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# THE OPEN ISSUE

**TXT**  
MAGAZINE



**TXT**  
MAGAZINE

TXT: The Open Issue



# TXT

## The Open Issue

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# Note from the Editors

Over the winter of 2021, *open* was the word on everyone's lips, usually as part of a question – *How long will everything be able to stay open? Are we going into another lockdown? Will we have to work remotely?* As we watched the headlines for new regulations and wore our masks around the university corridors, the COVID-19 pandemic forced us all to reconsider the openness we had once so casually taken for granted.

However, the flipside of the coin also became apparent. Adapting to the necessary regulations led to creative digital solutions that had once seemed impossible, such as hybrid classrooms. Once the time came to discuss possible themes for the new issue of TXT, it was exactly this question that interested us most: what *openness* can mean in our divided, digital, and dizzyingly fast-changing world.

With *The Open Issue*, we made the decision to leave the prompt for the call for papers as *open* as possible. Driven by curiosity, we wanted to see just how many perspectives we could gather on the connection between text and *openness*, and we were not disappointed. From the potential of Open Access to cultural exchange, the digitization of incunabula to podcasting, we received a treasure trove of contributions that we are proud to present in the 2022 edition of TXT Magazine.

Now more than ever is the time to celebrate *openness*. Sharing ideas, research, and knowledge across boundaries, taking advantage of digital technologies, and working together as a (global) community are essential as we move forward into a somewhat uncertain future. This issue brings together contributions from countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Greece, Iran, Canada, and Mexico. It explores forms of knowledge creation and communication beyond the scholarly article, through both visual and written art. These are also texts. This is also *openness*.

*The Open Issue* is the result of hard work and collaboration. There would be no journal without the efforts of our editorial team, our faculty supervisor Fleur Praal, our sponsors at Eleven, and of course the authors and creators. We would like to offer our thanks everyone involved for their contributions to this edition of TXT. We are excited and proud to present *The Open Issue* to you, our reader, both in print and digitally, wherever you may be.

Kunmi Shonubi & Hanna Olters  
*Co-Editors-in-Chief*



*Cuba*

Lukas Paul

2022

Digital collage

Lukas Paul (1997) is a visual artist from Albuquerque, New Mexico with a focus on Digital Collage, Music Production and Film making. He currently plies with trade with EA Sports Vancouver working on promotional gameplay stills for the FIFA franchise.



# Hurdles on the European Road to Accessibility

*Aafje Baarslag*

Aafje is an alumna of the MA program *Book and Digital Media Studies* (2020-2021), where she focused on heritage and book history. She currently works as a coordinator for the Dutch Publishers Organization, where one of her tasks is to organize workshops for Dutch publishers on the requirements for accessible media. In her free time, she reads horror and fantasy books and also writes her own stories.

In the European Union, around 80 million people deal with some kind of disability (European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion). Disability should not stop people from being able to participate and grow in the digital world. As such, in 2019 the EU proposed the *European Accessibility Act* ('EAA'), which "aims to improve the functioning of the internal market for accessible products and services, by removing barriers created by divergent rules in Member States" (European Commission, *European Accessibility Act*). Under this Act, the most important pieces of media have been considered, such as computers, ATMs, smartphones, audio-visual media, public transport, banking, and e-books, the latter being the main subject of this essay. Of the various mediums discussed in the Act, e-books in particular are to be made accessible to people with a visual impairment or cognitive disability that hinders them from reading, be it through blindness, dyslexia or anything else. In Europe, this is a group of more than 30 million people.

As provided in the Act, companies are expected to have the groundwork for legislation at the ready by June 28, 2022, and full legislation ready to go into effect by June 28, 2025. Eventually, businesses will hopefully be able to serve a complete clientele with the help of the EAA. By implementing these requirements, businesses should be able to serve a market in which nobody is excluded, and people with a disability are able to consume the same media as everyone else and engage with everything the digital world has to offer.

In many cases, steps towards an accessible future have already been taken. As I write this text, Microsoft Word automatically shows me if the document is well-structured according to general guidelines. Even website-building platforms like WordPress will tell if an article on the website would be accessible to every user. However, these are large companies, with many employees and an international market presence. In the publishing world, this matter is slightly different. Many publishing houses are not large, nor do they have the luxury of being able to hire external parties to 'fix the accessibility question'.

Every country will have a different path laid out before it to implement the regulations, just like the changes will be more substantial for one

company than the other. The purpose of this essay, therefore, is to give a general overview of the challenges that the book industry is currently facing at the dawn of the new regulations, focusing primarily on the examples happening within the Netherlands. Here, there is still much to be done to form the actual groundwork needed to implement the legislation. With this, it should of course be mentioned that this essay can only describe a small part of the requested implementations, and it is not only the Netherlands that deals with these issues, but every EU member state.

## Guidelines

Before the hurdles can be looked at, it is important to know what the minimum requirements of the EAA are that would suffice for a business to comply with the given expectations. In general, the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines* (WCAG) – a series of guidelines created by the *Web Accessibility Initiative* (WAI) of the *World Wide Web Consortium* (W3C) – have become the international standard to be used in the process of providing accessible content. The guidelines of WCAG 2.1 are divided into four categories: *perceivable*, *operable*, *understandable*, and *robust*. By the length of the guidelines, it is impossible to discuss these in full, and should instead be viewed on the website of W3C (W3C, 2018). More important is the structure of WCAG 2.1, which is ordered from category A to AAA. The more As a business collects, the more accessible their content is. To give an example: under the category *understandable* falls guideline 3.1: *readable*. In order to qualify for an A level, the content needs to be written in a natural language that a web page can be programmed in; an AA level requires that each passage or phrase can be programmatically determined, with the exceptions of some specific words; and finally, an AAA level requires a mechanism to be used to find meanings of unusual words, being able to identify abbreviations, a version of the text readable for a lower secondary education level, and a way of identifying specific pronunciation of words (W3C). Right now, content producers are only required to have accessibility up to level AA. While AAA would be ideal, it is in some cases



impossible to provide. In cases where the text is unchangeable, as is the case with books, not every AAA level is manageable. Turning the e-book of a heavy novel back into a simpler use of language would after all change the complete story.

In the case of publishers, most adaptation is needed in web shops and, especially, e-books. In general, a recommended format has already been established: EPUB. This format shares values with open web technology that is used to build websites (like HTML, CSS and XML), and because of that, is easy to produce and maintain (Audrain et al. 3). However, just using an accessible format does not mean that an e-book is completely accessible itself. Hardware used to read e-books must be able to support all necessary functions, like text-to-speech. But accessibility goes beyond the physicality of the object and already starts with the hidden information of the product: the metadata.

