Collective funding models for open access books

Librarians' experiences and barriers to participation across six European contexts

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OpenBook Collective

1. Executive summary

The Open Book Collective is an example of a collective funding model for open access (OA) books, wherein libraries commit to financially support OA book publishers, infrastructure providers or packages containing both, for a set period of time. Since our launch in 2022, we have expanded our supporting library membership to 88 members in 13 countries. Collective funding models can provide better value for money than Book Processing Charges (BPCs) and offer a way for libraries to support the scholarly commons. In this report, we seek to understand librarians' experiences of collective funding models, especially barriers to joining organisations like the Open Book Collective (OBC).

Our aim was to learn from differing experiences in countries with different OA policies and institutional contexts. The OBC was keen to reach out to librarians and other stakeholders in areas where it has fewer existing networks and experience, given that most libraries which currently support the OBC are in the UK and US. We focused our research on six national contexts in continental Europe: Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. Interview participants were recruited from OBC membership and broader Copim/partner networks. Participants were interviewed via Teams between February and July 2025.

The data is explored by country in the full report, but overall the key findings were as follows:

- There is a strong commitment to the idea of an OA knowledge commons from librarians and researchers in many contexts across Europe.
- Trust in OA initiatives has been eroded by corporate buyouts, notably that of Knowledge Unlatched.
- Many librarians perceive a tension between committing funds to advancing the scholarly commons and meeting the needs of their institution, given ongoing pressure on budgets.
- Usage data from OA initiatives helps justify investment decisions, but doesn't resolve said tensions.
- Dedicated budgets ringfenced for this purpose could help, but may be hard to implement in some contexts, e.g. when concrete justification is needed by funders.
- Transformative agreements consume most of the OA budget in some institutions. This is often the case in countries where OA policy and awareness is advanced.
- European librarians are concerned about the UK/US-centricity of many OA initiatives; national language publishing is seen as under-supported.

"Collective funding models can provide better value for money than Book Processing Charges (BPCs) and offer a way for libraries to support the scholarly commons"

- Formal policies influence librarians' OA decisions less than expected; informal decision-making, faculty opinion and networking were seen as stronger factors.

Based on these findings, we were able to formulate these concrete recommendations for collective funding initiatives:

- Build credibility through transparent operations. Charitable status, as in the OBC's case, is a key differentiator here. Explain your business model and how you guard against corporate acquisition.
- Combine quantitative data (metadata, stats, usage authorship) with qualitative narratives about your collection (bibliodiversity, ethics, sustainability) to help librarians build a case for supporting you.
- Ensure package models signal quality and standards with clear, simple membership criteria.
- Avoid US/UK-centric bias – diversify your portfolios by region, language, and subject.
- Enable access via national consortia (e.g., Bibsam in Sweden, FinElib in Finland, Couperin in France) whenever possible.
- When consortia aren't an option, make workflows and contracts simple and fast for librarians to use.
- Engage faculty – researchers are overlooked key influencers in funding decisions. Librarians talk to faculty as well as to other librarians.
- Partner with local publishers – support national languages and structures. Shared memberships/agreements can also enhance local relevance.

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2. Introduction

What is a collective, Diamond open access funding model for books?

The Open Book Collective (OBC) launched in December 2022, towards the end of the Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs (COPIM) project, which ran from late 2019 to early 2023.[i] Since then, mostly as part of COPIM's successor project, Open Book Futures (2023–2026), we have gradually expanded the number of libraries funding our Supporter Programmes to, at the time of writing, 88 supporters across 13 countries.

This support is vital for our publisher and book publishing service provider members, whose other revenue streams tend to be unreliable and usually inadequate. Currently, we have 14 publisher members.[ii] For them, a key contribution of the funding we deliver is to help them move away from funding models we have argued are fundamentally inequitable (Deville 2023), such as charging authors/institutions Book Processing Charges (BPCs) to fund the costs of publishing open access. We also have publishing service provider members – 3, as things stand[iii] – and for them, this funding helps them deliver the much needed services and high quality digital infrastructures that support OA publishers across the globe. Through this work, the OBC is contributing to the development and resilience of a 'Diamond' model for open access (OA) book publishing. By 'Diamond', we here refer to OA models that help publishers produce texts which do not require payment for individual publications (e.g. charged to authors/institutions/funders). We will return to definitions of Diamond OA later.

The OBC's Diamond model is also an example of what can be called a 'collective funding model' for OA books. Some such models, like OBC's, involve generating funding for multiple publishers – for example Knowledge Unlatched (KU), Opening the Future (led by our fellow Copim colleagues), JSTOR's Path to Open, University Press Library Open (UPLOpen), Direct to Open (MIT Press) and OpenEdition. Some models are run by individual publishers or infrastructure developers, including Open Book Publishers, punctum books and OAPEN/Directory of Open Access Books (all of which are also members of the OBC).

In all of these models,[iv] member institutions, usually libraries, commit to providing financial support to OA book publishers and/or infrastructure providers, or particular packages of current or future OA content, for an agreed term (often 1 to 3 years), with the potential of renewal thereafter. Most collective funding models, including OBC's, offer tiered pricing depending, for example, on the institution's size or location. In return, supporters receive various

> "The OBC is contributing to the development and resilience of a 'Diamond' model for open access (OA) book publishing"

direct benefits. These vary by model, although almost always include public recognition/acknowledgement (if desired). Examples of other benefits include discounts on hard copies, usage data based on specific institutional IP addresses, MARC records, free/discounted services from infrastructure providers, as well as – in some models – access to non-OA backlist content (Opening the Future, Direct to Open), or a wider range of formats (Open Edition Freemium for books), or the ability to shape the particular titles/priority areas that will, in future, be published OA (KU, Path to Open, UPLOpen). These models also often encourage libraries to consider the wider, indirect benefits of their support, including a greater volume of longform scholarship being freely and openly available to all.

The OBC is a community-governed, UK registered charity. Many other collective funding models are similarly operated by non-profits, although some also involve smaller commercial publishers. This includes the OBC. For example, our members White Horse Press and Verlag Barbara Budrich are both private companies, with the large majority of their revenue being reinvested into their publishing work. Some of the larger commercial publishers are also involved in collective funding models. Since 2021, Knowledge Unlatched has been run by Wiley , following an acquisition.[v] However, in the seemingly perpetual ebbs and flows of mergers and acquisition across scholarly publishing, Knowledge Unlatched has recently been acquired by Annual Reviews, a non-profit organisation.[vi] UPLOpen, launched in 2024, is operated by a non-profit foundation: De Gruyter eBound. However, this foundation was established by DeGruyter,[vii] prior to becoming part of DeGruyter Brill, following the 2023 merger.

Whether all these models can be classified as doing 'Diamond' OA is a matter of debate. Some definitions of Diamond OA exclude content produced by commercial publishers, of any size.[viii] For practical reasons, in this report, we refer to all these models as Diamond OA funding models, while also suggesting that the open access community consider whether a blanket exclusion of commercial publishers, of all sizes and scales, from the definition of Diamond OA is appropriate. While the OBC strongly encourages the adoption of non-profit organisational structures wherever possible, we are more concerned about the ways that large, commercial publishers are increasingly dominating the scholarly system.

In our view, collective funding models provide a more financially efficient way of sustaining open access across the higher education system than universities subsidising or fully paying Book Processing Charges to individual publishers. These charges are frequently in excess of £10,000 (circa €12,000 / $14,000). As we and our colleagues have argued, the widespread expansion of the BPC model across the university system would be untenable (Fathallah 2022; Deville 2023; Barnes 2024).

Particularly when involving smaller and non-profit publishers and infrastructure providers, collective funding models can also offer a

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way for libraries to participate in a more equitable, sustainable OA ecosystem. When these models are successful, they make it more likely that more authors, wherever they are based, and whether or not they have access to BPC funding, can publish their books OA. For models that involve supporting OA infrastructures, this helps create robust, open source infrastructures that are free to use by any publisher, helping to democratise the means of OA book production.

Collective funding models receive support from a wide variety of institutions, across a great number of countries. A majority of these models are run by organisations based in anglophone contexts, notably the UK and the USA, and most predominantly support anglophone publishing. As such, in most models, the majority of supporters are from these contexts. An important exception is the OpenEdition Freemium for books programme, which is financially supported by over 170 largely francophone institutions. [ix]

Researching collective funding models beyond the anglosphere

Given this context, we were keen to further explore the relevance of collective funding models, such as the OBC's, beyond anglophone contexts, and in particularly in the European Union. In part, this is because anglophone contexts – and the UK and the USA in particular – were the focus of a previous Copim scoping report on barriers to collective funding, Gerakopoulou et al. (2021), as well as other existing reports, as we will come on to detail. But more generally, we wanted to better understand the experiences of librarians in different EU contexts with collective funding models, especially the barriers they come up against in supporting organisations like the OBC. This is all the more important given the rapidly changing role of libraries in the scholarly communications landscape: from acquiring and curating relatively closed collections to increasingly working as key stakeholders and full participants in a landscape moving rapidly towards OA as a norm. Yet librarians operate in various national, institutional, cultural and economic contexts which influence their decision-making, and occupy a range of roles within their departments. And while there are global constraints on library budgets – a problem felt acutely here in the UK – these constraints will inevitably vary both locally and nationally.

To understand these contexts better, we have undertaken research in six national contexts in Continental Europe: in Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. A particular aim was to learn from differing experiences in countries with quite different OA policies and institutional contexts, as will be covered in the review of existing research below. The selection of these particular European stakeholders is inevitably somewhat arbitrary. Our sample, across six countries, includes two influential, large European OA actors (France and Germany); two representatives of the Nordic region (Finland and Sweden), a part of Europe that has

"Research in six national contexts in Continental Europe: in Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden"

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shown more of an appetite to embrace collective Diamond OA funding that some other areas; the Netherlands, which is often looked to as a leader in OA policy development and national funder support; and Poland, to ensure the report includes perspectives from Eastern as well as Western Europe, and profiting from existing links to the Polish higher education community within our team (all interviews with Polish respondents were conducted in Polish by Izabella Penier and then translated). As such, it is a strategic rather than a representative sample, which on the one hand represents an effort to address gaps in understanding both within the OBC and the wider open access community, while on the other being inevitably incomplete.

The report's methodology is predominantly qualitative. It draws on 20 in-depth interviews, with at least three interviews in each country. In most institutions we interviewed one librarian, but in two cases where two librarians from the same institution chose to participate together, this is counted as a single interview. Most interviews are exclusively with librarians, but in the case of Poland, we did not receive sufficient responses from librarians to fill our quota and so supplemented our sample with some other OA stakeholders, namely, publishers and external experts. We initially experienced some delay in locating librarian participants in France. Thus our first interviewee was a publisher, to provide a general French perspective. Partly with this publisher's help, we were ultimately able to conduct interviews with representatives of three French libraries. These interviews were conducted in French by Francesca Corazza and then translated.

We directly approached librarians who we already knew were active in the OA space, or who were recommended to us, or via calls for participation circulated via mailing lists, with some contacts also coming from interviewees in a quasi-snowball sampling fashion. Most interviewees were approached and interviewed in English, although in France and Poland we approached interviewees in their local language, and conducted interviews in a mixture of English and their local language. None of the interviewees are personally identified. All interviewees were sent drafts of this report, with the option to make changes as required. Some participants chose to have their institution directly represented in the main text. For the rest, their institution is acknowledged at the start of this report, but referred to generically in the main text.

We used an interview methodology because, based on our experience within the wider Copim community, surveys struggle to capture the nuances of how librarians understand and perceive different open access initiatives, and how these perceptions relate to the diverse cultural contexts within libraries. However, this decision, combined with the focus on only select countries and the relatively small number of interviewees per country, does mean that this report cannot provide an overarching or representative overview

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of library perspectives either within or across different European contexts. Rather, it is an exploratory piece of work that provides the framework for future, deeper research as needed. And of course, it is limited by its focus on Europe. We are fully aware how important it is to engage with the global OA community, beyond the so-called Global North. However, to date, it remains the case that financial support for collective funding models overwhelmingly comes from institutions in the wealthier Global North.

Structure of the report

This report opens with a review of research that has explored librarians' experiences with collective funding models for OA, focusing on distinct geographic contexts, as well as some other related models. It focuses primarily on books but incorporates data on journals where book data is less available. It provides a brief overview of the broad OA contexts of our six chosen country contexts. It then presents and discusses the results of our interview-based research, before closing with a summary of lessons learned and recommendations for next steps. In addition, Appendix 1 includes links to resources s to assist librarians in evaluating OA initiatives they might support, as well as advice on engaging with budget holders and other institutional decision makers.

> "It remains the case that financial support for collective funding models overwhelmingly comes from institutions in the wealthier Global North"

Notes

[i] See https://copim.ac.uk

[ii] African Minds, Arc Humanities Press, Leuven University Press, LSE Press, Mattering Press, mediastudies.press, meson press, Open Book Publishers, punctum books, Sidestone Press,
University of London Press, University of Westminster Press, Verlag Barbara Budrich, White Horse Press.

[iii] OAPEN/Directory of Open Access Books, Public Knowledge Project (PKP), Thoth Open Metadata.

[iv] An exception is OpenEdition's Freemium for books programme. OpenEdition books are available, online, to read for free. However, universities are encouraged to purchase the 'freemium' versions of these books. As such, the model is structured as a more straightforward acquisition model, even though it relies on the collective funding of OA books across many universities.

[v] https://knowledgeunlatched.org/2021/12/wiley-acquires-oa-innovator-ku/

[vi] https://www.researchinformation.info/analysis-opinion/advancing-collective-models-to-unlatch-knowledge

[vii] https://www.degruyterbrill.com/publishing/paradigm-publishing-services-university-press-library-embarks-on-a-sustainable-open-access-initiative-for-university-press-monographs?lang=en

[viii] See for example the DIAMAS definition of a Diamond OA journal: https://toolsuite.diamas.org/what-diamond-open-access. Knowledge Unlatched – although not, as far as we are aware, UPLOpen, nonetheless uses the term to describe its model: https://knowledgeunlatched.org/introduction-to-ku/

[ix] Based on the most recent 2023 Annual Report: https://www.openedition.org/47105?file=1

3. Research on collective funding models for open access books

In the past decade, a small but growing range of research has begun to explore the functions, operations, barriers and opportunities of various collective funding models for Diamond OA, and how they interact with libraries. In this section of the report, we will explore this existing work to set our own research in context. Our discussion is organised geographically, and begins by looking at existing research focused on the US context, before moving onto Europe (including the UK).

