If you read nothing else, read this!

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This toolkit is a step-by-step guide aimed at small to medium-sized scholarly publishers that have a backlist of ‘closed’ books, but who are interested in moving towards open access. If they have no mechanism for doing so, then the Opening the Future (OtF) model might be an option and this guide will show you how.

Benefits to the publisher

- The model does not rely on one-off costly Book Processing Charges to pay to flip one book at a time.
- It is based on simple collective library investment: lots of small payments are pooled to cover frontlist publishing costs, meaning no library bears a disproportionate burden and the publisher is able to fund its OA activities.
- The OtF model doesn’t require a lot of resources to run it.
- And it is quite low risk because the publisher doesn’t have to invest a lot of time or content upfront.

Benefits to library investors (members)

- Library members get perpetual access to specially curated closed backlist books at a special price.
- Their investment pays for this access but goes into a collective pool which combines to fund new frontlist books in OA format.

- So for a modest fee libraries can enrich their local collections while simultaneously funding new OA books.

The OtF toolkit on the Copim Compass walks you through the process for setting up the Opening the Future OA book revenue model at your press. It is a comprehensive and detailed guide but the model is simple. In fact, the steps below tell you what you need to do in order to implement it. You can just follow those and read nothing else, or you can delve into more detail in the rest of the guide.

How to Launch OtF in 10 Easy Steps

1. Create a package of 40-50 backlist books on a similar theme (or create several of around that many books in each!). Think about what might appeal to libraries e.g. UN SDG goals and price it based on what might be appealing to libraries while still covering your costs.
   - For information on the rationale and scale, see Section 7 ‘Assumptions’.
2. Host this backlist package somewhere known and trusted by libraries (e.g. Project MUSE).
   - For hosting options see Section 8 ‘Organisational partnerships’.
3. Create a short description of your offering and host it on a subscription manager (e.g. Jisc, Lyrasis through an agreement) or host it yourselves with a sign-up form to your finance person/department.
   - For connections with Lyrasis & Jisc see Section 8 ‘Organisational partnerships’.
4. Create a web page which contains the description of your offering, details of the backlist package(s) on offer, the pricing, and a link to where libraries can sign up.
   - For details on the sign up process see Section 8 ‘logistics and workflows’.
5. Do comms, marketing and outreach to libraries that specialise in the subject of your backlist package, and/or libraries that support other OA initiatives.
   - For outreach templates see Section 8 ‘Author and library outreach’.
6. Keep track, e.g. using spreadsheets, of who signed up and when, so you know who your advocates are. You also need to track when their renewals are due after 3 years and when their access to the backlist becomes perpetual.
7. Use the funds from these backlist subscriptions to fund your OA frontlist in the same subject area as the backlist package, and be very transparent to investor libraries about where their money is going.
   - For info on the OA pipeline see Section 8 Further logistics and workflows.
8. Create a mailing list of library supporters and keep them informed of your progress in opening up your frontlist.
   - For marketing suggestions see Section 8 ‘marketing’.

9. When it comes to renewals, create a new backlist package and/or a supporter package without backlist content and reach out to your supporters about it.
    - For information on managing renewals and ongoing membership see Section 8 'renewals'.
10. Consider engaging your library investor members in an advisory capacity on a formal Board, but at the very least keep talking to them: keep them up-to-date on books they have funded, keep listening to what they need, what they can afford, what their pressures are, the policy and wider HE landscapes, and what your opportunities to tweak the model might be.

You can just follow those steps and launch OtF without reading any further, but you will find the rest of the toolkit useful to dip in and out of for more detail.

Updated April 2026: real world streamlining of the model

Here we cover what steps are necessary for new publishers to engage with Opening the Future. While the logistics are well-covered elsewhere in the Copim Compass, in particular the section on workflows and partnerships, this lacks some real world nuance and detail. Below we attempt to articulate how it has worked in practice and we follow that with a streamlined Press onboarding process.

The human element

We were surprised by the degree to which a human element played a factor in the onboarding of the three publishers who joined during the Open Book Futures project. One of these came about via a chance in-person meeting at a European conference, another via connection from an experienced university publisher in the USA with their own OA model, and the third via a connection with Fulcrum who themselves we first met with at another UK conference (after which we pitched OtF to them). A fourth discussion which advanced quite far, but did not ultimately lead to a partnership due to external factors at the press, came about through our close working relationship with our original pilot CEU Press. The degree of correlation between managing to form a partnership and having met in person rather than just remotely was striking to us, and we would recommend that those seeking to implement a model like this attend industry conferences and try to arrange in-person meetings with libraries, platform providers and publishers where possible.