## Metadata

Metadata is of high importance when it comes to making a work findable. In the case of a standard book, the metadata will tell the buyer about aspects such as themes and the number of pages. For a visually impaired person, metadata can be of even greater importance. They will need to know if they will be able to read the book in the first place. Is the piece, for example, compatible with their screen reader? By adding *Accessibility Metadata*, the client will be able to know what functions have been added to the text, so that they can buy a title without regretting it later (at least on the technical side).

To ease the implementation of such metadata, Benetech founded the *Accessibility Metadata Project* in 2013. With this project, they wished to bring *Accessibility Metadata* to schema.org, which is the biggest collection of vocabulary, and is used for over 10 million websites and applications (Garrish, 2021). This metadata is crucial within the EAA, for without this data even the most accessible book can still be impossible to find for its target audience. The employment of accessibility data for the

book industry has made good progress, but in many countries, such as the Netherlands, effective metadata information is still not implemented consistently. Internal metadata (standard information provided by the publisher) and/or external metadata (information for the sales by (web-) shops) are in most cases, nonexistent or incomplete, undermining the effectiveness of the scheme.

In list 196 of *Onix* – the software primarily used for book metadata – the codes for accessibility have been implemented (Onix codelists). The list itself also shows the factors publishers would need to keep in mind, for both their *born digital* and *made digital* materials. It asks for reading orders, alternative descriptions, color, audio, dyslexia readability and much more. There are many important things to consider, but at the same time, they are also just that – a lot. And this in itself provides a further problem. At the time of writing – March 2022 – no further clarification has been provided by the EU on the situation surrounding the backlog of e-books. Currently, publishers have a large number of old e-books, most of which are not completely accessible. Should these publishers be required to turn the backlog into an accessible format to be able to keep them for sale, the easier option for them is to get rid of this backlog completely, which would cause a massive loss for every lover of books.

The issue around the backlog of e-books shows that the EAA will need to make certain exceptions in order to function well without unintentionally causing many older titles to be lost in a non-physical form.

## Exceptions and problems

Already exceptions have been made within the EAA itself. To begin with, it does not apply to every type of book. Those that rely on image-heavy content (i.e., art books, comics and graphic novels) are excluded from needing a fully accessible version, as these images cannot be turned into mere image descriptions without losing full purpose (nor is anyone waiting on an in-detail description of *The Night Watch*).

Currently, the following other exemptions have been made by the EAA, to assist businesses. Websites in particular have been given strong exceptions, although these might not be applicable to every institution. Such exceptions are:

- Pre-recorded time-based media published before June 2025
- Office file formats published before June 2025
- Online maps, provided essential information is also given in a different, accessible way
- Third-party content that is not funded, developed or controlled by an organization that has to follow the EAA
- Archive content that won't be updated after June 2025 (Kuik)

The main exception in the EAA relates to micro-businesses. Here, however, a *problem* with the Act can also be found. The EAA is a European law, following European standards. The definition of a micro-business in the eyes of the EU, and in that of the Netherlands have some differences, as the tables below show:

**Table 1** Business categorization according to the EU  
(European Commission, *SME Definition*)

Category	Staff headcount	Turnover	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	<250	<€50 mln	<€43 mln
Small	<50	<€10 mln	<€10 mln
Micro	<10	<€2 mln	<€2 mln

**Table 2** Business categorization according to the Netherlands  
(Kamer van Koophandel)

Category	Staff headcount	Turnover	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	<250	<€40 mln	<€20 mln
Small	<50	<€12 mln	<€6 mln
Micro	<10	<€700.000	<€350.000

When looking at these numbers, it is clear that a micro-business under the Dutch classification is much smaller than the European one. This means that were the EAA to be implemented in its current form, many businesses in the Netherlands would not be required to make their content accessible. As a result, the majority of e-books would still not be required to be fully accessible. Of course, it is allowed for the Dutch government to make these EAA requirements mandatory for any companies that are not classified as micro-business under Dutch law. Chances are that the Dutch government will not take these extra steps, and even if they would, accepting a new law can take years and would leave current *micro*-businesses with little to no time to implement the EAA before 2025.<sup>1</sup>

These are just a small number of inconsistencies and vague notions that can currently be found in EAA. It is an Act that, even now, is still in the stage of negotiation where every party tries to be as prepared as they can.

## Implementation

As the deadline to start the implementation of the EAA approaches quickly, and 2025 also looms closer than some might like, it should be expected that most members of the EU are working on the accessibility of their content. On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, the organization *Inclusive Publishing* published the results of a survey hosted through the *European Inclusive Publishing Forum*, a collaboration network used to support the implementation of the EAA (Inclusive Publishing). In this survey, only 14 out of 27 EU members responded. These 14 however make up for 74% of the European population. The other 13 are speculated not to have replied as a result of communication difficulties, or unwillingness to do so when no important activity is taking place in said country (Inclusive Publishing). What is

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1 This is also being lobbied for Digital Learning Tools, which currently don't have to be accessible and are not mentioned in the EAA at all.

interesting to see is that despite the implementation of the EAA being mandatory for each EU member, many do not have the large support that would be necessary to ensure a smooth transition. Half of the responding countries get government support, half have a stakeholder group that can give advice, and only four countries seem to have an active training programme to educate publishers. Closely related to these responses, three themes have come up that should be given more attention. These are the following:

- *Awareness-raising*: more communication with the publishers is necessary for them to understand their role and responsibility in this process.
- *Training*: more countries wish to have an active program to educate publishers on the best ways to implement the EAA.
- *Clarity over EAA requirements*: as has been shown in this paper, the precise requirements to meet the standards of the EAA are in many cases still unclear, which is concerning as the matter becomes more and more pressing (Inclusive Publishing).

In the Netherlands, such training started in the summer of 2021, as provided by the *Toegankelijk Publiceren aan de Bron* (TPUB2) project. This is a joint project between accessibility foundations and the branch organizations of the general and educational publishers that is hosted through *inclusiefpubliceren.nl*. It serves as a continuation of the original TPUB project from 2018-2019 and now helps publishers by giving educational workshops. As helpful as the workshops given by this project are, they only target the publishers that are members of the branch organizations. These publishers, however, often outsource their production to other companies and these companies are in some cases unfamiliar with what is expected of them. Although education can in no way instruct companies precisely with a step-by-step guide, they are given the general knowledge needed to prepare for the future, and this is crucial for every step in the production of books. Solutions for this problem are being looked at, but it does show where priorities are often placed.

## Conclusion

In a continuously changing society, it is a great improvement that disabled people are finally more included. The implementation of these new laws, however, leaves much to be desired. Expectations are unclear, education is lacking for each step in the chain, and a large number of companies may never have to deal with these new laws. Although some of this seems discouraging, it should not be. The path is there, though overgrown and treacherous it still might seem, and it is now that it should be trodden. The only way to go is forward, to ensure everyone can partake in continuously modernizing society.