US models and library contexts

We located three investigations into librarians' experiences with OA funding models in the United States. Two were focused on books specifically ([Barnes et al. 2017](#) and [Maron 2023](#)) and one more focused on journals ([Naim 2019](#)). In 2016–17, a collaboration between the University of Michigan and KU 'was designed to gather data useful for determining the scalability of library-supported open access (OA) initiatives focusing on monographs in the Humanities and Social Sciences' (Barnes et al. 2017, 1).[x] The Michigan/KU study analysed 103 responses from 37 US states, 74% of which had previously committed funds to an OA book initiative. It asked about librarians' priorities in selecting schemes to support, and what factors would play into decisions to continue or increase participation in the future. Quality of OA content was the single most important factor in evaluating initiatives for libraries that already provided support, and the second-most important factor for non-participants. When asked about obstacles to scaling up participation, librarians answered that affordability and the (related) need to support other initiatives were key factors. Librarians expressed concerns about the sustainability of funding models, both in terms of whether such models would continue to be affordable for libraries, and in terms of what one participant described as 'realitybasedness' , or asking: 'Does this model rely for its sustainability on people doing things that experience suggests they don't usually do?' and 'Does this model require potential participants to redirect already-scarce funding away from other campus priorities? (And if so, how much?)' (Barnes et al. 2017, 3).

In keeping with the findings of research conducted during the first Copim project (Gerakapoulou et al. 2021), participants expressed a need for usage data and metrics that would back up the benefits of participation for individual institutions. Difficulty in obtaining clear usage data, which respondents state is more problematic when it comes to OA books than journals, was ranked as a considerable

obstacle to scaling participation in OA monograph schemes. On the need for hard data to justify spending, one participant in the Michigan/KU study noted that 'Ebook usage is a thorny issue to begin with because the reporting standards are not as clear cut as for ejournals' (2017, 89). Readers may utilise one chapter rather than a whole book and may access a book from many different platforms whose usage is not recorded. It should equally be noted that there have been several suggestions for alternative metrics to judge OA book usage and value, such as Bulock and Watkinson (2017); Farrell et al. (2021); Snijder (2023a, 2023b), and see also the OA Book Usage Data Trust. Librarians also made the point that the business models of initiatives needed to be simple enough to quickly explain to decision-makers. Overall, the study found that 'library-funded OA book initiatives can successfully scale up if they 1) employ straightforward and sustainable business models, 2) offer quality content from trusted publishers, and 3) provide participants with usage data illustrating the local impact of their financial investment' (7).[xi] KU/Michigan participants appreciated differential pricing models that allowed smaller institutions to participate in the models, which is something we also utilise at the OBC.

A later (2019) study on US institutions, by Kamran Naim, sought to establish the points of agreement and disagreement on OA publications between research librarians and academic publishers, both commercial and non-profit. The scope of this research was therefore somewhat wider and also journal-focused. Naim found that 'Librarians viewed subscription-equivalent arrangements more favourably than other dominant OA models' (2019, iv). By 'subscription-equivalent', Naim means 'in which the existing economics and transactional relationships between both stakeholder groups are sustained, but leveraged to change the outcome of the publishing process from purchasing paywalled access, to supporting OA publishing services' (57). This aligns with the idea forwarded by Ferwerda et al., that sufficient funds already exist within the scholarly communication landscape to fund an OA transition, but are simply not being properly utilised (2017, 8; see also Pooley 2019). Librarians appreciated a model that would not increase their costs, though a minority noted that such a model would not go far enough as they actually need to be making reductions in their budget.

More encouragingly, Naim found that librarians are generally willing and ready to enter into cooperative models with publishers for the advancement of OA, providing that publishers operate in a way that promotes trust, such as transparency with regard to costs and surpluses. The importance of trust between stakeholders came through strongly in this study, as it did in 2022 in our workshops during the first Copim project, with some librarians sceptical that publishers would enter into cooperative OA models in good faith. Unfortunately, as we have observed in the Copim community (Copim 2021), the buyout of OA book initiatives like Knowledge Unlatched by

"The business models of initiatives needed to be simple enough to quickly explain to decision-makers"

for-profit corporations has damaged trust in the OA book sphere. Naim counsels a certain pragmatism on librarians' part, writing that 'it will likely be prudent for libraries to focus on the centrality of achieving OA as part of their mission, while making peace with the prevailing commercial forces in scholarly communications' (2019, 126). (In our view, the OBC pursues a rather more radical model which does not accept that either libraries or publishers or indeed scholars should resign themselves to 'prevailing commercial forces'. At the same time, we recognise that the success of OA may not be best served by trading in absolutes, or dogmatically positioning one particular OA model as superior to all others). Naim's librarians were divided on the subject of direct payments to publish OA.

There was a notable divergence between these two studies with regard to the question of 'free riders', that is, libraries that benefit from increases in OA content but do not contribute either financially or in other ways to the work or schemes required to support it. In the 2017 study, most librarians stated that a concern about free riders was not a problem or a factor in their decision making – indeed, some stressed that as the entire point of OA literature is that it is free to access, the supposed problem of 'free riders' makes no sense (and c.f. Penier et al. 2020, 42). Naim's librarians disagreed, with one stating

The question of free riders will need to be dealt with early and rigorously. The question here is not so much whether librarians will be willing to continue ponying up the money to support a system like this—the question is how these librarians will respond when their funding institutions ask them 'Why should we continue giving you hundreds of thousands (or millions) of dollars every year for collections when we could cut your budget by 25% and not lose access to any of this content?' (2019, 138).

Verbeke and Mesotten made a similar point in a European context more recently:

What if a library pays for the production costs for OA so that everyone has access? We would hope that not too many librarians consider that to be a problem, as it is the essence of our profession to make information accessible to as many as possible. But colleagues in the financial administration of academic institutions might think otherwise: if access to content could be maintained with somebody else picking up the bill, then it is very tempting to reconsider spending money on it (2022).

There is something of a prisoner's dilemma – for each individual librarian, acting in a way that benefits the OA landscape overall may conflict with acting in a way that benefits their institution. Indeed, the decision might be out of their control. One important data point from Naim is that 'Some librarians also raised the issue that institutional procurement (as well as state) regulations might prevent them [from] paying for access to content that they may otherwise be able to access for free' (2019, 152). However, it would not apply in cases where, as Dean of Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis Libraries David Lewis suggested, libraries set aside a small portion of their budget (in his formulation, 2.5%) *specifically* for the support of

open infrastructure for scholarly commons. One of Naim's librarians seems to be referencing this in the following comment:

I would recommend that we invest a small portion of our budget to engage in exploration of new models of scholarly publishing. This would include a collaborative initiative with multiple academic libraries to explore a publishing cooperative model, following an initial successful step of agreement on key principles. It would also include exploration of other models (2019, 141).

Lewis is not talking about converting acquisition or collection funds but rather earmarking and setting aside an amount for the support of non-commercial collaborative initiatives, allowing for experimentation (Lewis 2017, see also University of California Libraries 2018, 26–27). KU Leuven Libraries, where both Verbeke and Mesotten are based, also has a fund specifically for the support of nonprofit and community-led OA initiatives, 'established as a budget line in the financial structure of the library separate from the acquisition budget for academic publications behind a paywall' (Verbeke and Mesotten, 2022). Overall, Naim found 'strong convergence between the perspectives of librarians and nonprofit publishers' (2019, 151), which suggests that academic libraries, and these types of publishers specifically, 'are primed for engagement on cooperative funding models for OA' (ibid). This is hopeful. Similarly, a University of California Libraries report, which cited Lewis' argument, noted that arrangements which utilise 'payment structures libraries are accustomed to managing' are popular, and gives the example of 'a publishing collective like Lever Press', wherein 'costs are determined by library collection budget levels and participants in the collective are asked to commit to funding for five years' (2018, 23). This is as an alternative to APCs 'with the basic processes resembling the subscription model' (25). But the report also noted that 'without access restrictions, library incentives to participate are more limited, and some measure of free-riding is to be anticipated' in a manner that suggests this may be a problem for some libraries, given 'continued pressure on library budgets' (25).

Finally, with regard to US institutions, the TOME (Towards an Open Monograph Ecosystem) initiative has recently published its 'Stakeholder Value Assessment: Final Report' (Maron 2023). TOME was a five-year pilot project, ending in 2022, and can be considered a quasi-collective funding model. On the one hand, it harnesses the power of collective collaboration across different universities and publishers. On the other, it has some characteristics similar to Book Processing Charge-based funding models, as 'participating pilot universities pledged to pay up to three $15,000 publishing grants per year for their faculty authors to publish open-access scholarly monographs with a willing university press' (2023, 4). In the pilot, a small group of participating colleges and universities in the United States provided three grants of $15,000 per year for five years, to support the publication of open access monographs of up to 90,000 words by publishers who signed up to the pilot. The TOME team did recognise the inequity inherent in such a system, noting:

"There is something of a prisoner's dilemma – for each individual librarian, acting in a way that benefits the OA landscape overall may conflict with acting in a way that benefits their institution"

From the outset, the partners and participants recognized that scholars who are unaffiliated or at under-resourced institutions would not benefit from the pilot. However, a future implementation of TOME could address this issue in any number of ways. As it stands, we know of at least one participating institution that funded a faculty author at a nearby HBCU. Going forward, TOME could address this issue structurally through scale and surplus, and by including a voice in TOME governance directly representing authors and humanities and social sciences disciplines (7).

This comment opens the door to a more overtly collective solution, where richer institutions could/would subsidise or cover the costs for OA publishing by scholars who would otherwise not have access. With regard to the TOME pilot, institutional funding came from libraries, provosts' offices, and deans' offices. Overall, the landscape of funding models for OA books is still in a developing and experimental phase. A 2020 report by Lyrasis on US libraries' OA activities more generally, found that whilst Article Processing Charges were unpopular,

> "A more overtly collective solution, where richer institutions could/would subsidise or cover the costs for OA publishing by scholars who would otherwise not have access"

For those institutions that do support OA, either for content created inside or outside the institution, financial support is dispersed via a number of pathways. No one model rises above the others (Rosen and Grogg 2020, 51).

European models and library contexts

We were able to locate a relatively limited range of work focusing specifically on European libraries and collective funding models. However, a 2021 study by Mirela Roncevic reported on 'librarians' perceptions and motivations for supporting collaborative models for open access monographs', using survey data from 160 libraries across Europe. It appears that 'collaborative' is used as a rough synonym for our expression 'collective', though there is definitely room for (mis)interpretation in the proliferating terms, particularly when translations are considered; Roncevic also uses 'crowdfunding'.

Roncevic found that a slight majority of librarians supported OA in principle (53%), citing the motivation that 'scholarship should be accessible and open to researchers worldwide' (2021). Unfortunately, the same percentage reported that they did or could not currently support collective OA models simply due to budgetary restrictions and cuts. A much smaller percentage (16%) 'believed that scholars should not pay to publish their work; instead, their institutions should step in and use their funds to support the publishing of their scholarship' (2021). This might suggest that OA fees are more acceptable in Europe than in the US, where librarians tended to be divided or more negative, but again, there is room for interpretation in the wording (does money from a funder count as a scholar's own funds? Different librarians might understand such questions differently). Another 21% reported that they did not support collective funding models because the OA titles were not relevant to their institutions.

In choosing whether to support a collective funding initiative, librarians seemed more motivated when the authors and subjects

published were of relevance to the communities they serve – regardless of librarians' belief in OA as a principle, this seems universal in the data. Roncevic found that concerns about the quality and prestige of OA publishing have somewhat subsided for librarians, 'owing in large part to the fact that established (therefore reputable) publishers have since embraced the publishing of OA monographs with more vigor and subject them to the same peer review process and editorial standards as the books published traditionally' (2021). Whilst we do not believe at OBC that the age of a publisher should be a marker of quality (we have our own rigorous membership requirements for publishers), it is perhaps understandable that publishers with an established history will be seen as more trustworthy by librarians. And of course, as we have already seen, trust is critically important for many OA initiatives.

Roncevic notes that 'the collaboration model brings together communities with similar views and goals' (2023), which aligns with Naim's finding that the views of librarians and OA nonprofit publishers typically converge. Her 2023 article utilises an updated version of some of her previous data, but concerns Knowledge Unlatched specifically. This article analysed the 'ranking' of libraries across Europe according to the THE, the ARWU, the QS, and the Leiden system, in relation to their degree of support for Knowledge Unlatched ('never', 'rarely', 'often', or 'the most'). There is a lot of granular data in the report, especially given the discrepancies between the different ranking systems used, but overall, Roncevic was able to conclude that:

"Institutions that financially support OA monographs through crowdfunding in some capacity (rarely, often, and the most vs. never) have higher overall world rankings than those that do not" (Roncevic 2021)

- Institutions that financially support OA monographs through crowdfunding in some capacity (rarely, often, and the most vs. never) have higher overall world rankings than those that do not [...] On average, the institutions that support crowdfunding the most [...] obtained the highest overall world ranking scores compared with other institutions;
- Institutions that have not yet participated in KU's crowdfunding initiative consistently rank below average in every category examined (2023, 16).

There were also some conclusions that pulled against an assumption that support is correlated to ranking in any simple way, such as the finding that 'institutions that support [KU] rarely stand out for their research output and the overall perception of their research in the scholarly community' (as opposed to those that support often), whilst 'the institutions that support crowdfunding the most produce the most significant (i.e., the highest) proportion of research OA' (2023, 17). In other words, degree of OA output might be a better predictor of support than traditional measures of prestige. Roncevic believes 'this finding points to the fact that the library crowdfunding business model for OA monographs is still maturing' (2023, 17). We would agree, but would also point to the specificity of this study, with its focus on Knowledge Unlatched. For

example, could it be that some of those institutions that supported 'rarely' dropped off in support after the buyout of KU by Wiley in 2021, feeling their trust to have been compromised? Such questions are not explored in the report.

We will now take a step back and survey the OA landscape in Europe a little more generally, before summarising what key issues we have located in librarian support for collective models, and then focusing in on the national contexts of our participants. Whereas the push towards OA as a norm through policy across the United States is currently led by the White House and the Federal Government, European policy that furthers this aim largely comes from the EU (Laakso and Multas 2023, 4). Laakso and Multas point to several conclusions and recommendations made at EU level between 2016 and 2023, culminating in the 2023 conclusions on 'High-quality, transparent, open, trustworthy and equitable scholarly publishing' (EU 2023). These resolutions were to 'encourage Member States […] to promote and support […] high-quality, subject-specific and national non-profit, open access publishing platforms and models' and to 'support the piloting of Open Research Europe into a collective, non-profit large-scale open access research publishing service for the public good' (European Commission 2024, 8). Open Research Europe describes itself as 'an open access publishing venue for European Commission-funded researchers across all disciplines, with no author fees'. It would appear, then, that the EU member states would be strong candidates for the flourishing of collective, nonprofit OA models for books, at least at the level of national and international policy. Whilst there is no space here to describe the specifics in multiple countries, we will first note some general observations that cross EU borders, then focus on the specific situations for librarians in Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden. These countries have been selected partly due to the availability of informants and the OBC's relative lack of prior research there, but also to represent a cross-section of centralised and de-centralised academic landscape and differing situations with regard to OA publications.

