Institution: Birkbeck University of London
Unit of Assessment: 27
Title of case study: Open Access and the Open Library of Humanities
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2020
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit: Caroline Edwards; Martin Eve
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015-2020
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N
1. Summary of the impact   The Open Library of Humanities (OLH) has transformed the space of scholarly communications. Working within a context in which governments and funders have committed to the principle that outputs of publicly funded research should be widely and freely accessible as soon as possible, Edwards and Eve theorised and then implemented a novel but economically viable model for scholarly communication which is operational and financially supported by 300 libraries worldwide. Through this, the OLH has changed the economic and behavioural patterns of libraries, publishers, journal editors, and authors and contributed significantly to policy debates about the future of open access.

2. Underpinning research

This research began before Eve arrived at Birkbeck (1 May 2015) with the publication of his influential Cambridge University Press book, Open Access and the Humanities: Contexts, Controversies and the Future (2014). The monograph established Eve at the forefront of research into scholarly literature in the humanities, a position he has maintained through his continuing research on open access since joining Birkbeck in 2015.

The study of publishing has long been part of the discipline of English literature and Edwards's and Eve's work extends it to consider the publication of scholarly literature, work Edwards began when she joined Birkbeck as a lecturer in 2013 and continued in collaboration with Eve when he joined the College in 2015.

Articles by Edwards in *Insights* (2014)[1] and Eve in *Online Information Review* (2015)[2] theorised the challenges facing open access (OA) in the humanities, their potential solutions, and the opportunities presented should they be overcome. They identified Article Processing Charges (APCs) as a particular barrier for the large-scale adoption of open access in the humanities. APCs are a prominent model for open access with a fee paid directly by the author or on their behalf by a funding body or institution to convert each article to open access. While a common model, it is generally recognised as financially prohibitive, especially in the humanities. Edwards and Eve instead proposed an alternative in the form of library consortia to pool resources enabling a sustainable model for whole journals to become open access. Edwards advocated for being proactive rather than waiting for policy to catch up, with the sharing of research ultimately beneficial to the creation of a more positive research culture.

These foundations were embedded in the successful launch of the Open Library of Humanities (OLH) as a platform in September 2015. As the OLH has evolved, subsequent research has been informed by and then informed the project and platform. Labour considerations for open-access publishing that form the grounding for OLH's ongoing business model and budgetary planning, for example, are explored by Eve in a 2017 article for *The Journal of Scholarly Publishing*[3].

Eve's research also explored the challenges facing open-access monograph publication, particularly the economics of scaling, in *Online Information Review*[2] and in a 2017 article in *Insights*[4]. Issues of value, peer-review, and evaluation are further explored in a 2017 article for *Triple C*, and in peer-reviewed book chapters, including for Oxford University Press (2018). These are important for an understanding of the ways in which OLH filters material and how evolving debates around peer review (e.g. post-publication review, open review) apply to humanities disciplines.

A 2020 article by Eve, Vega and Edwards in *Liber*[5] draws up a balance sheet of the OLH's first five years, the challenges faced and lessons learned. Each of these publications contributes to the OLH's evolving praxis, building a rigorous underpinning theoretical model of economics, labour, peer-review, evaluation, and disciplinary communities for evolving open publication in the humanities.

Eve is the recipient of several honours and awards for this research. He was one of five shortlisted for higher education's most inspiring leader in the *Guardian*'s University Awards 2017; in May 2018 he was awarded the KU Leuven Medal of Honour in the Humanities and Social Sciences for his research work on open access; and he received a 2019 Philip Leverhulme Prize in the category of Languages and Literatures.

The OLH has won the Open Publishing Award in the category of Open Publishing Models by the Coko Foundation in 2019, who described it as 'a force of nature'; Small Digital Publisher of the Year at the Association of Publishers (AOP) Digital Publishing Awards in 2020; and was highly commended at the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers awards in 2020.