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# Open Access Policies and Practices at Leiden University

*Saskia Woutersen-Windhower*  
*Marco de Niet*

Saskia Woutersen-Windhower LL.M. is a Digital Scholarship Librarian at the Centre for Digital Scholarship (CDS) at Leiden University Libraries, and the main contact person for Open Access at Leiden University Libraries. She is a member of the Dutch national working group on Open Access and of the *Knowledge Exchange Open Access Expert Group*. In 2010 she won the *SURFshare Open Access Award*.

Marco de Niet (1962) works at Leiden University Libraries (UBL) as the Research and Education Services Division Manager and he is also Deputy Director. He is responsible for all the services provided by UBL to the Leiden University Faculties and other user groups, on site and online. His key focus is on the development, implementation, and impact of open academic and cultural information services. He is currently also a member of the Supervisory Board of *Europeana*, the European flagship initiative for digital cultural heritage.



Increasing the number of Open Access publications is an important step toward full-scale Open Science practices. New options to publish in Open Access are constantly emerging, with Open Access publishing being promoted more and more by research institutions, governments, academic societies, and commercial publishers who incorporate Open Access in their business models. Likewise, governments in Europe and the Netherlands stimulate Open Access with policies and legislation (Bosman et al. 1-4). A few years ago, funders across Europe joined forces to speed up the process of transformation of scholarly publishing towards Open Access.

Leiden University, which has been supporting its researchers actively for several years now, tops the charts of Dutch universities with the highest level of Open Access publications amongst the entire output of peer reviewed articles. Nevertheless, Open Access publishing requires firm adjustments to the publishing strategy of a scholar. If you are an author or an editor at Leiden University, what are the choices that you are confronted with when trying to make Open Access publishing a reality? How do the University and Leiden University Libraries (UBL) organize support for scholars and editors so they can make the right choices about publication platforms, Open Access types, and proper licenses?

Leiden University Libraries pays special attention to the findability of Open Access publications in its vast academic collections, and to the role of Leiden's Scholarly Publications Repository, in relation to the information services provided by publishers and other repositories. As such, once a publication is available as Open Access, what search and retrieval facilities are available to others who would like to find and access such an article? In this paper, we will address these issues by examining both policies and practices at Leiden University and its faculties.

## **Open Access Policies**

Governments, funders, universities, and other academic institutions worldwide are embracing the notion of Open Science in order to make

publicly funded research available and inclusive for everyone. As Open Access publications are an important contribution to full-scale Open Science practices, policy makers set as a key target that all academic peer reviewed journal articles will become available in Open Access in the short term (for other publication types, such as books, the Open Access ambition is set for a longer term). As Leiden University also supports these goals, it has developed its own Open Access policy, to which all Leiden scholars need to comply. This includes, for instance, the obligation to upload the full-text versions of their articles to the Leiden Repository (“Scholarly Publications Leiden University”). In addition to this policy, a Leiden researcher may also need to comply with other Open Access policies or requirements (for instance, if the research is funded by an external funder). One such requirement may be that the article is published in Open Access immediately at the moment of publication, even though the journal it is published in requires a certain period of restricted access behind a paywall.

As for Leiden University’s policies, the Open Access mandate for PhD theses is already almost 20 years old, whereas the one for peer reviewed articles is more recent. This policy is based on the 2018 sector agreement between the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU, now called ‘Universities of The Netherlands (UNL)’) and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The aim of this sector agreement is to achieve Open Access for all peer reviewed scholarly articles reporting on research paid for through Dutch public funds. That is why, from 2017 onwards, Leiden scholars were required to make a version of their Leiden-affiliated peer reviewed articles available in Open Access via the Scholarly Publications Repository of Leiden University, acknowledging the publisher’s policy. This is called *green Open Access*. In 2020, the Executive Board of the University added Article 25fa of the *Dutch Copyright Act (DCA)*, also known as the *Taverne Amendment*, to the policy (“Artikel 25fa ch. Ia”; Sondervan et al.). This allows scholars to share short academic works within a reasonable period of time, regardless of any restrictive publishers’ guidelines, if their research was funded in whole or in part by the Dutch government. Article 25fa, which is expected to be used by all

Leiden scholars by the Executive Board, entails that, after uploading the published versions of articles, book chapters in edited collections, book reviews, and conference papers in the Leiden Repository, these publications will become available in Open Access after an embargo period of six months after the first publication. In December 2020, the Open Access policy of Leiden University was incorporated into the employment contract of all Leiden scholars.

Leiden scholars who receive funding from national or international research funders, or who have co-authors who need to comply with Open Access policies of their funder or their institution, may also need to acknowledge external Open Access requirements. The Open Access policies of funders may apply not only to peer reviewed articles but also to peer reviewed book chapters and books. The most important funders of Leiden scholars' research are the Dutch Research Council (NWO) including ZonMw, the European Commission, and the European Research Council (ERC). The first two have joined *cOAlition S*, a coalition of science funders, set up with the specific purpose to accelerate the transition to Open Access, which launched *PlanS* in 2018. Its main principle is that “with effect from 2021, all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in Open Access Journals, on Open Access Platforms, or made immediately available through Open Access Repositories without embargo” (“Principles and Implementation”). These different Open Access policies from institutions and funders, sometimes resulting in incompatible requirements, can make it difficult for authors to know how to comply.

In addition to these differing policies, there are also several options for researchers to choose from if they want or need to publish an article as Open Access. The two main routes are designated with the labels *green* and *gold*. If the *green* route, also called *self-archiving*, is chosen, the authors publish a version of their article in a repository, such as the Leiden Repository, which is sent to the publisher for official publication. In contrast, in the *gold* route, the publication is direct Open Access upon

publication on the website of the publisher. Whereas there are no publishing costs for the author involved in the *green* route (although an embargo may be in place), with the *gold* route, an *Article Processing Charge* (APC) is (pre)paid to buy off the immediate availability of the article in Open Access. It could be the case that such publishing costs are covered by sponsors of the journal – for instance, funders, donors, subscribers, or societies. This last model is also called the *diamond* route.

There are two main models of *gold* Open Access: *full Open Access journals* and *hybrid journals*. Hybrid journals are subscription journals that are not Open Access by default, although authors can decide to pay an APC to publish their article as Open Access upon publication. Dutch Universities have collaboratively made so-called *read-and-publish* deals with 18 international publishers, which combine subscription access to the archives of the publisher with Open Access publishing for new articles by an author of a Dutch University, who then takes the primary responsibility for communication with the journal during the submission and publication process (that can only be one person). It is important to note that most of these agreements only include hybrid journals. However, a requirement of *PlanS* for these deals is that they are “transformative” (Borrego et al.). Their aim is to flip the subscription journals to full Open Access journals by 31 December 2024, at the latest.