With regard to understanding the landscape of OA publishing in Europe, we located these relevant large studies from Copim colleagues and related projects (Table 1). Because much of this data is multiply evidenced, and some reports have a large number of authors (given in full in the reference list), for the sake of easy sourcing in what follows we have assigned each output a short reference in the table. We have also included one Copim report that deals with UK and US libraries, which is something of an anomaly in the geographic organisation of this literature review, because the issues addressed fit better within this set of literature. Additionally, we draw on evidence collected during the early development of the OBC, as part of geographically-focused outreach workshops with librarians in Scandinavia, Southern Europe, Germany and Poland, as well as the US and UK (linked accordingly below).

"It would appear, then, that the EU member states would be strong candidates for the flourishing of collective, nonprofit OA models for books, at least at the level of national and international policy"

Table 1: Previous studies				
Year	Project	Title	Short title	Country focus
2017	Knowledge Exchange	A Landscape Study on Open Access and Monographs: Policies, Funding and Publishing in Eight European Countries	Ferwerda et al. 2017	Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, France, Norway and Austria
2018	Knowledge Exchange	Knowledge Exchange Survey on Open Access Monographs	Stone and Marques 2018	Global, UK and Europe-centric
2019	Knowledge Exchange	Towards a Roadmap for Open Access Monographs Knowledge Exchange.	Adema 2019	Europe and UK
2020	COPIM	Revenue Models for Open Access Monographs	Penier et al. 2020	Global North, UK and Europe especially plus US
2021	COPIM/ OPERAS	Academic Libraries and Open Access Books in Europe. A Landscape Study	Morka and Gatti 2021	Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands
2021	COPIM	The Promise of Collaboration: Collective Funding Models and the Integration of Open Access Books into Libraries	Gerakapoulou et al. 2021	UK and US
2023	DIAMAS	Institutional Publishing in the ERA: Results from the DIAMAS Survey	Armengou et al. 2023	European Research Area
2023	OPERAS	OPERAS Business Models White Paper: Collaborative models for OA book publishers (Version 2.0)	Błaszczyńska et al. 2023	14 EU countries plus Norway, UK and US
2024	DIAMAS	National Overviews on Sustaining Institutional Publishing in Europe	Taşkın et al. 2024	Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, UK
2024	DIAMAS	IPSP Sustainability Research Report	Brun et al. 2024	Primarily Europe, plus UK and Canada
2024	DIAMAS	Institutional Publishing in the ERA: Complete Country Reports	Agnoloni et al. 2024	European Research Area
2024	DIAMAS	Institutional Publishing in the ERA: Full Country Reports	Bosman et al. 2024	Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK
2024	PALOMERA	Report on the PALOMERA Survey on Open Access Policies for Books in the European Research Area	Dreyer et al. 2024	European Research Area

As is evident from the above report titles, the studies cover a range of issues and publishing models, but we will first highlight some general points that several supported before honing in on the national contexts of our participants. The DIAMAS and PALOMERA reports were particularly useful here, despite the fact that some of these studies were more geared towards journals and some concerned institutional publishers and service providers only. Generally speaking, the following context is established:

- Though multiple funding models exist for OA books, finding ways to route and direct funds is a barrier for many institutions, particularly as library roles and strategies are in flux (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Penier et al. 2020, see also Verbeke and Mesotten 2021; see also Kennison et al. 2019).
- Cancellation of big deal journal models could lead to library reinvestment in OA monographs (Penier et al. 2020).
- Librarians seek more and more transparent information regarding publishers' costs (Stone and Marques 2018).
- Trust, communication and collaboration between stakeholders is important (Stone and Marques 2018, Gerakapoulou et al. 2021, Copim workshops). This is particularly important for collective models given the buyout of Knowledge Unlatched (Gerakapoulou et al. 2021, Penier et al. 2020).
- Co-option of OA book initiatives by commercial interests is a concern (Stone and Marques 2018, Gerakapoulou et al. 2021, Penier et al. 2020).
- OA book metadata and the related integration of OA books into library systems can be problematic (Gerakapoulou et al. 2021, see also Copim workshops and Ball et al. 2021, Dreyer et al 2024).
- Librarians are often positively disposed towards collective models that dispense with BPCs (Stone and Marques 2018), but governance of such platforms is acknowledged as difficult to do well (Penier et al. 2020).
- However, collective funding models are not yet widely used. Where they are used, they tend to make up a smaller part of a publisher's income (Gerakapoulou et al. 2021, Błaszczyńska et al. 2023, Brun et al. 2024, Armengou et al. 2013).
- Sustainability is a concern for all models (Penier et al. 2020, Błaszczyńska et al. 2023).
- Policies for books are rarer and less developed than for journals (Stone and Marques 2018, Morka and Gatti 2021).
- Funding for OA books specifically is rare (Morka and Gatti 2021, Dreyer et al. 2024).

Commonalities across national contexts

With regard to supporting collective funding models, then, some key points of importance to librarians stand out across contexts. These

include quality assurance; transparency and trust with regard to publishers; the need for high quality metadata and usage statistics; simple ways to convert existing funds; institutional value; and, of course, affordability. Librarians and non-profit publishers would seem to be natural colleagues in pursuit of a more equitable OA landscape. This largely converges with the findings from the workshops we have hosted at Copim, where librarians in multiple countries pointed out the need for trust and transparency, the need to demonstrate local institutional value on investments, and the ever-present problem of costs. These high-level issues remain in place across Europe and the US.

Having established what research has shown within a wide geographical context, we will now proceed to briefly set out the broader OA contexts in our participants' countries, based on existing literature.

Notes

[x] It should be noted here that the Open Book Collective takes a differing perspective on questions of 'scale' than many initiatives. In keeping with the Copim perspective on scale, we see scaling as not simply 'growing' or 'expanding'. Rather, in the pursuit of our values of equity, cooperation and bibliodiversity, we operate according to a 'scaling small' perspective of connecting diverse stakeholders in the OA book landscape to build resilience and sustainability through cooperation and mutual aid. Nonetheless, the reality that our model relies on a sufficient number of library members financially supporting publishers and infrastructure providers cannot be avoided. See also Adema and Moore (2021).
[xi] Again, we at the OBC would hesitate to endorse 'scaling up' unproblematically, which perhaps could be rephrased for our purposes here as 'scale for equity and resilience' or 'scale for equity and sustainability'.

"Librarians and non-profit publishers would seem to be natural colleagues in pursuit of a more equitable OA landscape"

4. Open access contexts in Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden

To help situate our analysis of interview responses across our chosen European countries, this section provides a brief overview of some of the key features and developments in each country's approach to open access, based on existing literature.

Finland

- A large number of small learned society publishers represent the majority share of the market (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Agnoloni et al. 2024).
- The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies administers government funding for publishing activities, including OA books. Demand is greater than the amount awarded (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Agnoloni et al. 2024).
- Most Finnish based journals already publish Diamond OA (Agnoloni et al. 2024).
- The Aleksandria Consortium (2016–17) was a library consortium intended as a model to fund Finnish language OA books (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Morka and Gatti 2021). Finnish libraries are closely connected by consortia and networks (Morka and Gatti 2021).
- Policies on OA monographs are emerging (Ferwerda et al. 2017) but national OA policy presently excludes books (Morka and Gatti 2021, Agnoloni et al. 2024).
- Edition.fi is the national publication platform for Finnish OA books (Taşkın et al. 2024, Agnoloni et al. 2024), hosting monographs and anthologies from multiple publishers

Since 2015, the Open Science and Research Initiative, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture, has been working with the National Library of Finland and the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies to attempt to establish a collective funding model for OA journals (Ilva 2018). So far, stakeholder groups have been unable to reach a consensus over the distribution of costs (Laakso and Multas 2023). Ilva writes that libraries are unwilling to reallocate the required amounts from their acquisition budgets, which are 'tied up with the costs of the licence agreements they have with the major international publishers, since these are prioritized by the faculty' (2018, 7). Taşkın et al. 2024 add, 'Creating a national journal funding model that would work around the principles of Diamond OA has been a long-standing topic, where there have been different initiatives ongoing for close to 10 years without reaching a model that

> "Creating a national journal funding model that would work around the principles of Diamond OA has been a long-standing topic, where there have been different initiatives ongoing for close to 10 years without reaching a model that would satisfy all central stakeholders" (Taşkın et al. 2024)

would satisfy all central stakeholders [...] a sustainable collective OA funding model has not been established despite continuous effort' (2024, 58).

France

- The academic landscape in France is fairly centralised and interconnected, with the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research at its core (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Morka and Gatti 2021, Dreyer et al. 2024).
- Couperin, a national consortium of libraries, has been 'a strong advocate for open access and is likely to play a significant role in promoting OA for monographs in the future' (Ferwerda et al. 2017, 78).
- France has historically been a strong supporter of Diamond OA, such as through the national platform OpenEdition, which has received government support and funding (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Agnoloni et al. 2024, Dreyer et al. 2024).
- There is a national OA policy: the national plan for Open Science calls for OA for books and articles, with a preference for Diamond (Morka and Gatti 2021, Dreyer et al. 2024, Agnoloni et al. 2024).
- Institutional OA policies are fairly common, but those specifically for books are rarer (Dreyer et al. 2024, Morka and Gatti 2021).

The DIAMAS project also notes an interesting paradox with regards to the policy situation in France:

On the one hand, supporting diamond is an explicit objective of the Second Open Science National Plan, and several important regional and national institutions, such as CNRS, have adopted firm policies in favour of the diamond model, naturally subscribing to the Action Plan for Diamond Open Access [...] On the other hand, the involvement of public institutions in publishing is restricted and closely monitored at the governmental level to prevent 'unfair competition' with the commercial sector and safeguard the interests of private publishers (Armengou et al. 2013, 215).

Perhaps this is why the study found that French funders are the most likely to fund Diamond OA institutional publishers and service providers beyond their home country. Collective funding models are of course one way of achieving this (Armengou et al. 2013, 81).

Germany

- The landscape of academic research in Germany is very decentralised. Universities are funded by federal states, not a central government (Adema 2019, Ferwerda et al. 2017, Morka and Gatti 2021, Copim workshop). Institutions operate with a fair degree of autonomy and some have dedicated OA book funds (Morka and Gatti 2021, Dreyer et al. 2024).

- In a complex policy landscape (see below), monograph policies lag behind those for other outputs (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Morka and Gatti 2021).
- Major commercial publishers are dominant actors in the OA publishing landscape (Taşkın et al. 2024, Ferwerda . al. 2017, Bosman et al. 2024).
- In the journal sphere, Germany has actively created and promoted the notion of the transformative deal, which remains a dominant OA model. The most prominent are brokered at a national level by the DEAL consortium (Taşkın et al. 2024).
- DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, or 'German Research Foundation'), a large and highly prominent national funder in Germany, has launched a national Diamond Service Centre (Taşkın et al. 2024, Bosman et al. 2024) and recommends OA for all outputs (Ferwerda et al 2017).
- BPC funding is available from the DFG.
- DFG also supported the establishment of Language Science Press, which utilises a collective funding model for books via a partnership with Knowledge Unlatched (Ferwerda et al. 2017).

With regard to national OA policies, the most recent research describes the situation as 'complicated':

Germany has a large number of policy documents: Policies at the level of the federal states, statements from research funding organisations, papers [...] the question of the existence of a national policy is not easy to answer. Because the federal states are responsible for educational issues in Germany, an open access policy can initially only be implemented at federal state level for formal reasons. In fact, some federal states have adopted their own open access policies. Some mention books, others do not (Landesportal Schleswig- Holstein, 2020) [....] Coordination processes between the federal and state governments are often lengthy and complicated (Dreyer et al. 2024).

"Though there have been some efforts towards a coordinated position on OA between the states, we think it fair to say that at present, Germany does not have a national policy strictly speaking, though major funder policies obviously have national impact"

Though there have been some efforts towards a coordinated position on OA between the states, we think it fair to say that at present, Germany does not have a national policy strictly speaking, though major funder policies obviously have national impact. Finally, it should be noted that the Federal Ministry for Education and Research has funded two successive projects focused on developing a collective funding model, with some similarities to the 'crowdfunding' approach pioneered by KU: KOALA (2021-2023) and KOALA-AV (2023-2025). This initiative has developed a multi-state collective funding model. However, although it has in the past included an offer for a small number of book series, its most recent offer is wholly journals-focused.

The Netherlands

- The Netherlands is a European leader in OA and the home of the OAPEN infrastructure, which has received government support (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Bosman et al. 2024). There is a

national OA policy, the Open Science Plan (Morka and Gatti 2021, Ferwerda et al. 2017, Taşkın et al. 2024).

- However, the government has recently cut funding to the National Open Science Program by half.
- The UKB, a partnership between the Dutch University Libraries and The Royal Library of the Netherlands, is a key stakeholder advancing OA plans and policies (Morka and Gatti 2021, Taşkın et al. 2024).
- Policy-making at institutional and funder level is also strong. Some do include monographs (Ferwerda et al. 2017, Bosman et al. 2024), including the Dutch Research Council (NWO), a major funder.
- Large commercial publishers are dominant in the OA landscape (Bosman et al. 2024)
- Some universities have specific funds for diamond infrastructure (Bosman et al. 2024)
- Funding sources for OA are very diverse and include the government and universities, but collective funding is not widely used, at least amongst institutional publishers and service providers (Bosman et al. 2024).
- Historically, Gold and Green OA routes have dominated over Diamond (Bosman et al. 2024, Taşkın et al. 2024): the Dutch Research Council (NWO) has a fund for Book Processing Charges.
- A step towards increasing both collective funding and Diamond OA has recently been launched, titled Project Diamond open access in the Netherlands, funded by the Universities of the Netherlands (UNB) and the Dutch Consortium of University Libraries (UKB). This includes the establishment of a national centre of expertise (Taşkın et al. 2024; see also Constantin et al. 2024).
- At the time of writing, the Dutch Research Council has just announced funding to support journals in flipping to a Diamond model.
- A unique amendment to applicable copyright law means that Dutch authors have the right to share copies of journals and book chapters via a Green OA route, regardless of publisher contracts. This is known as the Taverne Amendment. However, it does not seem to be applicable to monographs and other long works.

