

Monographs and book chapters must become a larger part of the open access landscape

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The Wellcome Trust's open access policy, which requires funded research publications be made openly available, now extends to scholarly monographs and book chapters and additional funds will be provided to cover publishers' OA monograph processing charges. [Cecy Marden](#) provides further background on the Trust's decision-making process and explains why the additional costs (0.1% of their total research spend) are worth the investment.



Imagine, if you will, open access as a train, running up and down the length of the country, travelling anywhere track is laid, delivering papers, books, ideas to all and sundry. Research funders have the opportunity to man the signal boxes and set the open access movement's direction of travel. That is what the Wellcome Trust intends with the extension of our open access policy to include scholarly monographs and book chapters, part of our on-going commitment to making the research we fund open to all in order to maximise its impact.

The Trust has been very vocal about our position towards open access, but until recently monographs hadn't been included in our policy. As a funder of research in the medical humanities, we recognise that monographs are one of the primary research outputs within these disciplines. As we value all the research we fund equally, it seemed important for us to lay down some new track and ensure that these outputs can be accessed by all. Extending our open access policy to include them seemed an obvious step.

Immediate and open access to the research outputs which arise from our funding is a longstanding and fundamental principle of the Wellcome Trust. We accept there is a cost associated with this and fund our open access policy accordingly. The fee for existing open access options – ensuring all published material is converted to XML, and then made available in html and PDF – for books currently averages around £9,500, and we anticipate the average cost to make a book chapter open access will be £1,800. Using these figures we did some cost modelling to determine how much open access monographs and book chapters would cost when forming the extension to the policy.



We estimate that when we reach 100% compliance with the extension to the policy, which in our experience takes time, it will cost the Trust roughly £775,000 a year in “monograph-processing charges”, or 0.1% of our current research spend of approximately £650 million. This includes only Wellcome Trust-funded monographs and book chapters which fit the policy's criteria. Our policy only covers works aimed specifically at academic research audiences, so trade books and text books, for example, aren't included – there's more about this in our [FAQs](#).

To make academic titles immediately and freely accessible to readers, 0.1% of our annual research spend is a worthwhile price to pay. It is easy to find examples which illustrate this. Data from [YBP Library Services](#) show that the average price for an academic book in the life sciences is around \$90, (and this includes books which could be considered to be aimed at a relatively broad audience, which tend to be cheaper than those aimed at a more specialised audience). If we divide YBP's data by those they list as “general academic” and “advanced academic” then the average price for a life sciences book is roughly \$100 and \$40 respectively.

With these prices and a widespread tightening of belts, it is not surprising that print runs for academic monographs

tend to be in the low to mid-hundreds. When you compare this with the number of views open access books receive the contrast is stark. For example, as Open Book Publishers report, *Foundations for Moral Relativism* by J. David Velleman was accessed by 1,800 readers from 46 countries in its first ten days.

Funders have a unique ability to identify which research communities are essentially cut off from the open access network, explain why open access is the most effective way to communicate the books, books chapters and journal articles that those communities produce, and provide them with the material means to achieve it. Of course, those research communities, and the publishers who serve them need to adopt it too, but given the benefits funders should be confident open access monographs can move forward in the same way as research articles have been doing. There are already signs this is happening as Frances Pinter, founder of [Knowledge Unlatched](#) (a global library consortium enabling open access books), recently became the [new CEO of Manchester University Press](#), clearly signalling that this publisher sees open access as the future. And why not?

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Impact of Social Science blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

About the Author

Cecy Marden works at the Wellcome Trust as a project manager, both for some of the Wellcome Library's open access activity and for the Europe PMC Funders' Group. Prior to joining Wellcome, Cecy worked at PLOS and Open Book Publishers. Her interest lies in the many facets of open access, and with a background in English and Philosophy she pays particular attention to how open access functions in relation to the humanities.

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