In line with Dutch policy, Leiden University aimed to have 100% of the publicly financed peer-reviewed scholarly articles published in Open Access by 2020. According to Dutch Universities, the national percentage published in Open Access, in 2020, was 73% (gold: 25%, hybrid: 35% and green: 13%) and, according to Rathenau, 71%. This diverges from the average of 52%, in EU27 (“Monitor.”; Koens and Vennekens). In the CWTS Leiden Ranking, Leiden University obtained the highest Open Access score in the Netherlands, that is, 77% (gold: 19%, hybrid: 21%, bronze: 17%, green: 20%, and unknown: 1%) from 2016 to 2019 (“CWTS Leiden Ranking 2021.”). Open Access rates for books and book chapters are not monitored yet, but we know that the percentages are much lower, which is related to the costs involved and the focus on peer-reviewed articles in policies and legislation. Recently,

a working group at the national level was set up to work on a new “Definition Framework for Monitoring Open Access” that also includes books, chapters, and reports.<sup>1</sup>

All in all, we can observe that, looking at the percentage of Open Access at Leiden University for peer-reviewed articles, the original policy goals to reach 100% Open Access by 2020 have not yet been met. Nevertheless, Leiden University is well on its way, and Leiden authors must already be quite familiar with Open Access publishing, as most of them have made their reviewed articles available in Open Access via various routes.

## Publishing Practices

So, how do authors decide how to publish their works as Open Access? That depends on several criteria, such as the impact of the journal, the discipline, the career status of the researcher, the opportunities (is there, for instance, a funder budget or an Open Access deal with a 100% discount?), the funder requirements, and the personal preference of the researcher and institute (Kramer and Bosman). Let us look at these criteria more closely. Although the journal impact factor may no longer be used as a quality indicator in grant proposals and research evaluations in the Netherlands (VSNU et al., “Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027.” 33 and “Room for Everyone’s Talent.” 7), it is obvious that impact on the advancement of science or on society is a key driver for authors to publish their research results. Opinions differ, however, on how Open Access publishing improves impact. Most Open Access journals are new and do not yet have the status of the leading commercial scientific journals. But, on the other hand, Open Access publications may reach much wider audiences. Dutch universities and funders who support the *Declaration on Research Assessment* (DORA) have jointly developed a policy in which Open Sci-

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1 On 22 April 2022, the steering group Strategie, Public Affairs & Governance (SSPG) of the Universiteiten van Nederland (UNL) approved the “Adviesrapport Vernieuwing open access monitoring per 2022” from the “open access monitoring werkgroep”.

ence (including Open Access) is better recognized and rewarded, which may help to increase the status of Open Access publishing (VSNU et al., “Room for Everyone’s Talent” 7).

For some disciplines (e.g., Physics, Economics, and Law), there is a tradition to share works in an early version of the manuscript via preprint servers, such as arXiv, RePEc, and SSRN. For other disciplines (e.g., Medicine, Science), there are good opportunities to publish *gold* Open Access, since there is usually more budget to spend on Open Access and more suitable journals available. For Humanities and Social Sciences, Open Access is harder to achieve, but it is getting better: they now also have preprint servers, such as SocArXiv and OSF Preprints, which they can make use of prepaid deals, and there are more *diamond* Open Access journals emerging, for which payment is not needed.

As for career status, senior researchers, in general, know where they want to publish, and most of them also guide their PhD students in selecting an appropriate journal. On whether Open Access helps or hinders one’s career, opinions are quite divided. Some point to the lack of quality of Open Access journals, whilst others focus on the importance of Open Access, as possible future employers, especially outside academia, will have easy access to the publications (without payment). The same applies to sharing preprints. It can be very interesting for an employer to see what the applicants have worked on, especially when formal papers are still under review.

Scholars are presented with various opportunities that reduce the costs of Open Access publishing for them. For instance, they may publish Open Access with a 100% discount when a journal is part of a national *read-and-publish* agreement and when the author fulfils the terms and conditions required by the publisher. However, not all journals are covered by such deals. For example, the journals *Nature* and *Cell* are not included in the deals with Springer Nature and Elsevier. In such cases, it is up to the scholar to pay an APC in order to publish an article as Open Access. If the scholar did not secure sufficient funds from their funder, or if their department or funder is not willing to pay, the publication can only be accessed behind a paywall. In that case, the repository of their univer-

sity can be used to publish Open Access without any costs. Briefly put, authors can make use of Article 25fa DCA to make their article Open Access or follow the journal's Open Access policy.

As mentioned above, Leiden scholars have to be compliant with the Open Access policy of the University and that of their funders, which means that decisions are often based on these policies. These policies can concern a certain open content license, the obligation for direct Open Access (without embargo), or a mandatory upload in the repository, even when the article is available in *gold* Open Access with the publisher.

A final factor that impacts the levels and routes of Open Access publishing is the preference of the researcher or the institute. The personal preference of the author to select a specific journal to publish in is usually driven by the need to secure a certain level of quality. The institutional preferences often result from the need to reduce costs: does the publishing require additional funding (e.g., the payment of an APC) or not? Nevertheless, there may be other kinds of motivations for an author to prefer Open Access, as is illustrated in Figure 1. It should be noted here that some publishers misuse this system and mislead scholars that have such aspirations. Under the banner of Open Access, so-called predatory publishers are collecting APCs while promising peer review of the articles, but they do not actually make that happen. Instead, they prioritize financial gain as their goal, rather than the advancement of scientific research as a collaborative effort (Grudniewicz et al 210-212).



**Fig. 1** Kingsley, Danny, and Sarah Brown, “Benefits of Open Access”, *Wikimedia Commons*, 28 October 2015, licensed under CC by 4.0, [www.commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benefitsofopenaccess\\_cc-by\\_logo.pd\\_eng.jpg](http://www.commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Benefitsofopenaccess_cc-by_logo.pd_eng.jpg).



## Library Support

Leiden University Libraries offers support, services, and infrastructures to make Open Access publishing for Leiden scholars as easy as possible. For example, the UBL's expert team, located at the Centre for Digital Scholarship (CDS), focuses on informing, advising, and answering researchers' questions. The experts participate in European and national networks that enable them to inform and advise researchers, faculties, institutions, and management of the university about the latest developments, workflows, opportunities, and requirements. Additionally, scholars can find extensive information about Open Access on the university website ("Open Access."). UBL/CDS also provide a flowchart that shows Leiden scholars how to publish a peer reviewed article in Open Access before submission, at submission, and upon publication. The Open Access experts also frequently give presentations and workshops at the institutes of the University, which are tailor-made to fit the publishing traditions of individual disciplines. Moreover, scholars can visit an Open Access expert individually on appointment.