Poland

- Like in other EU countries, Poland's OA publishing is striving to align with the European Research Area (ERA) principles of transparency, equity and accessibility. Open access adoption in Poland is also shaped by university policies and initiatives from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, as part of the national strategy to enhance global visibility of Polish research (Wnuk et al. 2024)

"A step towards increasing both collective funding and Diamond OA has recently been launched, titled Project Diamond Open Access in the Netherlands, funded by the Universities of the Netherlands (UNB) and the Dutch Consortium of University Libraries"

> "Universities and academic libraries are major stakeholders in academic publishing; they play a key role in driving the OA agenda through curating institutional repositories and collaborative initiatives"

- The Ministry of Science and Higher Education has issued recommendations for the development of OA, such as the adoption of OA policies at institution level, but there is no official national policy yet (Bosman et al. 2024)
- Universities and academic libraries are major stakeholders in academic publishing; they play a key role in driving the OA agenda through curating institutional repositories and collaborative initiatives ([Wnuk et al. 2024](); OPI, 2023).
- Both public and institutional funds support OA publication (Bosman et al. 2024)
- Publishers in Poland are mostly international legacy publishers or local university presses. Most academic books are published by one of these (Morka and Gatti 2021).
- The Narodowe Centrum Nauki (NCN), a governmental grant-giving agency, is also an important driver of OA agenda. In 2020, NCN implemented an OA policy applicable to research projects, funded from calls launched on 16 June 2020 onwards, with funding agreements signed after 1 January 2021. This policy mandates that all final author versions of research publications should be openly accessible as soon as possible – no later than 6 months after publication, or 12 months in the case of social sciences and humanities ([NCN]()).
- While there is strong advocacy for OA journal articles and significant strides have been made in developing OA repositories, the inclusion of books in these policies is still developing. For example, NCN OA policy does not include rules for publishing monographs, monograph chapters or peer-reviewed edited volumes. Currently, there is no comprehensive national policy specifically addressing OA for books (Morka and Gatti 2021).
- There are also no significant library or scholar-led OA book initiatives or collective funding models for books (Morka and Gatti 2021).
- Despite the absence of a national policy on OA books, there have been initiatives to promote open educational resources (OER). In 2015, the Polish government launched an open e-textbooks program, providing an online platform with over 60 modular textbooks for primary and secondary education. This program aims to enhance accessibility to educational materials and support the adoption of open resources in the education system ([The Open Education Policy Network]()).
- Poland has actively participated in several EU-funded initiatives to develop OA infrastructures, such [as OpenAIRE (Open Access Infrastructure for Research in Europe)](), EIFL and [Library of Science,]() the largest OA scientific collection in Poland.
- However, financial and infrastructural challenges to OA book publishing remain, and there is a notable gap in initiatives and funding specifically targeting OA books. Funding for OA

in Poland is still very limited, with no OA book-specific funds at the national or institutional level ([Wnuk et al. 2024](#); OPI, 2023).

- Consortia, such as the Interdisciplinary Centre for Mathematical and Computational Modelling (ICM) Consortium at the University of Warsaw, advocate for better funding and accessibility in scholarly publishing. The ICM coordinates the Polish Academic Consortium, a collective of over 500 institutions dedicated to advancing OA publishing in Poland ([ICM](#)).
- Through transformative agreements with academic publishers, such as Cambridge University Press, or Springer Nature, the consortium enables researchers from member institutions to publish their work OA without article processing charges (APCs) but not book processing charges.
- There is an increasing number of institutional repositories, fostering the dissemination of OA articles and books across various disciplines. The repositories are both university-based and discipline-oriented. For example, [Bridge of Knowledge](#) is an institutional repository managed by the Gdańsk University of Technology.

Sweden

- There is a national policy in Sweden recommending full OA for all publicly funded research by 2026 (Morka and Gatti 2021).
- The overall national guidance is followed by individual libraries, which also have individual policies (Morka and Gatti 2021).
- For institutional publishers, there is little collective funding available, and publishers are much more likely to rely on subsidies from parent institutions to publish OA (Agnoloni et al. 2024; Bosman et al. 2024).
- Sweden has a notably high rate of OA publication, when compared to many other countries, especially when it comes to journal publishing. In 2022, 70 percent of journal articles featuring at least one researcher at a Swedish Higher Education Institution were OA, which is closely associated with the fact that much recent national work on OA has focused on transformative agreements (SUHF 2023).
- OA activities are coordinated at the national level by the National Library of Sweden, especially through the Bibsam library consortium (Morka and Gatti 2021).
- In 2023, the influential Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions (SUHF) produced a report and set of recommendations for Bibsam. This recognised the flaws in the transformative agreement model, advocating for a different approach, as well as overall cost reductions for the Swedish system. The report also argues that control over

"For institutional publishers, there is little collective funding available, and publishers are much more likely to rely on subsidies from parent institutions to publish OA"

scholarly publishing should remain within the academic community (SUHF 2023).

- In response to these recommendations, Bibsam in 2024 adopted a new action plan, which includes a commitment to promote new pathways to open publishing and to develop alternative business models (Bibsam 2024).

5. Experiences of librarians and other stakeholders

Between February and June 2025, we reached out by email both to our OBC membership and to our broader networks. Initially we had intended to interview only librarians, but as this did not prove possible in some locations, we extended the sample to include some publishers and independent experts in OA books.

Naturally the answers to our questions overlapped in conversation, but in sum, we asked about:

- The types of open access initiatives librarians supported
- The policies informing their support for open access books (e.g. national, institutional, funder)
- The priorities criteria they used in assessing which initiatives to support
- The challenges a library in their country might face in supporting collective funding schemes like the OBC
- How the OBC could potentially alleviate those challenges and better meet their institutional needs

Seven of the librarians we interviewed mostly served in leadership positions, such as Director, Deputy Head or Head of Services. Others were information specialists, OA specialists or worked in research support, and one was a faculty liaison (for a full list of library roles, see Appendix 3). By default, the institution is referred to by a country and number in the text below, unless the interviewee requested that we name them here and attribute quotations, which has been honoured. The findings are now presented and discussed by country, followed by overall conclusions and recommendations. It should be noted that direct quotations have in some cases been lightly corrected from the original speech for readability.

Finland

In Finland, we were able to interview three librarians at three different institutions. These were

- The National Library of Finland (established 1640), which is administratively part of the University of Helsinki. This is the foremost research library in the country.
- Finnish Library 2 (founded early 20th C.), a medium-sized Swedish-language university serving a large proportion of the Swedish-speaking population in higher education in Finland.
- Finnish Library 3 (founded early 20th[th] C.), a large public research university.

Of these, the National Library of Finland is an OBC member.

The Finnish librarians mentioned a range of initiatives that their institutions supported, as shown in Table 2. Multiple transformative agreements were also mentioned. One librarian mentioned a BPC fund (Finnish Library 2), whilst another stated that transformative agreements took up the majority of OA spending (Finnish Library 3). The National Library of Finland told us that they had previously supported the Select scheme for monographs through Knowledge Unlatched, but withdrew after the buyout by Wiley, a disappointment echoed by Netherlands Library 1 (see below). The DOAB and OAPEN package was supported through FinELib, a consortium of universities, other research institutions, and public libraries which actively promote the availability of e-resources and open publishing. An interviewee told us that the staff of the FinELib offices monitor potential initiatives, suggest them to members of the consortium as possibilities to support, and negotiate with initiatives to meet their members' needs, thus playing a central role in the OA landscape.

Table 2: Initiatives named for support by Finnish librarians		
Book publishers	**Other publishers (including journals and multipublishers)**	**Infrastructure providers**
Open Book Publishers	The Open Book Collective	DOAB and OAPEN (as a package)
punctum books	Knowledge Unlatched	DOAB
Central European University Press	Open Commons of Phenomenology	DOAJ
	SCOAP3	Public Knowledge Project
	DSpace	

Policies informing support

All the librarians mentioned that Finland has a national policy on OA, in fact multiple policies. However, the way that these are followed and implemented varies significantly by institution. Librarians seemed to have a lot of discretion in this. One librarian told us that most universities have signed a national strategy and declaration for open access, but

the ways that we actually implement - I don't remember how many points there are, but the ways we implement [them] vary by university, so we can sort of make our own interpretations of how to implement the declaration (Finnish Library 2).

Another stated that 'both the national policy and the university policy have been interpreted, it seems in practice as mainly policies about article publishing', to the neglect of books (Finnish Library 3). Universities are rewarded financially for a higher percentage of open access outputs (Finnish Library 3). The National Library of Finland stated that they do not have a formal institutional policy, but that this has been in evolution since the current interviewee took on their role:

We have not discussed formally what kind of initiatives or publishers or whatever to support, because […] it has been going on only for five years, this kind of support

that we have actively done [...] When I came to work in my work then this was for the first time, this was part of someone's work to think of what kind of initiatives to support to give money. So it has been doing by practising more than following some principles. [...] [It]'s evolving all the time (National Library of Finland).

It seems, then, that whilst there are multiple policies and some financial support for OA at a high level in Finland, institutions vary considerably in points of implementation. It also appears that, as with most places, books are comparatively neglected.

Criteria and priorities for support

Given this flexibility in implementation, librarians again mentioned several criteria by which they judge initiatives. Again, this was described as quite an informal process. As one librarian put it: 'I thought the simple answer is there are no criteria, it's really ad hoc, but the truth is obviously there are criteria' (Finnish Library 3). However, these seem to be mostly informal and implicit. One interviewee explained:

I discuss with my colleagues. So what I'm doing is I'm searching for [initiatives] to support and as one of my tasks and then about this [I talk], to my colleagues and especially to colleagues that choose books that we buy for our library [...] we have a small budget that we have to that we can use. So if I just find a good initiative to support, then it's quite straightforward (National Library of Finland).

We have already noted the withdrawal of support from Knowledge Unlatched as it commercialised. Some of the factors librarians named as priorities included values linked to the scholarly commons, such as being scholar-led, sustainable or not-for-profit.

But librarians also voiced pragmatic and immediate concerns to serve their own institutions. One noted:

The main criterion is probably whether we're actually going to get something out of it or not [...] personally, I think that's a very short-sighted criterion, but there's not much you can do about. I mean that's the harsh reality of public funding (Finnish Library 3).

Librarians were very concerned with the quality of the publisher's output and the relevance of the books to their own institution. The National Library of Finland noted, 'we are a library for humanistic studies and especially for history studies, Russian and East European studies, philosophy and so on'. Publisher name, reputation and the standard of processes such as peer review were considered markers of quality. The Ministry of Education has a ranking system for various publishers (the [Publication Forum](#) or JUFO), linked to funding, which whilst not as deterministic as the Polish metrics, does influence both author choice of publisher and, connectedly, the initiatives chosen for support: 'there might be a very nice initiative otherwise, but if we can't see how it connects to the people who work at this university, then sometimes we have to not use it' (Finnish Library 2). University librarians ultimately prioritised this mission, noting, 'our role or our task is of course, to support the researchers here. And then the overall support of Open Science is secondary to this' (Finnish Library 2). In another, the budget is strictly

"The main criterion is probably whether we're actually going to get something out of it or not [...] personally, I think that's a very short-sighted criterion, but there's not much you can do about. I mean that's the harsh reality of public funding"

allocated by discipline, so the ultimate decision of whether to support an initiative rests with the subject librarian (Finnish Library 3). We also learned that there is concern for national publishing in Finland, much of which is written in local languages, as

Sometimes we've been worried that the models are all about preserving the status quo, not enhancing quality in the publications or, you know, smart ways to take care of it, especially for journals in Finland, there has been initiatives and the attempts to make up some sort of consortium models (Finnish Library 2).

This leads directly into the next area of discussion, as we asked about the barriers to supporting said models.

Challenges to supporting collective funding models

As noted in the literature review, the Aleksandria consortium was a collective funding project that attempted to adapt the Knowledge Unlatched model for a Finnish national context (Morka and Gatti 2021). Our interviewees told us that, unfortunately, there were not enough pledges from libraries to sustain the model, so we were particularly keen to hear about barriers. We have already noted that for one library, transformative agreements took up most of the budget for OA spending. This seems to be recurring problem in countries where OA in general is well accepted and policy quite advanced. 'Lack of time' was also mentioned by the National Library of Finland: both time to sort and assess the different OA initiatives, and time for the actual administrative processes of supporting them. However, our interviewee did mention that time for these activities is increasingly accounted for in library job roles. Complex contracts were also mentioned as a barrier (Finnish Library 2). Our interviewee stated that whilst supporting an OA initiative is not strictly speaking an acquisitions process, any such scheme would 'have to speak the acquisitions language and fit in with the other models there' to obtain support. One librarian mentioned that despite the fairly advanced policy landscape, the commitment level of librarians to OA is not as high as one might expect (Finnish Library 3). Shrinking budgets were mentioned again, as were misconceptions regarding the quality and permanence of OA publications, as one librarian summarised:

People have this kind of idea that OK, something that's published, open access. It's something that's done perhaps a little bit less professionally. Maybe the peer review isn't so thorough. We can access it through the Internet now, but tomorrow the site might be gone and we won't be able. So I think there really is this kind of idea still that it's not perhaps quite as good as real publishing (Finnish Library 3).

We have encountered these persistent misconceptions in many contexts, which the OBC is actively working to dispel in our outreach efforts. More concerningly, one interviewee told us that he didn't feel books were high on the agenda in terms of how the academic community sees the future of OA:

I have thought many times that [with] the funding of universities and the way we are funding transformative agreements, journal agreements and so on, the way everything is going there probably won't be very much book publishing. At least not in the same way as before. [...] I think that's also probably one reason why there

aren't any clear goals or policies or anything. I think many people just think, OK, you know, this is something that's not going to be existing in this way very long (Finnish Library 3).

Our interviewee wanted to be clear that this was not his personal opinion on the (un)importance of books, but a broader trend he was observing, that he considered 'kind of depressing' as 'someone who thinks books are quite central'. Obviously, we at the OBC are highly committed to the future of the academic book, in its multiple forms, but it is nonetheless important we take note if books are truly being neglected in conversation.

Alleviation

Finnish interviewees told us that one concrete step a collective funding initiative could take to make it easier to support them would be to enable support via FinELib. FinELib handles most negotiations of this sort. One librarian told us

Most of the infrastructures for open science which we support go through there […] here the libraries together pledge through the negotiations consortium so and this makes it easier for us, because there's many libraries all together in at the same time and all like SCOAP3 and DSpace and all of these go through there (Finnish Library 2).

