Straive™
Connecting the dots

Key Aspects of Open Access

Types of OA business model

OA business models, originally predicated primarily on Article Processing Charges (APCs) have proliferated in recent years. The SPA-OPS project[1] funded by the Wellcome Trust introduced 27 models in 2020, and the list has subsequently expanded to nearly 40 options as publishers have innovated with new models. At the ISMTE Global Virtual Event in October 2021, Tasha Mellins-Cohen introduced her seven-part classification of these models, which she has granted us permission to reproduce (Figure 1).

The original OA model, the APC, is an example of **Transactional** models. These models share two common traits: costs are shifted to research producers, and they require investments in infrastructure and administrative oversight.

Originally used to bundle reading and publishing spend, **Bundled** models have recently expanded to incorporate pure publish arrangements. Working at scale and leveraging well-established publisher sales routes, these models repurpose existing spending.

Choreographed Shift models rely on cooperation across libraries and consortia, but beyond this trait they vary widely. Subscribe to Open is probably the best-known of these models.

Non-library Funding models like institutional support are common in some fields, with differences depending on the actor providing the funding and on the duration for which funding is guaranteed.

What Mellins-Cohen badges as **Alternative OA** models offer either full and immediate OA to a version that is not the publisher's version of record, or embargoed OA to the version of record. Options such as author self-archiving fall under this heading.

The final two classifications – **Products and Licensing** and **Cost-shifting** – do not provide a direct route for converting subscription products to OA, but instead help make OA more achievable in other ways.
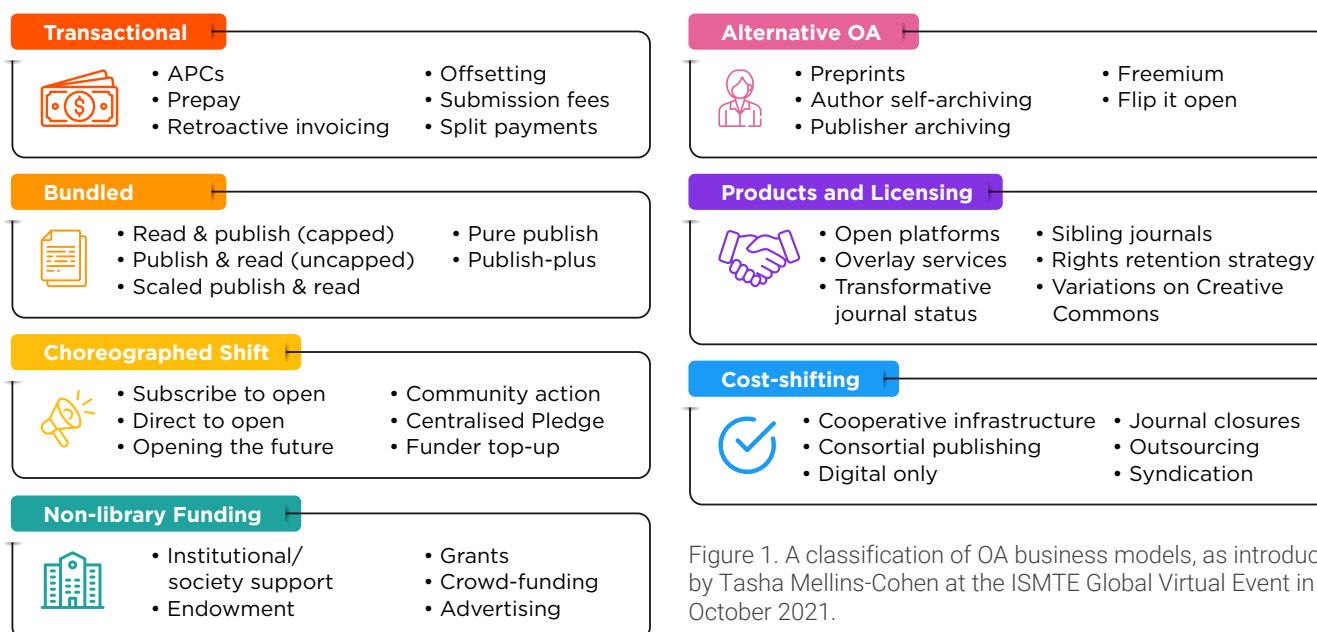
Transactional
- APCs
- Prepay
- Retroactive invoicing
- Offsetting
- Submission fees
- Split payments

Bundled
- Read & publish (capped)
- Publish & read (uncapped)
- Scaled publish & read
- Pure publish
- Publish-plus

Choreographed Shift
- Subscribe to open
- Direct to open
- Opening the future
- Community action
- Centralised Pledge
- Funder top-up

Non-library Funding
- Institutional/ society support
- Endowment
- Grants
- Crowd-funding
- Advertising

Alternative OA
- Preprints
- Author self-archiving
- Publisher archiving
- Freemium
- Flip it open

Products and Licensing
- Open platforms
- Overlay services
- Transformative journal status
- Sibling journals
- Rights retention strategy
- Variations on Creative Commons

Cost-shifting
- Cooperative infrastructure
- Consortial publishing
- Digital only
- Journal closures
- Outsourcing
- Syndication

Figure 1. A classification of OA business models, as introduced by Tasha Mellins-Cohen at the ISMTE Global Virtual Event in October 2021.