In addition, the UBL/CDS runs a central helpdesk for the University and uses various tools to answer the questions that reach them, such as:

- the national *Open Access Journal Browser* (at [openaccess.nl](http://openaccess.nl)), with information per journal, for instance, about the national *read-and-publish* deals, and references to the *Directory of Open Access Journals* (a list with high quality peer reviewed full Open Access journals) and *Sherpa Romeo* (publishers' Open Access policies)
- *Directory of Open Access Books*
- *PlanS* journal checker tool
- *Think, Check, Submit* (to prevent predatory publishing)
- *Openjournals.nl* (to host small Dutch and academic journals)

Besides support, the library also offers authors the opportunity to publish Open Access without any costs. Together with the other University Libraries in the Netherlands, UBL participates actively in the negotiations with national and international publishers, in order to get access

to their archives, as well as create favorable publishing conditions (Van Otegem et al. 16). As a result, Leiden researchers can make use of 18 publishing agreements for more than 11,000 journals with 100% discount. In 2021, 1,367 peer reviewed articles of Leiden University (including the University's Medical Centre, LUMC) have been published under *read-and-publish* deals. UBL also manages the Leiden Scholarly Publications Repository, through which they can disseminate their publications in direct Open Access, or after 6 months, making use of the *Taverne Amendment*. In 2021, 89% of the peer reviewed articles (excluding LUMC) had an upload in the Repository.

As part of the policy of the University, Leiden scholars are required to register their Leiden-affiliated output (such as PhD theses, scholarly articles, books, and conference proceedings) in the Leiden University Current Research Information System (LUCRIS). Here, they can upload their publications and, if necessary, indicate if there is an embargo. After this registration, the publications become available in the Leiden Repository, which disseminates the output widely and in a sustainable way. The publications also become visible on the researcher's personal page on the website of the University and on many other services, such as *Google Scholar* and *OpenAIRE*, a technical infrastructure funded by the European Commission, that harvests research output from data providers, including the Leiden Repository. All EU-funded research should be offered to the EU harvester by local repositories. cOAlition S has also formulated requirements for repositories that institutions must fulfil, which have recently been implemented in the Leiden Repository ("OpenDOAR"). Finally, the files are also archived in the e-depot of the National Library of the Netherlands.

In recent years, UBL has done several Open Access projects. The project *UBL helps with Open Access* aimed to make Leiden scholars aware of the 100% Leiden Open Access policy, the policies of journals, and the *read-and-publish* deals. The library informed scholars about their articles that could have been, but were not yet, available as Open Access. If a researcher was interested in this, the library could take care of uploading and labeling their publication as Open Access.

Another project was the implementation of Article 25fa DCA (“Taverne Amendment”). As the wording in this article is vague, the Dutch University Libraries, including UBL, joined forces to get legal advice on how to interpret it (e.g., what does *reasonable period* stand for, what is *the work*, and what does *wholly or partly funded* really mean?). They first tested the interpretation in a pilot and later implemented it in the repositories for all their scholars to use. Since the implementation, over 2000 short works have been made Open Access in the Leiden Repository, thanks to the *Taverne Amendment*.

A third project relates to publication policies. Currently, the library is working with research institutions on institutional publication policies that help control the costs of APCs and assist authors in making the right choices in accordance with the policy of the university, their institute, and their research funder. Since publication traditions may differ per institute, it is useful to address this at an institutional level. The main principles of the institutional policies are:

- Open Access is how we publish
- Quality and freedom of choice where to publish are paramount
- Compliance with *PlanS* requirements, if required
- Costs must be made transparent and controlled

The experts of UBL/CDS constantly monitor compliance with the Open Access policy of Leiden University and other relevant policies and advise the institutes accordingly.

## **Finding Open Access Research Outputs**

The search and retrieval strategies of a person looking for scholarly information in Open Access do not differ much from traditional search strategies. However, there are some tools available to make it easier to find Open Access publications. For example, when a researcher visits the website of a publisher, they can use the *Unpaywall* browser extension, which shows whether a version of the publication is available in Open Access

(“Unpaywall Extension.”). When the publication is green Open Access in a repository, *Unpaywall* will refer to that copy of the publication. The advantage for Leiden scholars is that they do not have to log in or be in the Leiden network domain to have access. This way, it is easy to find the Open Access publications in the Leiden Repository via the publisher’s website. Leiden University Libraries also manages other repositories to improve (open) access to the publications of students and researchers, such as dissertations, bachelor and master theses, journals and book collections published at Leiden University, conference proceedings from conferences held at our university, and the publications of Leiden University Press. All these collections benefit from the repository infrastructure: long-term preservation and access, permanent identifiers (UBL uses *Handle* to guarantee the findability of publications), clear guidance on the rights and obligations of the end user, and increased visibility in international networks. Furthermore, service providers can harvest the metadata easily via an international standard, the *Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting* (OAI-PMH). As a result, scholarly publications can also be found, for example, in the Dutch research portal *Narcis* and the European Research Portal funded by the European Commission, *OpenAIRE*.

Open Access publications can, of course, also be found in the library catalogue, through metadata from the *Directory of Open Access Journals*, the *Directory of Open Access Books*, and all the publications in the Leiden Repository. In fact, library catalogues are essential for digital-only Open Access books, as these are not for sale and can therefore not be found at booksellers. UBL’s Subject Librarians also select relevant Open Access materials and add them to the catalogue. By using these different sources, the library catalogue offers a complete overview of all relevant materials available, be it by subscription or in Open Access.

## Conclusion

Leiden University Libraries works closely with Leiden scholars to make Open Access of all Leiden-affiliated scientific output a reality. UBL offers support to scholars so they can choose the right Open Access route(s) in compliance with the relevant policies, and preferably without payment. In addition, they support the institutes at Leiden University to include Open Access as an integral part of their publication policies and strategies. In 2020, most peer-reviewed articles at Leiden University were already available in Open Access. However, work still has to be done to reach the 100% target for peer reviewed articles, as well as to make other works Open Access, such as books and book chapters. The Leiden Repository plays a key role in implementing the Open Access policy of Leiden University. It makes the publications of Leiden University findable and accessible, thereby increasing their international visibility and impact. Although many works are Open Access nowadays and do not have to be purchased for the collection, the subject librarians at Leiden University Libraries still need to select the high-quality Open Access journals and books to be indexed in the library catalogue of Leiden University. It is in doing so that Open Access publications are integrated seamlessly into search and retrieval services.