Communications and outreach were again considered a priority for interviewees, including tailored outreach to the various stakeholders involved both on the administrative and academic side:

We would want it to be in ways that also our economic system can understand. This is useful for them and also we would want it to be easy to use. [And for] the researchers, the material should be such that the researchers quickly can understand what it means when it comes to book publishing (Finnish Library 2).

This foreshadows the comment of Netherlands Library 1, who noted that she could not support a publisher that she would not recommend researchers work with, and French Library 3, who saw researcher understanding of an initiative as key to sustainable support. We saw again the theme of expanding our publisher membership to include national publishers, including those working in the Finnish language: 'I've been thinking that it would be very very nice if you had some Finnish scholarly publishers among the publishers that could be supported via OBC' (National Library of Finland). Expanding the range and languages of our publishers must be a priority for the OBC, including offering national publishers that European researchers would want to work with. Finnish interviewees stressed the importance of national relevance:

The international arena is full. There's so much stuff there. The world is full of things, but this is where our worries go, that with the local publishing, or maybe even if we have some sort of [publisher] at the university itself – how could the Open Book Collective be of use for them? (Finnish Library 2).

Overall, alleviation of barriers to support in Finland could be summarised as:

"I've been thinking that it would be very very nice if you had some Finnish scholarly publishers among the publishers that could be supported via OBC"

- Ensuring relevance of publishers and content to Finnish researchers
- Enabling easy support through the national consortium; and
- Clearly communicating this ease and relevance to both the researcher and the library communities.

Reflections

Despite a generally high level of policymaking and awareness of OA in Finland, it seems that books are currently neglected. Some of the concerns raised around OA books echo those we have encountered in other contexts, such as quality and preservation. Encouragingly, the National Library of Finland commended the OBC for acting as a guarantee of quality of our publishers, due to our membership criteria. More concerning is the perspective that books may be seen as less important in the national conversation. Nonetheless, the fact that a collective model for books has been attempted shows that there is appetite to advance OA for books at the national level, and it seems that national publishing and local relevance is a high priority for librarians. Initiatives looking to expand membership into Finland would be advised to consider the relevance of their offerings to Finnish libraries and the Finnish national languages (Finnish and Sweden). Making membership available through FinELib would certainly make the process easier and more appealing to libraries. Finally, as ever, outreach should be prioritised and tailored to the needs and language of various stakeholders, from subject librarians to administrators to academics themselves.

France

In France, we were able to interview librarians at 3 different institutions, plus a French publisher. These were:

- French Library 1 (founded early 19th C.), a business school and *grande école* with international campuses.
- French Library 2 (founded 16th C.), a very large public research institution.
- French Library 3 (founded 15th C.), a very large public research institution.
- French Publisher 1, a scientific and technical publishing house for work arising from publicly funded research.

None of the institutions are currently OBC members.

As shown in Table 3, the French libraries mentioned a smaller range of initiative that were currently supported, and most were named by the same library. French Library 1 also mentioned transformative agreements with publishers such as Elsevier and Wiley, which are negotiated through the national consortium, Couperin. Indeed, all the libraries mentioned that their support of OA is negotiated through Couperin agreements, and the importance of Couperin as an intermediary was stressed across the interviews. Couperin handles most negotiations with publishers and initiatives, though individual

Table 3: Initiatives named for support by French librarians			
Book publishers	Other publishers (including journals and multipublishers)	Infrastructure providers	Other
OpenEdition Freemium (for books)	OpenEdition Freemium (for journals)	DOAB	SPARC Europe
	PLOS	HAL Open Archive	Peer Community In
	SciPost	Érudit	

libraries can choose to broker their own agreements if they think they can secure a better deal. This underlines the findings from the literature review that the academic landscape in France is relatively centralised and connected. French Library 1 also told us that their institution does not have a specific OA fund, but can choose to dedicate budget to measures such as APCs if they wish to. Historically, however, this has not been a common practice and funding. French Library 2 mentioned that it is currently considering supporting OPERAS, but is not yet committed to this.

Policies informing support

France has a national OA policy, and institutions often also have their own. As one interviewee put it:

There's a national policy through Couperin, notably. There's a policy to support library networks, let's say. Then, I think there are local dynamics and policies, with university or research institution libraries that have decided to reallocate part of the budget previously dedicated to subscriptions to open access, and this is done at the local level, not nationally. So I think there's both: a link between national and local policies (French Publisher 1).

French Library 1 stated that their OA policy is in development. French Library 3 has an 'Open Science Charter'. French Library 2 has an 'Open Science Roadmap' but no monograph-specific policy as yet: this is currently in early stages of consideration. The relative neglect of monographs in current policy is a running theme in the data. This library mentioned that there is a legal duty in France

to distribute a certain number of scientific outputs openly, but this does not include monographs. So there is no legal framework in our country to easily disseminate monographs or book chapters in open access (French Library 2).

Moreover, when these outputs are obliged to be OA (perhaps by funder mandate in an international project), 'there are somewhat contradictory injunctions on encouraging open science for all scientific productions without really having the possibility of implementing these obligations' (French Library 2). Hence the need for more book-specific policies.

Criteria and priorities for support

All the interviewees agreed that initiatives endorsed and supported through Couperin are more likely to be prioritised in France. Couperin functions as a guarantee of quality, as well as handling

"All the interviewees agreed that initiatives endorsed and supported through Couperin are more likely to be prioritised in France."

negotiations with publishers and streamlining the payment processes for institutional support. Our publisher also mentioned that the existence of other funding sources, such as ministerial, serves as validation of an initiative.

This interviewee also stated that most libraries in France are quite specialised and subject-specific in what they choose to support: 'If you contact libraries from universities focused on HSS, they'll never fund our [scientific and technical] books'. Indeed, French Library 1 attested that their priorities for support are 'mostly Professor requests' and 'requests that come up during research committee meetings and that kind of thing [...] We don't necessarily introduce new things unless we know what's going to be useful for our researchers' (French Library 1). These requests are then evaluated by committee.

French Library 2 agreed that the relevance of the material to their institution and usage of their research community is a very important factor, but added that 'there are more general considerations of impact and the benefit for open science'. They mentioned that they consider the SCOSS criteria, which include: an assessment of an initiative's sustainability; its non-profit status; multi or-international relevance; and relevance to multiple disciplines, demonstrating that whilst faculty needs are an important criterion for support they are certainly not the only one. This Library stated that they may in fact be *more* likely to support a worthy initiative that is not yet well established, and 'less [likely to] support an initiative that already receives significant funding, whether from our Ministry or from UNESCO' (French Library 2). This diverges with the experience of the publisher. Moreover, librarians can and do suggest initiatives to Couperin. French Library 3 added:

> **"We look at whether the model is virtuous, if it has a transparent governance, if we have an idea of how the initiative actually works, if it has a global impact on the open science ecosystem or not"**

We look at whether the model is virtuous, if it has a transparent governance, if we have an idea of how the initiative actually works, if it has a global impact on the open science ecosystem or not (French Library 3)

This interviewee also preferred to commit sustainable funding for a period of years, rather than make one-off donations. None of the libraries used a published or formalised set of evaluation criteria

Challenges to supporting collective funding models

According to our publisher interviewee, collective funding models are not common in France, but the primary barrier to their support is budgetary constraints, rather than a lack of awareness or will amongst librarians. They expressed that 'It's purely the availability of funds. In France, a university library would always be willing. That's not an issue. The real difficulty is having the budget to do it' (French Publisher 1).

Libraries 1 and largely 3 agreed, commenting that from the librarian perspective,

It's largely a question of money [...] we're trying to integrate this into the new way libraries operate, meaning that, in addition to purchasing books, we need to

purchase databases, data, etc [infrastructures]. We also need to fund open science, but it's a long-term effort to change mindsets about the need to fund the publishing ecosystem now (French Library 3).

Library 1 noted that making a case to institutions for supporting OA is becoming much easier, given that 'rankings, accreditations, and funders' now reward OA 'and the general public is requesting it as well'. However, 'universities had a major budget cut this year and they're at the mercy of the state-determined budgets [...] We collect fees from our students, so we have a lot more flexibility. But fluctuating budgets would be the main problem' (French Library 1). French Libraries 2 and 3 both noted the importance and challenge of explaining such initiatives to researchers, who often have limited understanding of OA and are still invested in the 'reputational economy' (French Library 2) of traditional commercial titles:

Even if we [as a library] support [initiatives], there comes a time when they need to be passed on to the researchers as well, and for them to take ownership, to adopt these new tools, these initiatives (French Library 3).

This connects to the points raised above about faculty needs and input being key criteria for support, suggesting that a lack of OA awareness on the part of researchers remains a concern despite the will and efforts of library staff. It also echoes Finnish Library 2's concern for more researcher understanding. The barrier mentioned was the time and effort required to sort through the array of initiatives on offer, a concern we have noted in several contexts:

infrastructures are increasingly varied and complex. In the Diamond open access landscape and its surroundings, there are structures like OBC with a specific model, but also other infrastructures that can be more predatory. It's easy to find oneself a bit lost in this jungle (French Library 2).

Alleviation

With regard to overcoming barriers to support from French institutions, it seems clear that for a collective funding model to succeed in France, 'You'd have to go through Couperin' (French Library 3). In sum,

All the universities are members of Couperin and so, if there are messages, things to be circulated, that's the way to do it. It's the most effective way because that's one entry point that covers everyone. It's an essential agreement, a key player (French Library 3).

Ultimately, libraries will make their own decisions on initiatives, but outreach and support through the consortium would be the single most effective enabling factor. Institutions have one or more Couperin correspondent who receives the information in official form (French Library 3), illustrating again the centralised and connected nature of the landscape.

Librarians did appreciate the ease with which the OBC handles contracting to publishers and other OA initiatives via a single payment process, comparing it to the work of the consortium itself. This alleviates the need for individual assessments and contracts, and simplifies administrative procedures for supporting institutions.

"A lack of OA awareness on the part of researchers remains a concern despite the will and efforts of library staff"

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French Library 1 also suggested that direct outreach to universities stressing the importance of OA could help, because as noted, university libraries do make recommendations to the consortium. This outreach could include 'highlighting the work that would be done on our behalf, especially on contract negotiations […] we always need marketing tools as well, and promotional materials, all that kind of stuff that we could share with our communities'. These may be factors that would persuade librarians to join, but centralised support and promotion from the consortium would likely be the decisive factor for a collective funding model's success, enabling a familiar and easy financial process for librarians that simultaneously acts as a guarantee of quality.

Reflections

As in Finland, it seems that despite a relatively high level of OA awareness and policymaking in France, the situation for monographs is lagging. There is little an initiative like the OBC can do about the decreasing budgets of universities everywhere, beyond demonstrating the effective value proposition of collective funding models. But enabling support via the national consortium would effectively remove multiple barriers to support simultaneously in France. By acting as a guarantor of quality, undertaking outreach and promotion to universities, and enabling a familiar and easy payment process, most of the librarians' concerns would be addressed. The importance of the national consortium supports the literature review finding of a relatively centralised academic landscape. However, outreach to individual institutions, including to researchers themselves, should not be neglected, as libraries have their own subject priorities and also assess schemes for factors like sustainability, governance and importance to the global knowledge commons. Moreover, institutions can and do propose initiatives for Couperin to include on their lists, which may be an important entry point for a new initiative to the French landscape. Finally, initiatives should tailor their offer to suit the specific research and subject needs of the institutions approached, as relevance is again a key factor.

"Enabling support via the national consortium would effectively remove multiple barriers to support simultaneously in France"

Germany

In Germany, we were able to interview librarians at three different institutions, each in a different state. These were

- German Library 1 (founded mid-20th C.), a mid-sized public research university, with a broad-ranging focus.
- German Library 2 (founded 16th C.), a mid-sized public research university, with strengths in life-sciences, psychology and geography.
- German Library 3 (founded mid-20th C.), a smaller public research university, with a focus on the sciences, particularly computer sciences.

Of these, German Library 2 is an OBC member.

Librarians in Germany mentioned a wide variety of OA initiatives that their universities are supporting (Table 4). These ranged from transformative agreements with major corporates to support of small publishers by membership/subscriber schemes. Multiple transformative agreements with major publishers were also mentioned.

German Library 3 has presses that offer OA for books, whilst German Library 1 is currently developing a publishing service. Two librarians also mentioned that their universities have limited open access funds to support their authors. One stated that they have two pots, one sourced from the institution itself, and another from the major national research funder, the DFG. The DFG offers up to €5000 for OA publication of books resulting from funded work, and it is institutions rather than researchers who must bid for this.

Table 4: Initiatives named for support by librarians in Germany			
Book publishers	**Other publishers (including journals and multipublishers)**	**Infrastructure providers**	**Other**
Open Book Publishers	Open Library of Humanities	DOAB and OAPEN (as a package)	Verfassungsblog
DeGruyter (open ebooks package)	ArXiv	The TIB DOI Consortium	
Language Science Press	Scipost	DOAJ	
	Koala		
	Open Book Collective		
	Knowledge Unlatched		
	Nomos		
	Zeitschrift für Europarechtliche Studien Quantitative Science Studies		

Policies informing support

Librarians concurred with our impression that there is no formal national policy on OA. They mentioned that both the government and the DFG have issued statements on the importance of OA, as have some states. The funder statement is not a mandate. All of the libraries had an institutional policy, and one also described how library activity and networking in support of OA has informed policy formation at a university level and beyond:

What is today the open-access.network and the Open Access Tage evolved through […] networking […]. But this this has been much more bottom up than top down […]

with open-access.network for sure, since the beginning, there was a lot of exchange about how to proceed institutionally with these policies [...] 50% of my job is managing open access.network and 50% is supporting open access at [my University]. So I'm with one leg in my institution and very often I'm much more in touch and working with everybody else in Germany and beyond on knowledge exchange (German Library 1).

Conversely, a librarian at German Library 2 seemed to suggest a more 'top-down' approach, noting, 'the conditions of national funding programmes are important for our open access activities, so we orient ourselves on their conditions to fulfil them'. It seems that policymaking is multidirectional and institutionally dependent.

Criteria and priorities for support

The German librarians in our study all gave quite similar answers to this question and a smaller set of criteria than, for example, those in the Netherlands (see below). They focused first on the content and relevance of initiatives they might support, especially 'the importance of the publications in these initiatives for the researchers of our institution' (German Library 2). The national relevance of the publisher or initiative was also considered, with librarians voicing a desire to support German-language presses, especially in the humanities. This strategy may be orientated more to the development of a knowledge commons than an individual collection. One librarian told us that based on his discussions with librarians at other institutions, he felt that many OA advocates in Germany were comparing the costs of memberships to the equivalent in APCs:

> They [would ask] this publisher [...] for reports [on] how many people from my university have published with you in the last three years? This is what most open access advocates at universities do, and if the average sum is comparable to APC, then they say 'OK, we will fund this.' This is what most people do (German Library 3).

