. Third, projects like DOAB, OAPEN, OpenEdition, Unglue.it, and Project Muse are already performing ORL's work, albeit not at ORL's scale, and these

open platforms also allow libraries to easily integrate into catalog systems, making the significance of duplicate work questionable. Fourth, as Figure 3 shows, Freemium sales of OA publications represent important income sources. As a for-profit company, KU's provision of only one free format raises questions about whether there is intent to deliberately expand sales, which would also reduce reuse of OA publications and lower openness of OA publications.

5.2 Lack of Transparency

In April 2013, Science Europe released “Common Principles on the Transition to Open Access to Research Publications,” explicitly stating that OA publishing fees need transparent disclosure. S. Lawson et al. noted that due to complex and opaque funding flow networks among public organizations, higher education institutions, academic groups, researchers, and publishers, it is difficult to analyze and evaluate the effects of new OA journal publishing models funded by research support. When investigating the financial status of KU and OBP online, aside from OBP's disclosed sales revenue for 2015 and 2019, no other valuable data was obtained, requiring high attention from stakeholders, especially libraries. In traditional library subscription models, bundling obscures costs, with some publishers requiring libraries to sign confidentiality agreements and other forms of financial opacity, leading to excessive financial burdens on libraries and allowing publishers to accumulate substantial wealth. The current HSS academic monograph OA publishing model is still in its early development stage. Without reasonable financial disclosure policies established early, the final outcome may mirror the traditional subscription model, where insufficient financial transparency around academic exchange hinders evidence-based policy formulation, leaving researchers, decision-makers, and academic institutions completely unaware of the significance of new OA monograph publishing models.

5.3 Is ORL Monopolistic?

ORL's main innovations are twofold: (1) making OA publication academic evaluation data more accurate; (2) saving transaction and management costs between publishers and libraries. However, ORL's network marketing approach of locking in users and investors raises questions.

First, the exclusive sales model for publishers locks in users. ORL stipulates that unless otherwise provided in the agreement, publishers agree to use ORL and may not promote or sell their products in any other capacity during the agreement's validity period. This sales approach has two main impacts on OA publishers: (1) publishers are forced to rely on the single ORL platform to interact with libraries, reducing the ability of other platforms/services to emerge; (2) libraries wishing to cooperate with any publishers in the platform must either become part of the platform themselves or establish one-to-one relationships with each publisher, increasing financial costs for both libraries and publishers. Exclusive contracts are commonly used by network platforms as a business strategy for monopolizing and dominating entire industries (e.g., gaming platforms

establishing exclusive contracts with game developers, Apple requiring users to use the iOS operating system to access exclusive applications). ORL's exclusive sales model can quickly and effectively establish exclusive control over libraries and OA publishers, thereby maintaining higher price profits and harming development space for small publishers.

Second, the three-year contract service model for libraries locks in investors. ORL uses three-year contracts for libraries to purchase the ORL platform in exchange for services such as personalized usage statistics and customized MARC records. This service approach, which attempts to establish market dominance early to lead the OA monograph publishing market in the future, will place competitors relying on library funds in difficult positions.

5.4 Reflections on Review Systems

OBP's publishing review system is a networked manifestation of traditional publishing processes, with libraries serving as only one type of investor (consumer). KU helps libraries evolve from consumers into important innovators in publishing, enhancing library discourse power in academic publishing. Theoretically, libraries are closest to readers, and this business philosophy can maximally satisfy reader and library needs while attracting more library participation. However, the close relationship between crowdfunding and economics may lead investors to adopt various balancing considerations for crowdfunding success, potentially preventing the publication of difficult, less-demanded, but academically valuable unique works. Additionally, libraries view matters from readers' perspectives rather than professional editorial perspectives. Professionally, academic editors possess academic, artistic, and creative characteristics that librarians lack. KU abandons the editorial system, instead allowing librarians to determine crowdfunding reading lists without professional publishing expert oversight, which may cause publishing content bias and quality decline.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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