

# Book sales

Amongst the guides, there is broad consensus that while book sales are likely to be an important part of a publishers' revenue stream, it is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the costs of Open Access publishing. Most Open Access publishers use print-on-demand publisher services to support their book sales. This involves individual books being published only when they are sold, with the print-on-demand service being linked directly to distributors and/or online e-commerce platforms. As discussed further in the [section on the production process](#), this model eliminates the need for large print runs, which not only involves a high upfront cost but also risks producing multiple copies of a book, which then need to be sold in order for the financial outlay to be recouped. Some publishers generate additional sales revenue from the sale of books in additional digital formats while providing at least some versions freely available as Open Access texts.

The sale of print books may open up important questions about where such income should flow. Publishers often make decisions as to whether to pay royalties on a case-by-case basis depending on authors' expectations. For example, for [Ubiquity Press](#) "80% of the proceeds from book sales are returned either to the author as royalties, or paid into a waiver fund for developing country authors" ([Jisc interview](#), Brian Hole). [Open Book Publishers](#) typically pay 50% of net profits from sales, but only for the titles which generate significant royalties ([Jisc interview](#), Rupert Gatti).

[African Minds](#) do not pay royalties: "African Minds' priority is dissemination, not financial returns, and in bringing to print non-commercial works that may not otherwise have been published. In accordance with our mandate and values, we would rather invest any surplus from sales back into marketing and dissemination" ([Business Models for OA Books](#)).

## Case studies

- For [punctum books](#), sales are now a stable part of their revenue – based on recent figures, currently around 20%. punctum's books are sold via [Amazon](#) and other on- and offline booksellers, as well as via wholesale distributors (e.g. Ingram). When punctum books press began, the press was able initially to function without external funding due to revenue from its print-on-demand sales, by keeping overheads to a minimum and depending on the free labour of its academic founders. Over time, book sales, donations, author contributions, and more recently revenue from its library membership programme have allowed the press to diversify its revenue streams and to grow ([Business Models for OA Books](#)).
- Open Book Publishers also receives revenue from the sale of printed and some digital editions. Their paperbacks are typically priced at around £15, hardbacks around £30. For some books, digital editions (e.g. EPUB, MOBI) are sold for £5, alongside freely available PDF, HTML and XML editions. Just under 40% of OBP's revenue comes from book sales – more than from its Library Membership Programme (25%) ([Business Models for OA Books](#)).

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