However, he himself did not use this method, partly due to philosophical opposition to methods resembling an APC, and preferred to ask researchers at his institution such questions as 'Are you reading this journal? Are you reading books from this publisher? Are they important for you?' He expressed that 'the first criteria is what does the community say about it?' (German Library 3). Quality control standards such as peer review, PIDs, acceptance rates and licensing were a consideration, as were PIDs and licensing, but this librarian considered the research community was an able judge of this, so asking for their opinion and usage of the initiative covered these angles as well. This aligns with French Library 1's position that the impetus to fund an initiative may come from the faculty.

Challenges to supporting collective funding models

As has been a recurring theme, librarians in Germany told us that 'the biggest challenge is budgetary justification', in the absence of 'directly visible or measurable benefits that come out of supporting such an initiative' (German Library 2). This librarian suggested that the addition of membership fees to the OBC packages, which do not go directly to publishers and service providers, might be difficult to

"They would ask [...] how many people from my university have published with you in the last three years? This is what most open access advocates at universities do, and if the average sum is comparable to APC, then they say 'OK, we will fund this'"

explain to budget holders, though she personally understood how they are necessary for our operating costs. One librarian told us that whilst her institution does have an OA policy and supports OA as a 'political decision', in practice subject librarians act according to the research needs of their department, meaning that 'there's some whole divide between our two camps, which is not very productive' (German Library 1). OA librarians may argue for the support of initiatives they find sustainable and a positive contribution to the knowledge commons, but subject librarians are more concerned with the immediate research needs of their department. Even when subject librarians are supportive of OA, they sometimes lack understanding of the differing models and issues such as licensing and re-use, which can lead to librarians talking at cross-purposes. The topic of a separate budget for Diamond OA has also been broached at this institution but has not come to fruition thus far.

Librarians in Germany agreed that complex systems and payment processes were a significant barrier to supporting collective funding models. A further layer of complexity is added when the source of funding is the DFG, which requires 'very strict detailed monitoring' of spending, and 'it's more complicated with these collaborative funding mechanisms than with funding single APCS' (German Library 3). For this reason, German Library 3 does not support collective funding models with DFG funds, though it theoretically could, but utilises university-sourced funds only. Interestingly, when describing their need for a streamlined system, librarians described some features that the OBC already offers, such as 'a central platform where we could [....] support Open Book Publishers, Open Library of Humanities, Language Science Press, DOAJ [...] Just pick and choose and then press submit or buy and then we could get one invoice, one invoice with the amount we pay for every single service' (German Library 3). The OBC does provide this sort of streamlined process for supporting our library and infrastructure providers, but obviously not for the many OA initiatives that are outside our scope. It is difficult to imagine a service that would provide for every OA initiative a given library wanted to support, less still for more than one library. This finding does suggest, however, that we need to do better at communicating our offer to librarians, of which a streamlined workflow is a key factor.

Another barrier in the German context was the lack of 'a centre for cooperative support for open access infrastructures' (German Library 3). This librarian suggested that a consortium such as in France would make 'collaborative open access support' much easier for libraries, as institutions can support initiatives via a consortium which handles administration. There are some consortia operating at state level, but none relevant for the whole of Germany. Yet potential barriers operate at state level too: one librarian told us about the activities of an 'Audit Court', which monitors how universities spend money:

"Complex systems and payment processes were a significant barrier to supporting collective funding models"

If they suspect or [get] impressions that you're wasting money it can be very tough. I know in Bavaria, in some universities that did support open access publication infrastructures like the DOAJ [...] they were asked by this audit office, 'what was the benefit for the state of Bavaria for this support?' It was quite tough at some universities (German Library 3).

This again connects to the need for a bibliodiverse OA landscape, and for universities to be enabled to support publishers of local relevance. It seems, then, that the primary barriers for the German librarians are administrative and bureaucratic – not so much that funding is unavailable, but that the time needed to assess initiatives, handle payment processes and then document and justify those payment processes to the relevant authorities is prohibitive for many librarians.

Alleviation

On the positive side, alleviating administrative barriers may be easier than financial ones. Once again, librarians asked for data: for detailed reports on usage statistics, on affiliated authors, for as much transparency as possible regarding income and outgoings, for evidence of 'concrete services or added values that are understandable for the budget managers of our institution' (German Library 2). Whilst librarians were sceptical or critical about the value of transformative deals with major publishers, they did recognise that these publishers offer convenient concrete services, such as automatic metadata generation. This makes their value easy to judge and demonstrate. One librarian suggested that having viewed our website and the packages we offer, 'it might be interesting for universities to see what technical features the publisher offers' (German Library 3). This could also be of use in demonstrating a return on investment to budget holders.

Regarding the division between librarians and miscommunication between different types of library staff, our interviewee suggested that 'the way to the heart of the subject librarians is through the professors [...] to win researchers. [...] I don't want to waste too much energy on the subject librarians' (German Library 1). This aligns with the previous librarians' observations on the importance of faculty opinion. On the other hand, there are also barriers at play in Germany that are beyond the OBC's control, such as the lack of a national consortium for ease of payment and subscription.

Reflections

Overall, the German librarians in our study emphasised quantitative data more than their counterparts in, for example, the Netherlands (see below), though the issues of local relevance and the national language were raised as qualitative markers of valued initiatives to support. The primary barriers to supporting collective funding schemes were administrative, not least the strict monitoring of spending both by the national funder DFG and the government/state-level auditors. Whilst librarians may fully see the value in supporting Diamond and collective funding initiatives, the difficulty of

translating the value proposition in a way these authorities will accept can be a major deterrent – to the point that one institution elects not to use DFG funds for collective funding at all. Content and institutional relevance was the key factor for librarians in deciding which initiatives to support. We saw highlighted the importance of communication between stakeholders both within and beyond the library – including, notably, the research communities, who influence subject librarians. In a reminder that practice often precedes policy, there is no national OA policy in Germany, but much activity and networking at an institutional level, which contributes to policymaking at a smaller scale.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, we were able to interview librarians at three different institutions. These were

- Netherlands Library 1 (founded early 20th C.), a large public research university with specialties in medicine, business and economics.
- Tilburg University (founded 1927), a Catholic research university in the south of the Netherlands with focuses on the social sciences and economics.
- Netherlands Library 3 (founded 17th C.), a large public research university with a wide spread of focus.

One of these – Netherlands Library 3 – is a current OBC member.

The librarians we interviewed in the Netherlands reported supporting a wide range of OA initiatives with diverse funding models (Table 5). This is not surprising, given that the Netherlands is historically a leader in OA and a comparatively wealthy country. All librarians also mentioned that their institutions had BPC funds for their researchers, but only up to a certain amount or percentage.

One librarian mentioned that their library used to cover full BPCs, but found that this disconnected researchers too much from the actual costs of publishing, noting:

When it first started, the Open Access Fund would cover charges like completely, and it didn't work because it kind of gave the impression of oh, we have this unlimited funding, the sack of money somewhere that we can just spend willy nilly, and we kind of want to stimulate that researchers themselves, [to] also find funding somewhere [else] and that if they cannot find enough funding, we do the rest (Netherlands Library 1).

Librarians also mentioned Read and Publish deals with major publishers such as Taylor and Francis and Wiley, which their research communities value. Tilburg and Library 3 also have their own open access presses, one Diamond and one which charges BPCs but offers a stimulus fund. One librarian mentioned a fund to support Diamond OA journals specifically.

"The primary barriers to supporting collective funding schemes were administrative, not least the strict monitoring of spending both by the national funder DFG and the government/state-level auditors"

Table 5: Initiatives named for support by librarians in the Netherlands		
Book publishers	**Other publishers (including journals and multipublishers)**	**Infrastructure providers**
University of Michigan Press	Opening the Future	Pressbooks
MIT Direct to Open	Open Library of the Humanities	Public Knowledge Project
CEU Press	Open Commons of Phenomenology	DOAB
Liverpool University Press	SciPost	
Sidestone Press	Open Book Collective	
Open Book Publishers	JSTOR Path to Open	
Lever Press	SCOAP3	
Arc Humanities Press	Knowledge Unlatched	
punctum books		
Language Science Press		

"'If a project is funded by NWO, they require books to be published open access. And they have an open access book fund for that"

Policies informing support

Librarians concurred that there is no formal national policy on books specifically, though it should be noted that the National Open Science plan does ultimately aim at 'Making all scholarly output Open Access'. Our interviewees pointed out that the major national funder, the NWO, does mandate OA for books arising from funded research: 'if a project is funded by NWO, they require books to be published open access. And they have an open access book fund for that' (Netherlands Library 3). Librarians also pointed out that there is a national working group devoted to OA policy, including librarians, and mentioned that such working groups are key to the academic landscape in the Netherlands. None of the universities has a book-specific OA policy, though librarians discussed how they have some influence in shaping policies at their institutions. This is a multidirectional process, and librarians at Netherlands Library 1 mentioned more pushback from faculty members on books as opposed to journal articles. This is partly because many authors still see books, particularly textbooks, as a revenue stream. Librarians also experience some mutual hesitation between the library and university management, as each seems to be waiting for the other before making formal decisions:

Libraries are talking to the University Boards and the Boards expect the Library to take some kind of initiative to inform them about developments, and then the libraries say, 'well, we only do what the library or what the University Board wants us to do' [...] They're kind of waiting for each other and it's really difficult as a librarian to

just start spending money on things you don't know if a University Board will accept in the end (Netherlands Library 1).

One librarian also mentioned that whilst it is not a formal policy, one faculty at their university has designed a publication *strategy* which prioritises Diamond OA, which has gone on to influence broader institutional policy:

This strategy has also influenced the university to create an open science framework based on this school's strategy, which also prioritises Diamond values, at least for publishing [...] The timeline is that this school first developed the publication strategy, then at the library we decided to [...] support these more sustainable open access initiatives via the collection as a collection development strategy as well. [...] The university late last year also developed and adopted the Open Science framework, which is based on this school's policy (Tilburg).

It seems then that there is certainly movement in terms of discussion, but further work to be done in settling policies that satisfy multiple stakeholders. But decision-making is a complex process, to be navigated between faculties, university management and the libraries themselves. We should also bear in mind that publication and collection/development strategies are connected at the policy level.

Criteria and priorities for support

Given this absence of a formal national policy on books, librarians mentioned several criteria by which they judge initiatives they might support. Since the interviews concluded, one participant informed us that the National OA working group has just made a decision to nationally align the characteristics that initiatives must meet to be eligible for support, which may exclude some initiatives from librarians' consideration. For the moment, however, one librarian called the decision process 'informal', noting once again that 'sometimes [...] the initiative comes from the faculty. Sometimes we are approached by faculty members asking us to support some initiatives where they regularly publish and they think are worth supporting' (Netherlands Library 3).

"The National OA working group has just made a decision to nationally align the characteristics that initiatives must meet to be eligible for support"

The factors librarians named as priorities included:

- Not for profit status
- Diamond OA models
- Transparency, especially with regard to finance
- Content fit with collection development model and university research areas
- Number of books published
- Metadata - though one librarian said that this was more of a concern for their colleagues than themself.
- Diversity in terms of authorship and subject matter, in keeping with a strategy to decolonise the university's collection
- Whether an institution's authors published with an initiative, and/or whether the librarian could recommend they do so.

- Open licenses for maximal re-use
- Governance models

It was recognised that sometimes these criteria may conflict, specifically with regard to the 'prisoner's dilemma' scenario noted in the literature review. Meeting the specific collection needs of a university may conflict with diverting funds to the development of a knowledge commons. Like many librarians in diverse contexts, our interviewees were disappointed by the buyout of formerly nonprofit initiatives, noting:

the example of Knowledge Unlatched that I made based on a collection because I'm paying it from a collection budget and it's really connected to that collection [...] I have been doubting it because they started as like a non-profit and now they've been bought up by one of those big companies and I'm putting money back into those pockets again. So if there was an alternative that would match the content in this way, it would be great (Netherlands Library 1).

Some librarians were clear that any initiatives they supported must have a connection to their university's collection needs; others said that development of a knowledge commons, whilst not a criterion necessarily, was a factor in decision-making processes:

Of course, we would prefer it if we could prove that the platform is well used by our researchers. But sometimes we have supported platforms where and initiatives where there were no publications yet (Netherlands Library 3).

Challenges in supporting collective funding models

The challenges encountered in supporting collective funding models echoed many of the issues we have already established in our UK outreach, and also brought to light some more Dutch-specific contexts. For example, whilst the simple question of money is acknowledged everywhere, librarians in the Netherlands point out that as a historical leader in OA that has prioritised Gold routes to OA, their institutions have very high spending on Read and Publish deals, which leaves less money to support collective funding models. One librarian told us:

We are spending so much on read-and-publish deals and there's very little space for anything else in our budget. So that's I think something that is common to many other countries, but the Netherlands has really invested a lot in this strategy unfortunately and so there's very little room for supporting other initiatives, but there is the willingness. Especially now we have a National Open Science program. And they aim to place more emphasis on diamond and equitable open access. But so far most of what we do is focused on Gold and pay-to-publish and that's the main obstacle (Netherlands Library 3).

The view from interviewees was that authors want and like these deals: they find them familiar and easy to use, and associate the major publishers that operate them with prestige. It was also pointed out that given that the major national funder provides OA funding for books, many authors do not see BPCs as prohibitive. Of course, this perspective is not universally held – one librarian drew our attention to a 'Call to Commitment' signed by a variety of stakeholders, including many researchers themselves, which advocates for a move away from transformative agreements and towards 'an alternative

"The Netherlands has really invested a lot in this [read-and-publish deal] strategy unfortunately and so there's very little room for supporting other initiatives, but there is the willingness"

publishing strategy based on community values and Open Science (OS) principles' (it does seem to relate primarily to journals rather than books). Librarians also discussed the difficulty of making a business case for collective funding models. This may be less of a problem where libraries have a centralised budget and more autonomy, which varies by institution. Some librarians have much more freedom than others, some are working with budgets more tightly controlled by schools. It was also acknowledged that many institutions are still focused on building on a collection as a 'material thing' (Tilburg) rather than developing a global knowledge commons. According to one interviewee, recent financial and political changes mean that the spending climate is more conservative than it was just a few years ago (Netherlands Library 1), echoing some of the concerns Naim's librarians voiced in the US context (2019). Some librarians also told us that screening for quality can be a barrier to supporting initiatives, commenting 'I cannot put money into something that I wouldn't recommend my own researchers to go to' (Netherlands Library 1).