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# Close Listening

Bookish Podcasts during  
the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Natalia Tolstopyat*

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There are many different challenges that book publishing has faced over the years (Ginna 13), but the COVID-19 pandemic was all-encompassing as it affected the publishing industry, writers, booksellers, and readers. Many readers turned into listeners with the proliferation of audiobooks and podcasts (Guren et al. 11).

Podcasts are becoming more and more popular. Their proliferation of topics, their accessibility, portability, and facilitation of multitasking mean listeners can consume content while doing other tasks, for example manual work. Emerging research highlights the slow but steady advance of the “burgeoning audio trend” (Guren et al. 11), not only in the form of audiobooks, but also podcasts (as overall consumption of podcasts was claimed to more than double after pandemic slump). COVID-19 has influenced many industries and book publishing is no exception. This article presents a closer examination of podcasts about books and publishing, and how they give access to a new range of primary sources. Thus, they can facilitate further investigation of the book industry’s response to the pandemic. The podcasts in the publishing and reading sphere are diverse: they can be created by independent individuals or by organisations, with aims as diverse as community building, promotion of books and publications, or blogging about books in audio format. Podcasts are known and hailed for their accessibility (Prince 269) over different gadgets (phones, laptops, computers), and platforms (Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Castbox, to name a few). The word podcast itself is a portmanteau of *iPod* and *broadcast*. Podcasts can be streamed or downloaded on listeners’ devices and played offline. Podcasts are generally free unless the creators provide extra episodes via paid subscriptions. Although the main characteristic of a podcast is the audio format, podcast content can also be consumed in video format and even feature a transcript, which makes the format more inclusive and available for deaf or hard-of-hearing content consumers.

While a more general definition of a podcast is any digital media file, or series of files, distributed over the internet for playback on portable media players and personal computers (Lonn and Teasley 88), Lucian Balanuta (2021) expands this definition by including the experience, authorship, and variety of themes and genres. As such, he defines the podcast as

“an on-demand listening experience, mediated through audio or video platforms, which involves heterogeneous formats and generous thematic designs that can be authored by producers of multiple backgrounds” (38-39). Other authors mention that podcasts are distributed online and usually follow a schedule of updates, as well as follow a particular topic (Guertin 4), although the podcasts that revolve around the figure of their hosts sharing their opinions on any theme might not necessarily have a clear topical designation.

It is worth noting that podcasts are accessible and easily manageable, not only for listeners but also for creators. Hammersley (2004) highlights the lack of program constraints, broadcasting time limitation, and easy access to the creator’s tool kit: a microphone, internet connection and simple to use, free software for the necessary editing. At the moment, there are over a million podcasts published online (Götting) on an incredible variety of topics, including books, publishing, and literature.

Podcasts in general have recommended themselves as a useful educational tool over the last decade (Pierce 269). However, in the context of book history, they have not been considered much. There is much to be researched in the tendencies and qualities of podcasts that revolve around books: interviews with authors, the promotion or introduction of new titles, discussions of content, books as a medium, and of course the challenges that publishing and the reading scene in general are facing are all relevant topics. In addition to being a tool for lifelong learning (Pownell 2004), podcasts provide a discussion space for literary criticism (Guertin 8) in academia and outside of it. While podcasts about books are often discussions and analyses of content, they are themselves also texts that can be analysed from the perspective of agency, social activity, and text production in the digital age (Strauch 3). It is in this way that podcasts engage with discourse of political, socio-cultural relevance and can provide an enormous field for research.

Simone Murray indicates in her book *The Digital Literary Sphere: Reading, Writing and Selling Books in the Internet Era* (2018):

*Digital media's data-generating and -archiving capabilities enable researchers to document and analyze the publishing industry's mysterious "word of mouth" factor either in real time or retrospectively – from advance publicity for a title, through waves of critical and customer reviews, plus the long afterlife of social media discussion and tagging (55).*

Many podcasts that deal with the bookish topics – bookstores, reviews, and recommendations of titles allow listeners to explore the many discussions of literature and the book within the reading community. These discussions also occurred within the context of 21<sup>st</sup>-century challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Bookish Podcasts**

The cancellations of first the *Book Fair* in Leipzig in 2020 (Peschel 2020) and later the *Book Fair* in Frankfurt in 2020 were significant events for the publishing world and reading communities. Karin Schmidt-Friderichs, the chairwoman of the *German Publishers & Booksellers Association* said in the press release on the official website of the *Book Fair* that the “Frankfurter Buchmesse is not only the world's largest book fair, it is also a constantly evolving enterprise. Lively, agile and adaptable. Given the current situation, this means a fair without an on-site exhibition in 2020 because of the more stringent corona restrictions being imposed once again.” Due to the pandemic restrictions, these events had to be either cancelled or adapted to online or hybrid forms. All of these adjustments had to be implemented on short notice, as the restrictions of social interactions were becoming more limited as the pandemic progressed.

Constant features of the online world, podcasts are one of the modes of information exchange within larger a reading community that spans

many others: video, written blogs, TV and radio programs, for instance. Several bookish podcasts discussed the reactions to the rapid succession of restrictions. This could be observed in real time as the episodes were being recorded as new changes to public life were implemented, sometimes on a weekly basis. The podcasts in question are in German and focus first and foremost on reading and books, with occasional commentary on the various sides of publishing world as well.<sup>1</sup>

Podcast *Kapitel Eins* (English: *Chapter One*) is created and co-hosted by journalist Jochen Gebauer and writer and translator Falko Löffler. Their first podcast episode aired in September 2018. Both podcast hosts reside in Germany and publish new episodes biweekly. Additionally, listeners can buy a subscription for bonus episodes that feature interviews with prominent writers, book bloggers, publishers, editors, etc. These bonus episodes are available on their website.

Podcast *Nachts im Buchladen* (English: *Nights at the Bookstore*) is created and hosted by Jenny Heimann, who introduces the listeners to different independent and chain bookstores in her area around the town of Hamm, North Rhine-Westphalia. In her podcast episodes, she interviews booksellers in their shops after they have closed for the day. The episodes usually feature the most popular books in the particular bookstores, as well as general book recommendations by the bookstore owners and employees. Additionally, local bookstores have a chance to advertise different offline events, such as book signings or meet-the-author events. The first episode of *Nachts im Buchladen* was released in November 2018. Jenny Heimann is a journalist with previous experience in bookselling. She currently works for her local radio station.

A publishing editor for science fiction, fantasy, and general literature at *Knaur Verlag*, Natalja Schmidt (a translator), editor Michelle Gyo, and writer Jennie Jaeger (under pseudonym Liza Grimm) created their podcast *Der Phantastik-Brunch* in 2020. The first episode was published on March 22. The three co-hosts focus on films, series, games, and books

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1 All translations and transcriptions presented in this article are the author's own.

in speculative fiction. Unlike the two previously mentioned podcasts, *Der Phantastik-Brunch* was created at the beginning of the COVID-pandemic “in the fight against loneliness” (“Der Phantastik-Brunch”). New episodes are published every fourteen days and feature reviews of books and series, as well as interviews with other translators, editors, and writers.

