01. About the toolkit

The Toolkit for Small and Scholar-Led Open Access Publishers is a resource to help relevant publishers wanting to set up a press or publishers wanting to improve the way they operate. It is published and maintained by the Open Book Collective and was launched in May 2023.

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Introduction: A guide of guides

Recent years have seen something of a flourishing Open Access presses, often being set up to serve a particular scholarly community. Within the Open Book Collective, which has produced this toolkit as part of the COPIM project, we would like to see many more such initiatives getting going. A key argument we make is that the scholarly community is best served by a bibliodiverse publishing landscape. This means different kinds of books, published in different places, crucially by different kinds of publishers.

In line with the aims of the Open Book Collective. this toolkit is aimed particularly at smaller and scholar-led Open Access publishers. Supporting such publishers is, for us, part of the principle of 'scaling small' that underpins much of what we do. For example, Janneke Adema and Sam Moore, in a piece that sits in dialogue with Lucy Barnes and Rupert Gatti's work, write that

> scaling small involves the creation of infrastructures that allow many presses to thrive at multiple scales, instead of taking up a competitive model in which some presses grow stronger in expense of others, or by usurping others (Barnes and Gatti 2019). What is needed here is an investment in and maintenance of robust open source public infrastructure that allows this diversity to exist, instead of outsourcing the necessary digital processes to commercial entities or platforms.

This toolkit, and the Open Book Collective more widely, is one such public infrastructure. Expertise on publishing should not be hidden away or hoarded, it should be widely and publicly available. The toolkit seeks to contribute towards that effort.

We know that simply providing 'more' information about publishing will not in any straightforward way address the knowledge gaps that can sometimes characterise parts of the Open Access publishing landscape. Much of the information that could be of use to publishers in fact already exists, in publicly accessible form.

However, the challenge for many publishers is finding a path through the diverse range of resources available. Part of the aim of this resource, then, is to respond to this challenge, by helping publishers better navigate some of the key insights that have already been compiled, whether in other toolkits or in some of the wider sets of reports and resources that have been produced in recent years. Specifically, we aim to pull out those insights that are particularly

relevant to smaller and academic-led Open Access publishers. In this respect, this toolkit is a kind of guide of guides.

There are, though, some issues and challenges that are specific to smaller and academic-led publishers. So in many sections, we supplement existing resources with further information, as well as advice about where to prioritise. In this respect, we draw on the experience of the COPIM team, as well as integrating advice and case studies from publishers that they have provided to us directly.

This resource is not complete. Publishing changes. Open Access changes. We therefore welcome any and all comments on the content included in the Toolkit. Any observations can be sent directly to info@openbookcollective.org. Or, you can leave comments directly on the text by marking up sections using hypothes.is and joining the OBC Toolkit group. All are welcome.

We hope you find the Toolkit of use.

-- The OBC Team

Using the toolkit

There are different ways to navigate our toolkit.

One route is to begin with our Key Resources and Sources which provides a summary of the resources that cover multiple parts of the publishing workflow that we have found useful.

Another is to browse the toolkit thematically. Each theme is its own 'Book' within the Toolkit. You can browse all the themes via our Toolkit homepage, which you can also access by clicking the title at the top of any page.

For each of the themes, we discuss some of the key issues that publishers might want to attend to, followed by case studies and what we call 'Questions towards good practice'. These questions aim to provide a quick way of ensuring that relevant issues and practicalities have been properly considered. At the end, we also link to further resources.

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