Alleviation

Librarians had several suggestions as to what an organisation like the OBC might do to help institutions overcome these barriers to supporting collective funding models. Firstly – and this is something we have heard in multiple contexts – we discussed the importance of qualitative and quantitative data to help librarians make a case for supporting the initiative. This involves transparency regarding 'the money that comes in and how it is spent' (Netherlands Library 1), as well as evidence of how researchers from an institution have benefited from platforms and publishers supported:

It would be nice if the initiatives themselves would prepare some kind of reports of, you know, how the researchers from our institution have benefited from your publication platforms or journals or publishers that we are supporting. So just to show the relevance for our research community so that we can argue that it's important for us to continue funding those initiative (Netherlands Library 3).

Such evidence could also include more qualitative arguments, such as demonstrating how our initiatives support a global knowledge commons with regard to the geographic diversity of authors and subjects: one librarian referenced a project of 'decolonising [their] collection'. Encouragingly, two librarians noted that their institution either already had or had begun to discuss a separate budget that might be used for open initiatives as opposed to collections, perhaps in line with the recommendation of David Lewis (2017) that libraries ringfence a percentage of their budget to support common scholarly infrastructure. Librarians in the Netherlands were particularly keen to stress that initiatives should avoid being too UK or US-centric – in the past, they have signed up to support schemes only to find that the works produced were primarily by and of interest to US-based authors, and do not want to repeat this experience. One interviewee suggested that recommendations would be useful, in the form of

"It would be nice if the initiatives themselves would prepare some kind of reports of [...] how the researchers from our institution have benefited from your publication platforms or journals or publishers that we are supporting"

testimonials from other librarians who have previously supported an initiative.

On another note, we discussed the importance of outreach specifically to authors and researchers. One librarian described this is as 'helping us reach authors with your message' (Netherlands Library 3). It is especially important to inform authors that BPCs are not mandatory, and about the high-quality range of Diamond OA book publishers available to them.

Reflections

In sum, then, it seems that whilst our participants in the Netherlands recognise movement towards more equitable and sustainable OA models at the level of discussion across the country, there is much work to be done in translating this into concrete policies that satisfy authors, institutional management, librarians and publishers and infrastructures simultaneously. As one librarian put it, 'the conversation is changing, but that doesn't mean that the reality has changed' (Netherlands Library 1). In the meantime, organisations like the OBC can work with librarians by demonstrating a diverse range of high-quality publishers and service providers relevant to their institutional needs via concrete qualitative and quantitative data, as well as by appealing to the necessity of moving beyond collection-building towards the development of a global knowledge commons. It is encouraging to note the presence of a declaration signed by a cross-section of stakeholders to move away from transformative agreements towards more sustainable models, though this does seem to prioritise journals over books at present. Finally, there is clearly work to be done on education and attitude change for some authors and researchers at some institutions, away from 'tried-and-true' pathways to OA that are inequitable and unsustainable, but researchers find familiar and easy.

Poland

In Poland, we were able to interview one librarian, two OA university publishers, and one external OA expert. Their affiliations were:

- Poland Library 1 (founded late 20th C.), an autonomous state-run university with schools spanning the humanities, natural sciences, and technology studies.
- Poland Publisher 1: University Press, Association of Academic Publishers. The press publishes scientific monographs, academic textbooks and conference proceedings. Many titles are available online through platforms such as the university's digital library or OA repositories.
- Poland Publisher 2: University Press. Dating to the 1950s, this press publishes scholarly monographs, textbooks and journals. Many titles are available online via the university's OA platform, as well as through repositories.

"It is encouraging to note the presence of a declaration signed by a cross-section of stakeholders to move away from transformative agreements towards more sustainable models, though this does seem to prioritise journals over books at present"

- Poland Expert 1: OPERAS-PL, the Polish node of the OPERAS project.

The Library is not a current OBC member.

Policies informing support

There is no national OA policy in Poland, although individual institutions have developed their own OA policies. However, little progress has yet been made toward developing approaches to support books specifically. As our expert interviewee put it, OA books are 'still without significant support from funding agencies or strong political backing through legislation' (Expert 1). The lack of policy around OA books can be linked to a wider absence of progress in developing OA book publishing in general. Alongside the lack of a defined funding channel for OA books, two other major reasons identified were a lack of infrastructure for books, and a lack of financial resources to develop one: 'very few publishers have their own platforms dedicated to monographs' (Poland Publisher 1). Moreover, whilst repositories are a crucial infrastructure for OA books in Poland, Publisher 2 noted that many publishers lack access to one: 'there are around 600 publishers listed as scholarly monograph publishers […] but only about 30 to 60 of them have proper repositories'. Relatedly, the preparation and management of metadata can present challenges. If a book is deposited Green OA in a repository, librarians can ensure they are indexed correctly in that context but our expert told us that publishers are more concerned that metadata is

included in major databases such as Scopus […] Publishers have also mentioned that preparing metadata for different databases is challenging because each platform has its own requirements. For example, metadata formatting for CrossRef differs from Scopus, and publishers are responsible for submitting ISBNs and DOI registrations (Expert)

Small publishers in many countries find metadata management to be a significant burden. OBC member Thoth Open Metadata is one service that can assist with this. The Polish context presents an additional challenge, however, due to differences in transliteration systems traditionally used. Our expert told us that 'Today, the dominant transliteration system is the Anglo-Saxon transliteration of Russian and Ukrainian, but traditionally, Polish publishers have used a Polish transliteration standard'.

Relatedly, one publisher also told us that publishers have concerns about the implications of new laws on accessibility for books, fearing they lack the time and resources for full compliance:

Books with lots of formulas, tables, references — preparing alt-texts and so on is both time-consuming and expensive. If a publication is to appear online, it must comply with the new directive […] we'll get no new financial support but will have to operate under new legal conditions. That's a challenge (Poland Publisher 1).

Overall, there are significant technical and infrastructural barriers to be overcome in publishing and distributing OA books in Poland,

"OA books are 'still without significant support from funding agencies or strong political backing through legislation'"

alongside a lack of policies around OA books. We also learned that some publishers are concerned about the possibility of AI being trained on their OA books, of essentially losing control of this process and uncertainty about the impact of AI on OA books in the future. Further, there is a need to build awareness among university management about the role and importance of academic publishing. Our publisher interviewee told us that 'it's still seen as something secondary — as a side activity, not a strategic part of the university's mission' (Poland Publisher 1).

Challenges in supporting collective funding models

One issue with attempting to adapt a collective funding model to a Polish context is that university publishers primarily serve their own institutions. As our expert put it, 'there is a strong preference for funding internal initiatives. University presses want to keep the funding within their own institutions rather than supporting external collectives'. Polish is the dominant publishing language for the Arts and Humanities, and there are insufficient publishers outside Poland that would be relevant for these institutions to support. However, attitudes do vary by institution – our expert indicated that some newer or more modern institutions might be more open to such a model than the most traditional ones. Another issue relates to autonomy over a budget to contribute, which due to the centralised funding situation, may not lie with either the library or publisher. Our publisher was unsure whether or not libraries would have any budget available for such a scheme, and commented:

Publishers here don't have free budgets to decide to contribute funds for open access publications. It's the same situation as with libraries. Funding comes from statutory activity, from deans or departments (Publisher 1)

Our library interviewee thought that some funds may be made available by her institution, but there was no established path to contribute yet:

I think it could work. It would depend on who holds the funds and how much freedom they have [...] maybe the library has some budget under its control, maybe the research office. If someone has a project, the grant manager might decide to cover it somehow. The publisher might try something. Maybe there are other avenues... So every time, the path has to be carved out again, in a sense — it's not standardized (Librarian).

This accords with Publisher 2's observation that

Each university is autonomous and can allocate funds however it wants. Research and publishing are both part of academic activity, but there's no specific amount earmarked for publishing.

It seems there is nothing here comparable to the 'information budget' we have seen in other contexts for the support of OA infrastructures or the scholarly commons. On the other hand, there is clearly an appetite for collaborative solutions, as one publisher told us:

We try to share experiences, organise trainings, discuss different solutions. Of course, it's not always possible to implement something jointly, because each

"One issue with attempting to adapt a collective funding model to a Polish context is that university publishers primarily serve their own institutions"

university has its own structure and limitations. But we do try to create a space where we can exchange ideas (Poland Publisher 1).

Moreover, our expert noted:

There is a spirit of cooperation among institutional publishers in Poland. They recognize that they can achieve more together than in competition with one another. Although, of course, there is still some level of competition. Due to university policies, academic staff members usually publish their books first with their university press. This is just how the system works. But in general, the idea of working together is present. That's why I think there is potential for developing cooperative funding models for open-access books (Poland Expert 1).

Another challenge relates to the politics of publisher prestige. Of course, this is an issue to be found throughout the academic system, but is perhaps even more relevant in a Polish context, according to our interviewees. University presses publish mostly in Polish. If an author wishes to publish in English, they are more likely to look for a publisher abroad. However, their choice is effectively limited by the 'points system' of academic reward and ranking. A selection of publishers is hierarchically ranked on a ministerial list – if a publisher is not on the list, the author will receive no points for the work at an annual evaluation. This points system is the subject of much contention. All three of our interviewees described it as problematic. As one interviewee put it, 'the list was constructed in a rather unfortunate way, with only a few publishers at the top — all foreign — and not necessarily the ones that should be there' (Poland Publisher 1). As the Librarian explained:

At this moment, authors' choices are heavily determined by whether the publisher is on the list. In other words, whether there will be points. In Poland, you may have encountered the phrase 'publishing for points' [*punktoza*]. That is, researchers thinking in terms of points, not content quality. You hear things like, 'I managed to publish an article worth 100 points'. Doesn't matter what's in it, just that it got published. Unfortunately, this way of thinking has taken root and deepened to the extent that some people say — and I really pay attention to this, because language matters — that if it doesn't earn points, it's worthless (Librarian).

This obviously has implications for institutions' prospective support of any publisher *not* on this list, for example via a collective funding model. It is harder to encourage support for other publishing models, or to advocate for universities supporting publishing models that break with conventional systems of prestige, in a context where an academic will be concretely scored by their publishing venue. In this context, the ongoing project by OPERAS Polish National Node has been to draft a set of alternative principles for the evaluation of publishers, including ethical publishing standards. However, at present the dominance of the points system is a significant barrier to the possibility of a collective funding model in Poland.

Whilst Polish institutions may not be interested in supporting foreign publishers simply to publish books, both our publisher interviewees suggested that a collective funding approach or similar international model might work to support the translation of some Polish works into English or other languages. International recognition, 'visibility

"Another challenge relates to the politics of publisher prestige. Of course, this is an issue to be found throughout the academic system, but is perhaps even more relevant in a Polish context"

and reach' (Poland Expert 1) is a big concern for Polish university publishers and the authors they serve.

As noted above, the points system remains a significant barrier to the collective funding model in a Polish context. Our librarian put it frankly: 'no one would agree to spend it on a publisher not on the list. I mean… maybe someone would, but it would be hard. The author would have to be really determined to go that route' (Poland Library 1). Secondarily, there may be questions over the decision-making processes regarding which books were ultimately published, as university presses do not necessarily have the same freedom to reject manuscripts as in other countries, given their primary mission to serve their institutions' own authors (Poland Library 1).

Alleviation

In a Polish context, one route towards the alleviation of challenges in engaging with collective funding models for books is wider advocacy around the relevance of OA books themselves, as well as changes in how academics are rewarded/scored for their publishing activities.

There are also positive lessons to be learned from the OA journals landscape in Poland. Interviewees agreed that the OA landscape for journals is 'at a relatively high level —though technological and infrastructural solutions vary — they have been publishing their content in open access in some form for years' (Poland Expert 1). Initially some publishers were resistant to OA for financial reasons but now are generally more concerned with visibility and recognition and accept OA as a norm: 'visibility became the new currency, meaning the use of publications reflected in various metrics' (Poland Library 1). Most journals in Poland are now Diamond OA, but books lag behind.

Interviewees did note that there could be possibilities for advancing OA book publishing in a Polish context:

I think the time for books has now arrived […] now we're all used to articles being accessible. In most cases. We estimate — looking at our databases — it's about 50, 60, even 70% of recent publications that are open. So I think it's time for books (Poland Library 1).

Librarians are likely to be key to building further support for OA books: one of our interviewees noted that they play a large role in the acceptance of OA in Poland, including the education of authors in rights retention and licensing (Librarian). OA awareness is high (Poland Publisher 2).

There is a clear need for further funding for OA Books. With most scholarly books in Poland being published by university publishers, OA books are largely funded from an institution's own budget, with these funds themselves ultimately coming from the Polish government (although some authors may also have grant funds to use). One publisher noted that funding via this system often seems to exclude publishing houses themselves, observing, 'everything now

"A collective funding approach or similar international model might work to support the translation of some Polish works into English or other languages"

seems to go around the publishers — or ignores them' regretting the lack of a 'defined funding channel for publishers to release books open' (Poland Publisher 2). Our expert also felt that funding remained a significant barrier to OA book publication, and thus, Green OA via a university repository is the dominant route (Poland Expert 1).

Reflections

Despite some significant barriers and unique challenges in a Polish context, a locally relevant form of collective funding models may have a future in Poland, as even the government has signalled that the time has come for the points system to be re-evaluated. Books do not receive the financial support for OA that journals do, and publishers may feel excluded from the OA financing model in its present form. Outreach at publisher and library conferences was recommended as critically important, especially given that librarians have been instrumental in the success of the OA movement so far. As our expert said, 'Poland is actually quite advanced in terms of openness, but most of the progress has been driven by individual institutions rather than government support'. We would therefore advise that collective funding schemes seek collaboration as a matter of priority, and that significant outreach work is needed to understand the needs, aims and unique context that Polish librarians and publishers are presently operating in. The suggestion of collaboration for translation is a promising one, given the significance of the Polish language for university presses and the demand for international visibility and reach. In the meantime, the OPERAS-PL node's work can be followed at operas.pl.

> "Outreach at publisher and library conferences was recommended as critically important, especially given that librarians have been instrumental in the success of the OA movement so far"

Sweden

In Sweden we interviewed three librarians at quite different institutions. These were:

- Swedish Library 1 (established late 19th C.), a large public research university divided into faculties of law, humanities, social sciences and natural sciences.
- Swedish Library 2 (founded 17th C.). A very large institution, with research strengths including health, technology, science and sustainability.
- Swedish Library 3 (founded early 19th C.), a research-led medical institution.

None of these institutions is a current OBC member.