3. References to the research

1. Caroline Edwards, "How can existing open access models work for humanities and social science research?", *Insights: the UKSG journal,* 27:1, (2014), 17-24. DOI: http://doi.org/10.1629/2048-7754.135
2. Martin Paul Eve, "Open-Access publishing and scholarly communications in non-scientific disciplines", *Online Information Review*, 39:5, (2015), 717-732.
3. Martin Paul Eve, "Open Publication, Digital Abundance, and Scarce Labour", *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, 48:5, (2017), 26-40. DOI 10.3138/jsp.49.1.26
4. Martin Paul Eve, Kitty Inglis, David Prosser, Lara Speicher, and Graham Stone, "Cost Estimates of an Open-Access Mandate for Monographs in the UK's Third Research Excellence Framework", *Insights: the UKSG journal*, 30:3, (2017), 89-102. DOI 10.1629/uksg.392
5. Martin Paul Eve, Paula Clemente Vega, and Caroline Edwards, 'Lessons From the Open Library of Humanities', *Liber Quarterly*, 30, (2020), 1–18. DOI 10.18352/lq.10327

4. Details of the impact

Research being made freely available to all through open access has huge potential benefits for researchers, educational institutions, business, and society at large. Open access is the most significant global change for academic publishing in a generation. It has grown exponentially: the *Directory of Open Access Journals* listed 300 titles in 2003 but 15,000 in 2020[1]. Open access addresses key issues such as the spiralling cost of subscribing to academic journals and global inequalities in access to resources[2]. It has been deemed crucial by organisations as diverse as the US Federal Government, UNESCO, and The Wellcome Trust. UK funding body UKRI now stipulates that outputs from their funded research must be open access, supporting the principle of publicly funded research being publicly available. The cost to convert to open access using dominant economic models, however, remains exorbitant (particularly using APCs) and problematic, with publicly funded research sold back to the public (often via a for-profit entity) with the intermediary bodies generating significant (and often growing) profit margins.

It is within this context that Edwards and Eve founded, and continue to lead (as co CEOs), the Open Library of Humanities which pioneered an alternative approach for open access,

offering a value-driven, collectivist business model that is equitable for both authors and readers.

The OLH publishes world-leading, rigorous and peer-reviewed scholarship across the humanities disciplines in 28 fully open access journals, with no article processing charges. Instead, it is a financially self-sustaining model with 300 libraries worldwide pooling their resources to convert ('flip') journals wholesale to open access, which are then hosted on the OLH platform.[3] More research is consequently openly available worldwide with commensurate benefits to the public and developing economies. Moreover, partner institutions have a say in the decisions of the OLH. As more sign-up, the cost per institution comes down. Its practical success and the research underpinning it have changed the behaviour of governments, funders, journal editors, business and others worldwide. It has become 'the standard international reference point for such models', leading 'to many publishers transitioning to OA with many more yet to come. It is looked to as the example of how things could be different'[4].

The British Library, for instance, recognising the onerous nature of other models, 'believes that a lack of funding should not be an obstacle for scholars who wish to make their research as openly available as possible. It is for this reason that we are proud to join the Open Library of Humanities (OLH) as an institutional member.'[5a,] University Libraries joined OLH because it is academic-led and an exemplary approach to sustainable open-access publishing[5b]. The transformative nature of the OLH is such that several institutions choose to financially support it at more than double the required rate[5c]. Although the OLH was launched and primarily focused on the Anglophone world, others have been inspired by its example and have taken it upon themselves to become advocates for its expansion. OLH-DE, launched in March 2018 and funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, actively promotes the OLH in Germany, aiming to attract German libraries as participating institutions, and German-language journals to 'flip' to open access using the OLH platform[5d].

The OLH has positively impacted library expenditure worldwide, one example was the resignation of the editorial board of the Elsevier journal *Lingua* in 2015 to establish a new open access journal, *Glossa*, hosted and underpinned by the OLH. The University of California Library System subsequently made a 'deliberate decision' to cancel their subscription to *Lingua*[6a].

In addition to its benefits to libraries, a significant aspect of the OLH is that it provides a sustainable economic model for journals and publishers that agree with open access but have hitherto been reliant on subscriptions and article processing charges to ensure a sufficient income. As examples, Liverpool University Press has converted *Quaker Studies* and *Francospheres* to full open access[7a] and the University of Wales Press has done similarly for the *International Journal of Welsh Writing* in English[7b]. Open access helps these value-driven publishers fulfil a greater purpose. Open access helps fulfil this objective by enabling their publications to be available to the broader public as well as academics. The economics of other models, however, had proved prohibitive. The OLH model, on the other hand, was not only invaluable in achieving open access to this title, but also ensured the viability of the journal in an important subject in UWP's mission. Prior to working with the OLH, the journal's very existence was in doubt, given the relatively modest market and consequent need for funding to bring it to publication as a subscription model.[7b].