These three podcasts are just a small fraction of what is available to German-language listeners. It is difficult to pinpoint a stable position of any podcast in the charts as new episodes are released every week, and the statistics of listening behavior and popularity is fluid and changes weekly. Moreover, the aggregators of statistical data for podcasts do not have access to data from all the platforms, websites, and apps to which the RSS-feeds share episodes. The available statistics show that *Apple Podcasts* is the most popular platform for content consumption by podcasts-listeners (“Apple Podcasts – Germany – Books”). In the category *Books*, podcast *Kapitel Eins* is in the 43<sup>rd</sup> position, *Nachts im Buchladen* is in 143<sup>rd</sup> place, and *Der Phantastik-Brunch* takes the 231<sup>st</sup> spot. These podcasts are also featured in the category *Arts* and have different positions in charts there as well. Charts deal with the number of people clicking on the episode or podcast title, rating them in the corresponding apps (for instance *Apple Podcasts*), and the number of comments left by listeners in a particular app. What complicates the statistical overview of any podcast even further is the language filter: charts do not always filter the podcasts by language but by the country in which they are accessed. As a result, there are podcasts in different languages featured in the charts for Germany in the category *Books*.

**“...there’s no one here, we’re closed and it feels so strange.”**

The episode of the podcast *Nachts im Buchladen* titled “Reading in Coronatimes”<sup>2</sup> aired on March 13, 2020 and was the first in a series of episodes dedicated to the changing local reading scene and its reaction to the cancellation of the Leipzig Book Fair. The guest of this episode – Antje Deistler – is the head of a literary agency (*Literaturbüro*) in the Ruhr<sup>3</sup> region of North Rhine-Westphalia, whose general task it is to stimulate the regional literary scene. This includes the networking of authors, bookstores, and publishers. Moreover, they are often responsible for the organization of public readings and book tours for authors (the organization of which became challenging due to pandemic restrictions). Jenny Heimann, the host, expressed her worry about the negative effect of the rapid changes in restrictions on the literary scene in the region:

**JH:** *The events are unfolding rather quickly at the moment, and that’s quite extreme for an industry like literature. What do you think about that? (01:12)*

**AD:** *Well, I can’t speak for all the bookstores and publishers, who of course depend on trade fairs, who have to negotiate, who have to exchange information about all the news. I would also have loved to go to the Leipzig Book Fair, but it doesn’t hit us so hard if we, as a team from the Literaturbüro Ruhr, don’t meet all our colleagues in Leipzig and exchange the news. So, on Friday I have a couple of telephone appointments with all those people with whom I would have had a personal appointment on Friday at the book fair otherwise. What would be missing, of course, are the parties, is the personal contact. There is of course a lot of information that won’t be shared, of stories that could be planned, there are new ideas that won’t be developed, and so*

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2 “Lesen in Zeiten von Corona.” *Nachts im Buchladen*, 13 March 2020, [www.podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/lesen-in-zeiten-von-corona/id1440765209?i=1000468314659](http://www.podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/lesen-in-zeiten-von-corona/id1440765209?i=1000468314659).

3 Literaturbüro Ruhr, [www.literaturbuero-ruhr.de/](http://www.literaturbuero-ruhr.de/).

*on. It's a pity that this won't happen, but I think we here at the Literaturbüro Ruhr are in the fortunate position that we don't lose any money because of it. I really feel sorry for some of my colleagues. (01:21-02:35)<sup>4</sup>*

While at that moment the literary agency was still planning some public events and was hoping to be able to keep their visitors safe by positioning chairs at a distance, avoiding shaking hands, and not having too many people join the event in a closed space (04:23-06:36)<sup>5</sup>, the decision to keep the planned events or cancel them was still with the venue owners. The episode had been pre-recorded, and all public events were prohibited by the time of its release.

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4 JH: Die Anschläge kommen ja im Moment ziemlich schnell, und das ist für so eine Branche wie Literatur doch ganz schön extrem. Wie schätzt du das ein? (01:12)

AD: Also, ich kann nicht für alle Buchläden und die Verlage sprechen, die natürlich auf Messen angewiesen sind, die handeln müssen, die sich austauschen müssen über alle die Neuigkeiten. Ich wäre auch sehr gerne auf die Leipziger Buchmesse gefahren, aber es trifft uns nicht hart wenn wir als Team vom Literaturbüro Ruhr, all die Kolleg:innen uns jetzt nicht in Leipzig treffen und uns informieren. Also, ich habe am Freitag jetzt ein Paar Telefontermine mit all den mit dem ich am Freitag auf der Buchmesse persönlich verabredet war. Was natürlich flach fehlt sind die Partys, ist der persönliche Kontakt, da läuft natürlich eine ganze Menge an Informationen, an Geschichten, die man sich erzählt, die man so planen könnte, da werden die Ideen geboren und so weiter. Das ist schon schade, dass das nicht stattfindet aber, ich glaube, wir hier als Literaturbüro Ruhr sind in der erfreulichen Lage, dass uns deswegen kein Gelder wegbrechen. Da tun mir einige Kollegen und Kolleg:innen wirklich sehr Leid (01:21-02:35).

5 Da sind zwei Veranstaltungen demnächst geplant: am 26.03 und am 27.03 und natürlich werde ich den Bahnhof Langendreer fragen, *Wie sieht das denn aus? Wie schätzt ihr es ein?* und vor allen Dingen was können wir machen, damit das Risiko geringgehalten wird (05:48). Also, entweder wir sagen alles ganz ab, diese Entscheidung würde ich in den Fällen den Kolleg:innen und Kollegen überlassen, in den Orten wo die Lesungen stattfinden werden. Aber wenn wir sagen *wir wollen es machen*, dann muss man halt gucken wie gestalten wir das so, dass es auch in Ordnung ist, dahin zu gehen. Also, nicht alle bis auf den letzten Platz und da noch paar Plätze, nicht alle Leute da reinschieben. Es werden sowieso wahrscheinlich nicht so viele kommen. Und vielleicht jemandem an der Tür stehen zu haben, der die Leute daran erinnert, sich nicht die Hand zu geben, einfach freundlich...freundlich Coronawinken. Und vielleicht die Stühle so stellen, dass Platz ist. ... Und es ist vielleicht in diesen Zeiten gerade die gute Idee (04:23-06:36).