The other element that is not perfectly captured in the Compass is the degree of adaptability of the model. While one page has a diagram involving Jisc, Lyrasis and Project MUSE, these are a reflection of our processes at the time of the diagram's creation, rather than concrete rules and if we were to recreate the diagram today we'd include Fulcrum and the African Books Collective too. In reality, to make this work, a publisher needs an infrastructure to manage access to the backlist packages, which can be in-house as in the case of Liverpool University Press, or a third party such

as Fulcrum or Project MUSE who undertake this work regularly for a fee, and ideally access to local billing agents in the region you anticipate engagement. They need to sign agreements or MOUs around these terms between themselves and the third party provider, and both then need to sign contracts with relevant billing agents such as Lyrasis and Jisc. However, as there is no Opening the Future infrastructure to be included, these agreements are directly between these parties.

To take Boydell & Brewer as a case study of this: as an independent publisher, they were unable to work with Project MUSE, who have a requirement that presses they work with be non-profits. While Boydell & Brewer is an employee-owned co-operative and highly mission-driven, they are also set up as a commercial entity. Therefore, they instead chose to work with Fulcrum to host and manage their backlist packages for a set annual fee, and opted, as with our other publishers, to make their OtF offer available on Jisc and Lyrasis to most easily access UK, US and rest of world library subscribers. The flexibility and intangibility of OtF made it extremely easy for us to involve Fulcrum as a new third party.

Another example is Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB). They already had a close and long-standing relationship with the African Books Collective, an infrastructure to support African scholarship on and from the region. While they were eligible to work with Project MUSE, BAB decided, after discussions with us and the African Books Collective, that they wanted to administer access to the backlist packages with the ABC, and to engage in a revenue split with ABC rather than pay one-off annual fees. Once again, the great flexibility of the model enabled this to happen with ease and speed, contemporaneously with both B&B's arrangement with Fulcrum, LUP's ongoing use of Atypon, and CEUP and MSUP's use of Project MUSE. We could easily envisage, for example, a regional split in infrastructure; for example, other publisher members of the ABC could theoretically adopt the model with the same arrangement with them as BAB has, while North American publishers could instead opt for Fulcrum. The fact that so many of the logistics, processes and adaptable templates are documented on the Copim Compass should support this process.

A streamlined onboarding process - a template to follow

The following template is a generic distillation of everything you should consider and articulate when thinking about and then launching an OtF programme. This template contains fictional details and notional pricing as an example only. We strongly suggest you look at what prices others are charging for comparable models and deals, then look at your costs and the scale of your OA frontlist ambitions and then decide on library fees that seem realistic for you and for them. Talk to sector partners like Lyrasis and Fulcrum, get advice from librarians - make connections, ask for feedback and act on it, don't just pay lip service to the idea.

Implementing Opening the Future at XYZ Press.

1. Quick summary of the model

Opening the Future (OtF for short) funds open access book publishing with no paywall to readers and no charges to authors - while also broadening library local collections through an affordable subscription to closed content. It provides a sustainable and low-risk way for smaller, scholarly

publishers to incrementally transition their frontlist to open access (OA). In this way, the model is helping to foster a transition from acquiring local content to enabling global content for the public good, and also enables authors who do not have access to funds for one off book processing charges (BPCs) to publish their titles open access.

OtF can achieve this by utilising a backlist package of a selection of the press' books (e.g. 40, 50 or 60 books) and offering them as a sales option to libraries - this is non-exclusive, and allows the press to continue selling the backlist through their usual channels. The press then uses the revenue from the OtF package sales to make frontlist titles OA as and when enough funds accrue. Based on previous implementations of the model since 2021, a package of c.50 books can support 2-4 frontlist OA titles per year, if libraries get on board in sufficient numbers and if they renew their financial commitment year on year.

2. Proposal to implement OtF and steps required

We propose that XYZ Press collaborates with Fulcrum on funding frontlist titles as open access through OtF through ringfencing a package of books that can be sold to libraries. XYZ Press would then ringfence revenue from those specific sales and use that money solely to produce new OA books, potentially in combination with their publisher funded model whereby 5% of collection sales are set aside to fund OA at author request which works for a similar purpose.

The key here is simply transparency: as long as libraries know what's happening with their money they are fine with it and ultimately they can choose to invest or not invest based on what you display on your website and wherever OtF is listed with partners: make it clear in your comms what progress has been made, what money has accrued, how many libraries are on board, perhaps even how close the Press is to funding the next book.

Two important caveats to bear in mind:

1. The OtF model is revocable and does not require XYZ Press to transform fundamentally or irreversibly. While the aim of our working together would be to fund new titles as OA, the fallback position would be for XYZ Press to revert to their existing, current sales model for those titles.

2. Everything outlined below is provisional and subject to discussion – it is hoped this document will help to highlight areas for further investigation and will prompt further conversations.