Six Learned Societies – the European Architectural History Network, the British Association of Film, Television and Screen Studies, the British Association for Contemporary Literary Studies, the Association for Laboratory Phonology, The Marvell Society, and the ASIANetwork (a consortium of over 170 North American colleges) – have converted all their publications to open access through the OLH. As an editor noted, they wanted to convert the journal to open access. Article processing charges, however, were exclusionary and they wanted a model that was free both to readers and to authors. They encountered Eve's research and decided to host the journal on the OLH from September 2015. From then until December 2019, they had 16,553 article downloads. In just 2019, they had 28,317 unique

article views (of the on-page versions of articles). This represents a substantial escalation in reach and helps the society to fulfil its mission.[8].

Aside from its direct beneficiaries, the OLH has positively impacted businesses including Érudit, a Canadian consortium which provides access to more than 150 journals, books and other research outputs, 97% of which is open access. As of May 2017, it recorded 23 million page views annually, with 70% of users based outside Canada. In 2016, it began an important shift in its business model to convert commercial agreements with Canadian libraries to an open access model based on partnerships and the OLH was one of the core sources that Érudit used.[9a]. Another business that has benefited from the OLH is the major open access publisher PLOS, which runs the world's largest journal, *PLOS One,* and has net assets worth $10.7 million (i.e. USD10,700,000) and total revenues in 2018 of $31.7 million (or USD31,700,000). PLOS has traditionally relied on article processing charges as its primary revenue strategy but recognises their exclusionary characteristics and their limitations regarding the distribution of funds. Accordingly, PLOS have adopted new business models intended to make open access publishing more equitable by removing barriers to publishing. PLOS felt confident that such drastic changes could (and had to) be made given the success of other transformative initiatives like Open Library of the Humanities, which demonstrates their viability financially and their alignment with the mission-driven academic libraries.[9b].

The OLH and particularly Eve have deeply influenced and altered the policies that will be implemented by cOAlition S from 2021 onwards, a body of 25 research funders, headed by the European Commission and including UKRI, the World Health Organisation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Their 'Plan S' requires research to be made publicly available upon publication, without delay, with no embargo period. Eve's research 'led to several revisions to the Plan S guidelines, emphasizing the need for diverse business models and that APCs (article processing charges) should not be the sole means of achieving Open Access.' Eve's research has been particularly influential in its advocacy of diamond open access, referring to models in which neither readers nor authors are charged to read and publish. cOAlition S commissioned a study into these models, based on Eve's research, and are using this to inform yheir policies. This has been instrumental in the commitment of various national research agencies – including the Dutch NWO and the Austrian FWF, and charitable foundations such as the Wellcome Trust – to support diamond platforms, such as the OLH.[6c] This has affected thousands of funded researchers, worldwide.[10].

A particularly thorny issue has been the economics of converting monographs to open access (OA). Eve's research on this has led directly to Research England announcing its intention to mandate OA books in the REF after next.[4]. It also led to the £3m COPIM project to develop the necessary infrastructure for transitioning monographs to OA, and, the mass transition of presses that we are seeing worldwide is potentially the most significant direct impact of Eve's research. For example, Eve's work in early 2020 as part of the COPIM project led to the transition of the Central European University Press to an open-access model; a complete conversion with a new model for OA books – "Opening the Future" – that will now spread to other presses worldwide.[4]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. 'About DOAJ', https://doaj.org/about.

2. See https://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/apr/24/harvard-university-journal-publishers-prices and the ACRL statistics at https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/6/3/18271538/open-access-elsevier-california-sci-hub-academic-paywalls

3. OLH supporting institutions: https://www.openlibhums.org/plugins/supporters/

4. Written statement.

5a. Dr Torsten Reimer, Head of Research Services*,* 'British Library joins the Open Library of Humanities', British Library Living Knowledge blog, 25 July 2018.
5b. 'UO Joins the Open Library of Humanities' Library Partnership Subsidy Model', UO Libraries.

5c. 'University of Edinburgh Further Supports Open Library of Humanities', Open Scholarship, University of Edinburgh Library Blog, 16 October 2017.

5d. Lena Dreher, Universität Konstanz, 'OLH-DE Project Promotes Open Library of Humanities (OLH) in Germany', OpenAIRE, 3 July 2018.

6a. Katie Fortney, 'UC linguistics faculty pledge support for Glossa, call for cancellation of Lingua', Office of Scholarly Communication, University of California, 16 February 2016.

6b. Written statement.

6c. Written statement.

7a. Written statement.

7b. Written statement.

8. Written statement.

9a].Written statement.

9b Written statement.

10. Written statement.