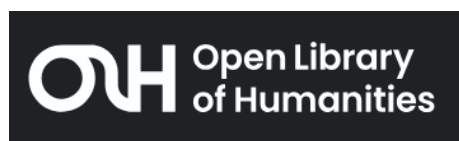


Open Library of Humanities (OLH)

URL: https://mirea.opensciencespain.org/en/iniciativa/bp24_open_library_humanities_en_v01/



Topic: Policies supporting open science

Type of initiative: Infrastructure / platform / service

Implementation scale: International

Responsible agents: Researchers, Publishers, Libraries

Location: United Kingdom

Keywords: academic publishing, open access, digital preservation

Start and end date: 2013 -

Sustainability: Yes

Summary

The *Open Library of Humanities (OLH)* is a charitable organisation dedicated to publishing open-access scholarship without article processing charges (APCs). Since 2013, it has operated as an international network of academics, librarians, programmers, and editors responsible for designing and implementing a sustainable business model to support the libraries associated with the project.

Key features of its business model include funding through a subscription model; rigorous peer review; robust standards for digital preservation and accessibility; and links to social media channels that make it easier to share articles.

Promoting organizations

The Open Library of Humanities (OLH) is a scholarly, non-profit initiative that promotes open-access publishing without charges for authors (no APCs) in the humanities and social sciences. It is sustained through a cooperative membership model in which an international network of libraries pays annual fees to fund the publishing infrastructure and keep content openly available. OLH operates as a UK-registered charity, governed by a Board of Trustees, and since 2021 has been affiliated with Birkbeck, University of London, from where it also supports open infrastructure developments such as its publishing platform.

Objectives

The main problem that prompted the development of this initiative was economic. The rise in subscription costs for academic journals above inflation (from the mid-1980s onwards), together with the exponential growth in research output during that period, had a direct impact on libraries, whose budgets have not been able to absorb the price increases set by publishers.

Moreover, with the emergence of the open access movement and new funding models based on article processing charges (APCs), the humanities and social sciences were even more affected compared to the sciences.

Against this background, the Open Library of Humanities platform set the following main objectives:

- To support scholarly journals across all humanities disciplines in order to advance education for the public benefit through open access publishing.
- To ensure the open availability of knowledge as widely as possible.
- To generate savings for library budgets.
- To encourage the commercial publishing sector to adopt new open access scholarship models and to ensure the highest quality journals for its members.

Achieving these objectives has been made possible through the creation of an international network representing all relevant stakeholders, alongside financial support from grants provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and from an international consortium of libraries.

Beneficiaries and stakeholders

Libraries, researchers, programmers, and editors.

Results

The Open Library of Humanities (OLH) publishes and sustains Diamond Open Access journals (no APCs), collectively funded through an international consortium of libraries. Today, OLH is a non-profit scholarly publisher that publishes 35 journals and, since its launch (2015), has published more than 13,000 articles and surpassed 8 million downloads worldwide. In addition, it complements its regular publishing programme with themed collections (Special Collections) focused on specific research topics.

Challenges

Although the project emerged in response to economic challenges, the proposed business model has proven to be cost-effective.

The challenge of achieving high accessibility standards has been addressed through strategies focused on providing inclusive formats and display features.

Interest and transferability

The project remains true to its commitment to open access by partnering only with charitable scholarly publishers, rather than with commercial for-profit entities. In addition, its organisational model allows the library consortium to participate—through voting—in decisions on whether to include new journals.

Moreover, its recent move to include content in languages other than English is potentially significant for expanding the project beyond Anglophone contexts.

Bibliography

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