[1] Wise, A; Estelle, L (2020): Society Publishers Accelerating Open access and Plan S (SPA-OPS) project. Wellcome Trust. Collection. https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.c.4561397.v3

Evaluating models using the 3S criteria

Not every OA model is suitable for every publisher, and models therefore need to be assessed within the context of each business. The **Simple, Scalable, Sustainable** "3S" model is a good way to deliver that assessment.

Simple
OA models exist on a spectrum from very simple to highly complex. When selecting a model to suit your business, choose one which you find simple to communicate, to implement, and to manage.

For communication, think of the 'elevator pitch': a short sentence describing the model in a way that anyone should be able to understand. For example, "If all existing subscribers renew, we will make the journal OA for the year" describes the Subscribe to Open model. Simple messaging makes it easier to get internal buy-in to introduce the model, easier to market to libraries and consortia, and easier to engage with authors.

Next comes implementation. In a lot of cases, new OA models are introduced on top of existing mechanisms – think of publishers who implement Read and Publish options while continuing to offer subscriptions and APCs. More models means more complexity, but this can be mitigated by selecting models that complement each other.

Finally, once a model has been selected and implemented it must be managed without creating unnecessary disruption. A model that requires a total rebuild of editorial or production workflows is less desirable than one which can be slotted in with only minimal changes.

Scalable
Scalability is fundamentally about growth within the context of a specific business. To determine whether a model can scale within your business, ask yourself the following questions:

• Who are your authors and where are they based?
• Do you operate within disciplines where authors and funders have an interest in or mandates for OA?
• Which consortia and institutions subscribe to your journals, and what OA policies do they have in place?
• Finally, do you have the staff to sell and implement a new model?

Sustainable
Sustainability is more than a question of finances. Yes, a sustainable model covers direct and indirect costs, but sustainable models also offer a plan for long-term operation and preservation, and ensure that publishing is inclusive (that is, all authors are able to publish if their work meets quality standards, regardless of funding status).

Metadata Matters

Detailed information about institutional activity is essential for any OA model. We recommend mapping authors and research funders to the Research Organisation Registry (ror.org) or to another unique institutional identifier such as Ringgold. You should map your subscribers and publication funders (institutions who have paid APCs) the same way.

Author and research funder information is – or should – all be in your article metadata, while subscriber and publication funder information is in your commercial records.

A detailed data strategy including data structure, migration and pipelines for capture, normalization and storage needs to be thought through. Straive is one of the market leader in unstructured data management.

Implementing new OA models

We all know that no matter how well we plan, launching a new OA business model will be fraught with challenges. You can reduce the risks by keeping things simple: communicate, make the change, and check how it's going.

Communicate

There are concentric circles of communication when it comes to implementing a new OA model (Figure 2). The first people are those inside your own organisation. The decision makers should already know about the model, but they need to be kept informed about the details of workflow changes and so on. Other staff in many different areas, from editorial and production teams to sales and communications, need to be informed of the decision and consulted about how best to implement the new model to minimise disruption and maximise up-take.

With your team on board, start communicating beyond your organisation, with editors, the sales agents who represent you, technology suppliers who may need to update their systems, etc. From here, extend your reach further to your customer groups – consortia, institutions, and, critically, authors. Create and maintain a short document describing the essential aspects of your model and your goals, linked to a set of frequently asked questions.

Figure 2.
Circles of communication

Change

After your staff and associates are up to speed, it's time to update the systems that will be used in implementing the model. That might be things you already have, like your peer review system or sales database, or new software like the OA Switchboard. Remember to document these changes and make sure that all relevant staff know of them, as well as of any changes they need to make to their day-to-day work.

Check

New models need careful monitoring on a regular basis, with reports back to participating institutions and funders so they can see the benefits of your model. Be prepared to iterate, taking lessons you learn during the check phase back into your next rounds of communication, and so on.

Global policy reach

The reason for the proliferation of new OA models is a parallel proliferation of increasingly stringent OA policies created by funders and institutions. ROARMAP, the Registry of Open Access Repository Mandates and Policies (roarmap.eprints.org/), offers an excellent tool to visualise the spread of such policies. As of October 2021, for example, ROARMAP had records of almost 800 OA policies, of which 638 related to research organisations (institutions) or their departments, 79 were funder policies, and 54 cut across funders and research organisations (Figure 3).