The offer and some details around that:

- Package of books would be the 2026 collection of 28 titles, called the [collection name].
- Offered to libraries for a 3 year minimum subscription, after which they retain perpetual access.
- Backlist access delivered and access-controlled by Fulcrum.
- We recommend using the NISO Shared E-Resource Understanding (SERU) agreement to govern this ongoing access.
- Invoiced in N. America, Europe and RoW by Lyrasis, the trusted non-profit library org.

- Option to be listed on the Jisc Library Subscriptions Manager portal in the UK, which would allow UK libraries to participate seamlessly and means those libraries don't have to go through procurement to get XYZ Press or Lyrasis onto their vendor systems (torture). You can opt to use Lyrasis for the UK too though - Jisc takes a 2% cut on top of Lyrasis' standard 6.5% cut which they will charge on all sign ups. These % fees cover admin overheads for both orgs - invoicing, renewals, some (passive) outreach, general advocacy etc. If you currently sell a meaningful proportion of books to the UK, and can therefore expect some UK library interest, we recommend being listed on Jisc to ease transactions.

Package suggestion:

The XYZ Press [Backlist Collection Name] - 28 titles

The books in this collection, published between [date and date], aim to increase understanding and advance [insert paragraph of package description here, articulating briefly what's in it and why it's valuable].

Next steps

- We'd need to give the package a name that makes it obvious at a glance what's in it and of course use some of the existing XYZ Press blurbs to describe the value and contents of the collection.
- Need to upload the collection to a ringfenced part of Fulcrum's platform
- Create a listing and some details for XYZ's package on the OtF website.
- XYZ Press are working with Lyrasis now and are aware this OtF package is coming soon. There will be an MOU and a few other details needed by Lyrasis (and Jisc) in order to list and sell the deal so we'll have to specifically ask them to initiate that when we're ready.
- Introduce XYZ Press to Jisc to initiate an agreement with them and to gather other details they need. They ask for a fair bit of detail but the good news is that a lot of it is around the platform which they already have on file since Fulcrum hosts the backlist for another OtF press already listed with Jisc.
- Aim to launch at or by [date].

3. **Pricing table**

Tier	2026/27	2028	2029
Jisc Band 6-10 and European small institutions	TBC	TBC	TBC
Jisc Band 4-5B and European medium sized institutions	TBC	TBC	TBC
Jisc Band 1-3 and European large institutions	TBC	TBC	TBC
USA Associate's Colleges | CRKN Bands 1–5 | RoW	$600	$620	$700

USA Baccalaureate/Master's Colleges & Universities | CRKN Bands 6–9 | RoW	$950	$988	$1027
USA Doctoral Universities | CRKN Bands 10–13 | RoW	$1600	$1670	$1744

Rationale and assumptions behind pricing

- Assuming $10,000 per OA book as XYZ's first digital copy cost.
- Number of books in the [name] collection is a little under as LUP's, who have 37 titles. Suggested fees for libraries are broadly comparable but ultimately XYZ to decide.
- Tiered pricing means no library bears a disproportionate burden and is in sync with Carnegie Classification and tiered pricing globally (suggest that for libraries based in a country covered by the Research4Life program, they use the smallest tier pricing).
- Due to rising publication costs, a 5% annual increase has been applied for annual payments. The slight annual rise in membership fees reflects rising inflation rates alongside rising production costs for publishers globally. The ongoing fees will allow XYZ to continue to use membership revenue solely to produce new OA monographs, moving towards an affordable, sustainable model for the future of academic publishing. And while the rises are around 5%, in real terms they are no more than a rise of around $20 to $100 a year.
- If a library would like to prepay their entire 3 year subscription (it happens quite often), we suggest you accept that and offer a small discount: usually the 3 year prepayment option benefits from a fixed annual price with no price increase during the 3-year term (ie. they pay Year 1 price x 3 with no 5% year on year increase).
- Assume various partners will need to take their cut of these library fees, e.g. 6.5% for Lyrasis, 2% for Jisc (if you use them) and possibly 15% for Fulcrum though Jason would need to confirm that. Plus assorted fees from e.g. OAPEN and JSTOR to list the OA books when you publish them.

4. **What might we hope to achieve with this?**

- As ever it depends on how many libraries get on board, but with these prices and (for example) 12 libraries signing up in Year 1 + another 12 in Year 2 + another 12 in year 3 this would fund nearly 2 new OA books in Year 1, nearly 4 new OA books in Year 2 and 5 new OA books in Year 3.
- Based on the suggested prices the books in the package average out at a cost of $xx per library for perpetual access.
- Increasing XYZ's foothold in the OA sphere and in library OA budgets, and also being seen as an early adopter of a progressive model.
- Ties in very well with XYZ's already planned/ongoing marketing and promotion of this specific collection.

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