Librarians mentioned support for a range of OA initiatives (Table 6), although it is notable that no book publishers were mentioned. Multiple transformative agreements were also supported. Some subscriptions were managed through Bibsam, the national library consortium. Strikingly, Swedish Library 2 offers a theoretically unlimited BPC fund for its authors. This is unusual. As the librarian

explained, this initiative came from the Humanities faculty, who argued that high spending on articles should be extended to books. The University also utilises some hybrid deals, but if needed 'all publication costs are covered. And if it is a book, [...] as long as you publish a book, open access, the costs are covered' (Swedish Library 2). One book can cost thousands of pounds, though our interviewee pointed out that 'one author doesn't publish five of those a year, so it fair to some extent'. This is a large expenditure, and as our interviewee noted, limited to the university's own authors. Swedish Library 1 has a fully OA press which is BPC-funded.

Table 6: Initiatives named for support by Swedish librarians		
Other publishers (including journals and multipublishers)	**Infrastructure providers**	**Other**
SciPost	SCOSS	Sherpa Romeo (now known as Jisc Open Policy Finder)
Open Library of Humanities	DOAJ	OSF (Open Science Framework)
	DOAB	
	OAPEN	
	ROAR	

Policies informing support

Sweden does have a range of OA policies addressing both articles and books at national, local and funder level. As one librarian put it,

In Sweden, we have a lot of national policies for open access both for articles, some for books. We have an open science policy at Swedish Library 1 that recommends that we publish both articles [and] some books in open access [...] Many funders mandate that when you get grants from the funder, you need to publish both articles and monographs in open access, but then it comes with money within the grant for open access books as well (Swedish Library 1).

This seems to point towards a landscape where OA for books will increasingly become the norm, though of course the models could be various, and funder mandates will only apply to a limited range of research. The strategies and action plan of the Bibsam consortium were mentioned as factors affecting decision-making at Swedish Library 2, as our interviewee was a member of the steering committee. As noted, these factors include moving away from transformative agreements towards Diamond and membership models for OA. Swedish Library 3 did not have any formal internal policies, but informal criteria for support.

Criteria and priorities for support

The priorities Swedish librarians mentioned were in some ways quite diverse. Swedish Library 1 told us that they are very much guided by their researchers, as was the case with some of the previous librarians. SciPost and the Open Library of Humanities were given as examples of support prompted by academics. However, they are

also concerned to benefit the wider scholarly ecosystem, noting a 'need to believe that if we invest money' in an initiative, it 'will make a change for the future for the scholarly communication system'. Likewise Swedish Library 2 stated, 'we only want to fund the journals [...] where the funding actually makes a positive difference' (Swedish Library 2). This is quite hopeful for initiatives like the OBC. On the prospect of supporting, the questions librarians asked were quite high-level:

Of course the most relevant is how you can contribute to the change for the future, how sustainable it will be. What will it take to address the question about the open access monograph for the future, what will happen if more and more [libraries] are joining your initiative and what will that lead to. I think it's [...] most important [...] that we can believe in this initiative to change the market for the future (Swedish Library 1).

Conversely, Swedish Library 2 told us that in financing OA for their own researchers' books, their criteria are quite straightforward, relating mainly to open licenses. They have no formal criteria for funding collective models yet, and decisions on memberships have been 'more of a financial decision' than anything else. Our interviewee told us that more work needs to be done on defining criteria, including for Diamond models and journals. This librarian also felt that national publishers and systems were perhaps better placed to serve Swedish institutions than international ones, noting:

I think that it's easier to experiment and to find the right system if you start in the Swedish market, so I think it's good to do that. Your situation [in the UK] is very different because the national market is the international market [...] there [are] big publishers in the US as well where lots of your researchers at your universities publish but the national market is very important [here] (Swedish Library 2).

Our interviewee at Swedish Library 3 also thought that Swedish universities were likely to start or return to more of their own presses, and that a Swedish national platform or collective model was likely. We discussed whether there would be room for an organisation like the OBC to collaborate with a Swedish national initiative, either with one offering membership in the other as part of a package, or in some other administrative and labour-sharing agreement. Other priorities and concerns mentioned echoed some of those we have seen in other contexts, including

- Transparency, with regard to issues like ownership and financing.
- Community governance and the ability of librarians and other stakeholders to be fairly included.
- Persistent and sustainable technology, referring also to the software that the organisation itself is running on.
- Publishing and quality standards for books.

Challenges to supporting collective funding models

Once again, budget constraints and the time needed to research, compare and contrast different initiatives were raised as barriers to support (Swedish Library 1). Funding OA books was perceived as

"I think it's [...] most important [...] that we can believe in this initiative to change the market for the future"

more complicated than transformative agreements, in which 'you can swap from paying for reading to swap to pay for publishing' with a reasonably simple contract (Swedish Library 1). For a university such as Swedish Library 2, which apportions a large amount of money to funding BPCs, one key barrier is simply the perception that at present, 'it's not reasonable that we should both collectively fund and total fund [our own researchers]', particularly for an institution with a high publication output. However, as the OA landscape moves away from paying to publish, this might change. For a science-focused institute like Swedish Library 3, books in general were considered less relevant than articles and other outputs. Our interviewee also pointed out that, as a relatively small institution, seeing that an initiative is currently supported by larger and national libraries, 'then we think, oh, it's not for us, we're too small' (Swedish Library 3). This is not actually a barrier to support – the OBC has supporter members of all types and a tiered pricing system – so much as a potential miscommunication of which we must be aware.

In general, though, our interviewees were quite positive about the OBC model. Swedish Library 1 found us 'very much aligned' with their priorities, whilst Swedish Library 2 compared our easy and straightforward payment system to the administrative work Bibsam does on institutions' behalf, compiling payments to various initiatives into one package 'instead of having to get 50 invoices and calling and changing and messing with it'. We also discussed the importance of including librarians as stakeholder voices in OA developments, which our governance structure reflects. The caveat here is that as a relatively new organisation, OBC does not have the same long-established credibility as a government organisation like Bibsam for Swedish libraries.

Alleviation

In many ways, the primary alleviation of barriers to supporting collective funding models in Sweden seems to be grounded in outreach, building on reputation and credibility, and clearly communicating offers to stakeholders. The librarians we spoke to were enthusiastic about what the OBC could potentially offer and become, and also how we might work in collaboration with national publishing platforms and initiatives. For some librarians, it might be easiest to support us through Bibsam (Swedish Library 3), whilst for others, a primary consideration is that we evidence our rigorous standards for publisher and infrastructure provider members, 'so that it feels reasonable to trust you to make the decisions' in the same way Bibsam is already trusted. (Swedish Library 2). Our interviewee's suggestion that the OBC work collaboratively with recognised national platforms to share administration or membership models could also be considered by other initiatives looking to expand into the country, particularly as national publishing seems to be a priority. But overall, our aims seemed much aligned with our interviewees. As one advised us,

"In general [...] our interviewees were quite positive about the OBC model. Swedish Library 1 found us 'very much aligned' with their priorities, whilst Swedish Library 2 compared our easy and straightforward payment system to the administrative work Bibsam does on institutions' behalf"

it's mostly communication [that is needed] and a good strategic plan so you can show what you have done within Open Book Collective and what has changed with the work you are doing. [...] You really need to have this as the selling point, that this will change, will contribute to change this scholarly publishing system (Swedish Library 1).

Reflections

Of the countries we have explored, Sweden in some ways presented the fewest practical barriers to supporting a collective funding model. Of course, money and time are issues everywhere, but some Swedish institutions are already investing a great deal of money in OA, and given that the Bibsam strategy entails moving away from transformative agreements and supporting alternative models, it seems this is an opportune national market for collective funding initiatives. To gain support from libraries, it seems there are two strands to consider: firstly, outreach, clearly communicating the value, options and membership criteria of initiatives both to Swedish institutions and the scholarly communication system at large; and secondly, ensuring ease and relevance both/either by enabling membership through Bibsam, and/or by entering agreements with Swedish publishers, platforms and other initiatives, including those using the national language.

"Given that the Bibsam strategy entails moving away from transformative agreements and supporting alternative models, it seems this is an opportune national market for collective funding initiatives"

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Throughout this report, we have seen several recurring themes across multiple contexts, and some issues quite unique to particular national and institutional contexts. At the highest level, most librarians with a commitment to OA are caught in tension between an ethical commitment to advance the scholarly commons on one hand, and the immediate practical and research needs of their specific institutions on the other. Ideally, these would not be in conflict; but in a landscape of ever-reducing budgets and increasing conservatism with regard to institutional spending, they too often are. Providing librarians with data to evidence the relevance and usage of an OA initiative's content to their institution can certainly alleviate this challenge at an immediate practical level – to speak the language of the acquisitions department, as our interviewee at Finnish Library 2 put it. But it does not address the broader conflict at the heart of the problem, or the divide between the camps that German Library 1 noted can arise between subject librarians with an acquisitions focus and librarians more committed to OA and the advancement of the scholarly commons. An information budget, something akin to the 2.5% percent commitment we discussed in the literature review, in which institutions set apart a percentage of their budget specifically for the support of OA infrastructure and the scholarly commons without cutting into the budget for acquisition, would undoubtedly go some way to relieving this in some circumstances, but this might be administratively difficult in some contexts. It would also have to be quite separate from the funds for transformative agreements which we saw eat up so much of the budget for OA for librarians in the Netherlands and Finland, both of which have OA policy developed at a high level.

We should not underestimate the strength of the commitment many librarians hold for an equitable, sustainable OA future. Though librarians are pragmatically concerned with how to demonstrate the value of their OA expenditure to institutions, no interviewee brought up the issue of so-called 'free riders' as a problem. In some cases, researchers themselves are also increasingly invested, as we saw with the Dutch Call to Commitment, though other librarians felt that understanding of OA and its variations was lagging amongst academics. Many of the interviewees we spoke to found us very much 'aligned' (Swedish Library 1) in our perspectives, and much of what they stated they would want from a collective funding initiative (publisher standards, streamlined workflow, transparency) are in fact already part of our mission. Clearly, what is missing here is outreach, specifically targeted outreach, and clear communication of both our offer to institutions and our broader vision for an

equitable OA landscape. Some librarians recommended informally that we attend more library conferences in their countries, which are considered key discussion points for the community.

National languages and nationally relevant publishing were key concerns for interviewees across the data. There was a perception that a lot of collective funding models are ultimately UK/US centric, and that librarians in Europe are enthusiastic to support publishers and initiatives of local and national relevance. This may also be easier to justify to budget holders, particularly when a university is committing public money. [Bibliodiversity](#) with regard to languages, publishers and subject matter should therefore be a key consideration for collective funding initiatives, as should collaboration with local initiatives already in place. Enabling support through national consortia was strongly recommended where available.

Formal policies played a minor role if any in most of the decisions librarians took when it came to supporting OA initiatives. This suggests that whilst policy should not be neglected, it should not be the first priority or point for collective funding initiatives to engage with. Informal priorities, including reputation and word of mouth, the influence of faculty and the relevance of the initiative to the institution were much bigger factors overall. The influence of academics and the related need to educate academics on OA issues came through strongly. We should not underestimate the ability of informal networking to result in concrete influence – as a delegate at the [OBC's first workshop in Cape Town](#) put it, policy often follows practice: it seems this remains true in quite diverse contexts. This is the case even at institutions that do have both OA policies and national policies in operation.

Concrete recommendations for collective funding initiatives to consider

- Thorough metadata, usage statistics, affiliated authors and institutional relevance are important, but not sufficient. Librarians do typically need to make a budgetary case to support a collective funding model; but qualitative stories are important here too. The importance of an initiative to developing the scholarly commons, supporting bibliodiversity, and the ethics and sustainability of its operations are arguments that can help librarians make a case, particularly if their university has or plans an information budget separate to acquisitions.
- The corporate buyout of OA initiatives has damaged trust in the OA sphere. Collective funding models have work to do to rebuild this credibility and demonstrate their difference, and transparency regarding funding and operations is key. The OBC chose to incorporate as a charity to protect against this: this should be a key outreach point.

"Formal policies played a minor role if any in most of the decisions librarians took when it came to supporting OA initiatives. This suggests that whilst policy should not be neglected, it should not be the first priority or point for collective funding initiatives to engage with"

- For collective funding models that offer a variety of packages, the organisation must work to build a reputation as a marker of quality and standards. This can be achieved by promoting rigorous membership criteria in a way that is easy, simple and fast for librarians to understand.
- European libraries may increasingly be less likely to support initiatives that are US- and UK-centric. Diversify portfolios and memberships to include locally relevant publishers, subject matters and languages.
- Enable membership through national consortia, such as Couperin, Bibsam or FinElib. This not only contributes to local credibility and makes it easier for librarians to argue for support from budget holders, but makes the workflow much easier for time-strapped librarians. The OBC can currently be supported through the Jisc subscriptions manager in the UK, as well as via IReL in the Republic of Ireland, and we are looking to expand similar consortial engagements elsewhere.
- Where this is not possible, workflows and payment processes should be as simple and streamlined as possible. This includes the contract: complex contracts and negotiations were cited as a barrier to participation everywhere.
- Engage faculty, too often a neglected stakeholder in the transition to an equitable OA landscape. Librarians in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden told us that faculty plays a significant role in their choice of initiatives to support. The Open Book Collective is presently developing a strand of outreach to researchers at all stages of their academic careers, including education and support on OA book publishing options, contracts, and the possibilities of financing beyond BPCs.
- Engage with national publishers who work in their own language. Local relevance and supporting national publishing were key concerns for librarians across the countries we interviewed. Consider shared administrative agreements or membership models that build on the structures already in place in local contexts.

"There is still work to be done on education and attitude change at some institutions, where OA books may still be considered less credible or of a lower standard"

That said, some contexts clearly present unique challenges. The points system of reward for working with selected publishers in Poland is one such. In these cases, we recommend that collective funding initiatives be open to creative forms of collaboration – our interviewees' suggestion of a translation initiative was one. Finally, there is still work to be done on education and attitude change at some institutions, where OA books may still be considered less credible or of a lower standard. Part of this can be addressed through author outreach; more can be accomplished at library and other relevant community conferences, where high publication standards and membership criteria can be evidenced.

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Appendix 1: Resources on supporting and assessing open access initiatives

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Appendix 2: List of librarian roles

The librarians we interviewed worked in a variety of roles within their institutions. To further contextualise the data without identifying participants, these roles are listed below:

- Curator
- Deputy Head of Department
- Deputy Head of Information Services
- Faculty Liaison
- Head of Publication and Research Support
- Head of Library
- Head of Library Services
- Head of Open Science
- Information Specialist
- Librarian
- Library Director
- Library Director
- Open Access and Scholarly Communication Specialist.
- Open Science Project Manager
- Open Science Team Librarian
- Project Manager
- Project Manager
- Research Support