It is important to remember that while Europe is the source of a plurality of OA policies and mandates, including Plan S, the European perspective is not shared globally. ROARMAP lists 419 OA policies where OA to the version of record is "recommended" or "permitted" as an alternative to Green self-archiving. That is, under these policies making the version of record OA is a secondary goal compared with depositing a copy of the article in an institutional or subject repository. Of these policies only six require CC BY and do not permit an embargo, and would therefore meet the high bar set by Plan S.

Figure 3.
The global Open Access policy landscape

Drivers of OA

As described in the section titled Global policy reach, funders and institutions are increasingly focused on ensuring their research is made openly available. There are two fundamental drivers to these policies: first, a belief that OA will increase the returns on or impact of their investment in research, and second the perception of OA as a moral good. The most cited benefits of OA tend to fall within the category of increased impact:

- Researchers, their institutions, and their research funders benefit from the increased reach of OA content compared with material behind a paywall, which in turn provides various forms of recognition (usage, citations, social media activity)
- Researchers also benefit from the opportunity to identify new collaborators.
- The research process itself benefits from openly accessible, reusable research, with data mining tools delivering insights from the full scholarly corpus that simply could not be uncovered by a human reader.
- It can also be argued that OA helps to increase the transparency and reproducibility of research, when combined with other open scholarship practices.

There is also a hope that OA may also help mitigate the problems of subscription pricing rising faster than library budgets. Unfortunately, experience to date suggests that while the number of published articles continues to grow and we continue to operate in a mixed model, subscription-plus-open economy, the hoped-for cost savings are unlikely to materialise.

For the many institutions facing financial constraints, one route to increasing the proportion of their researchers' outputs that are made OA is to require researchers to deposit their accepted manuscripts in an institutional repository. To maximise the discoverability and usefulness of their repositories, JISC encourages institutions to register their repositories with OpenDOAR (v2.sherpa.ac.uk/opendoar/), provide standards-compliant metadata, and track usage.

What this means for publishers

Authors as your primary customer
An interesting effect of OA has been to shift researchers into a more typically commercial "customer" role, particularly when the publisher relies on a transactional OA business model like the APC. This change in the dynamics between researchers, publishers, and institutional librarians has led to a new focus on authors from publishers' marketing and sales teams, as well as a drive to improve authors' experience of publishing operations.

Sales and marketing
In the traditional model, marketing would be targeted at institutional and consortia librarians, encompassing annual product catalogues, regular attendance at library events, and site visits by publisher or agent sales teams. Editorial teams would typically run submissions campaigns infrequently, and these were often reliant on Editors' personal networks. Today, most publishers have active author marketing teams producing new content on a regular basis. Born-OA publishers undertake regular submission drives that reach a wider audience, with researchers frequently invited to contribute work to discipline-specific special issues. Larger publishers, on the other hand, place more emphasis on researcher education, with the aim of fostering brand loyalty by reciprocal services that enable researchers to publish more readily and often.

Managing Efficient Peer Review Process

A leading open access publisher was experiencing significant rise in submissions and could not scale up internally to support this growth. Creating tremendous positive business and reputational impact for the client, Straive was able to provide:

- Flexibility to support rapid volume growth
- Faster review process through reviewer search
- Improved level of service with a team of SMEs

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Publishing operations

The drive for OA and associated repositioning of authors as customers has created a new focus on top-notch customer services from pre-submission through to post-publication. Editorially, publishers have invested in Journal Editorial Office (JEO) teams, whether in-house or provided by a partner like Straive. As referenced in our earlier report on peer review, authors' experience of publishing is a complex and often lengthy one, and many express their frustration on social media. Having a customer-focused, responsive JEO can help, both by reducing the time spent in peer review and by keeping authors informed throughout the process.

From acceptance, the standardization and automation of production has created a faster turnaround as well as improved user experience, both benefits for researchers who no longer need to wait for months or even years for their work to be published.

And finally, growth in the number of social media professionals has allowed publishers to more effectively promote every article, helping authors increase the reach and potential impact of their work – particularly when it is OA.

About Straive (formerly SPi Global)

Straive is a market-leading content technology enterprise that provides data services, subject matter expertise (SME), and technology solutions to multiple domains, such as research content, eLearning/EdTech, and data/information providers. With a client base scoping 30 countries worldwide, Straive's multi-geographical resource pool is strategically located in eight countries - the Philippines, India, the United States, China, Nicaragua, Vietnam, the United Kingdom, and Singapore, where the company is headquartered.

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