The following episode – released on March 20, 2020 under the title “Reading material for the Corona-time”<sup>6</sup> – features some recommendations and announces that starting that week, bookstores would be closed because of the COVID-crisis, but that “the booksellers you trust would still supply you with the books you need. Most of them have set up a delivery service.”<sup>7</sup> The guest of the second Corona-episode was Claudia Hellmann, the owner of a small local bookstore in Bockum-Hövel in North Rhine-Westphalia. Through her announcement to the clients, she was able to reorganize her bookstore in the first days of lockdown to fit the many forms of (online) orders coming in via WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, email, phone, and fax. She delivered the orders herself, keeping a safe distance, wearing a mask and gloves to protect herself and her clients. According to Claudia Hellmann, the clients gave her positive feedback, especially in regard to the flexibility of her small business. She openly expressed the need to cover her expenses for that month and her hope to be able to pay her business bills (01:54- 03:01). Support for local bookstores in lockdown had been expressed by the previous guest, Antje Dreitsler:

**JH:** *Okay, then my other alternative suggestion: Hamstering not only at ALDI for toilet paper, but hamster-shopping in the nearest bookstore, at the local bookseller preferably.*

**AD:** *I think there's a hashtag now, isn't there? Book-hamster or hamster book....*

**JH:** *Is that a Corona-hashtag?*

**AD:** *Yes yes!<sup>8</sup> (16:19- 16:34 “Reading in the Corona-time”)*

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6 “Lesestoff für die Corona-Zeit.” *Nachts im Buchladen*, 20 March 2020, [www.podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/lesestoff-f%C3%BCr-die-corona-zeit/id1440765209?i=1000468984192](http://www.podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/lesestoff-f%C3%BCr-die-corona-zeit/id1440765209?i=1000468984192).

7 Episode description: “Lesestoff für die Corona-Zeit,” <https://podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/lesestoff-f%C3%BCr-die-corona-zeit/id1440765209?i=1000468984192>.

8 JH: Okay, dann mein anderer Alternativvorschlag: Hamsterkäufer nicht nur bei ALDI in Sachen Klopapier, sondern einfach Hamsterkäufer in der nächsten Buchhandlung, beim örtlichen lokalen Buchhändler am liebsten.

AD: Ich glaube, es gibt inzwischen ein Hashtag, oder? Buchhamster oder Hamsterbuch...

JH: Ist das ein Corona-Hashtag?

AD: Ja ja!



*Hamster-shopping* is a term for the panic-induced hoarding of products, or *hamstering* (Sullivan 2020), that usually focuses on basic products like rice, noodles or toilet paper. Currently, in May 2022, #bücherhamster has 25,617 posts on Instagram. *Bücherhamster* (*book-hamstering*) encouraged people to re-invest the money that they normally would have spent on the trip to a book fair and order book packages from small publishing houses in order to support them (*Phantastik-Brunch*. Episode 2 09:40-11:45).

A guest on one of the following episodes was Johanna Lammert<sup>9</sup>, a bookseller from a small bookstore called *Carolin Wolff*. This bookstore also switched to online orders in response to pandemic conditions. Despite being busy with orders, the bookseller commented on the uncomfortable feeling she had: “Today it’s not *Nights in the Bookstore*, but for me it’s like night, there’s no one here, we’re closed, and it feels so strange.”<sup>10</sup> (“Die Mitmach-Folge” 01:42-01:47)

*Carolin Wolff*, a family-oriented bookstore, experienced a boom in orders after they created a special offer of book packages for children, who could not go to kindergarten and were supposed to stay at home. The store created several curated reading lists and so attracted locked-down parents and their children. The book orders were sent not only to local customers, but all over Germany (05:03-07:11). Promotion of the bookstore’s offer took place mainly over Facebook and Instagram, but also through word-of-mouth. Promotion on social media from the bookstore itself also gave clients the opportunity to see the work of a small bookstore in lockdown conditions (07:13).

Books for children were not the only popular books at that time; books that featured escapes from reality in any form were popular, according to Margret Holota from a bookstore in Hamm, Germany. In the episode

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9 “Die Mitmach-Folge.” *Nachts im Buchladen*, 3 April 2020, [www.podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/die-mitmach-folge/id1440765209?i=1000470397313](http://www.podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/die-mitmach-folge/id1440765209?i=1000470397313).

10 CH: Heute ist es ja nicht *Nachts im Buchladen* aber bei mir ist es wie *Nachts*, also es ist ja keiner da, wir haben geschlossen, ganz komische Atmosphäre. (01:42-01:47)

“To the bookstore wearing a mask”<sup>11</sup> (released on April 30, 2020), she expressed her relief and excitement at being able to see her clients again and go back to the old routine, as dealing with the online orders over the shutdown period was challenging – selling and sending one book took three times as much work and time as it previously had (00:53-01:19). *The Plague* (1947) by Albert Camus was one of the oft-ordered books, together with classics and titles that had been released over the previous several years (02:01-03:00).

Podcast *Kapitel Eins*, hosted by Falko Löffler und Jochen Gebauer, has provided analysis and discussion of many genre books since March 2020, for instance *World War Z* (2006) by Max Brooks (episode 41)<sup>12</sup> or *Not Forgetting the Whale* (2015) by John Ironmonger (episode 59)<sup>13</sup>. Both of these novels deal with different types of pandemics and their social consequences. The 2019 German translation of the novel *Not Forgetting the Whale* (2015) was successful and placed in the *Spiegel* bestseller list, something Jochen Gebauer said could be the result of the release of the translated book “at the right time, in the right place” (*Kapitel Eins*. Episode 59 06:40) and characterized it as “an antidote to the current pessimistic pandemic” (06:57). At the end of 2020, *Kapitel Eins* decided to also provide paid content that listeners could access via subscription. The first episode was an interview with Natalja Schmidt, an editor from the publishing company *Droemer Knaur* (*Knaur Verlag*). The episode was released on December 22, 2020 and is accessible without any paid subscription as an example of the paid content the podcast plans to offer.

In episode 60 (“Bonus-episode 3: Interview with Natalja Schmidt”), Schmidt (a representative of the publishing industry) provided insight into the work of her publishing company in Munich, Germany during the Corona-pandemic: as many employees were able to continue working

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11 “Im Buchladen mit Maske.” *Nachts im Buchladen*, 30 April 2020, <http://www.podcasts.apple.com/de/podcast/im-buchladen-mit-maske/id1440765209?i=1000473122185>.

12 “World War Z.” *Kapitel Eins*, 6 April 2020, [www.buchpodcast.de/2020/12/14/folge-59-der-wal-und-das-ende-der-welt/](http://www.buchpodcast.de/2020/12/14/folge-59-der-wal-und-das-ende-der-welt/).

13 “Der Wal und das Ende der Welt.” *Kapitel Eins*, 22 December 2020, [www.buchpodcast.de/2020/12/14/folge-59-der-wal-und-das-ende-der-welt/](http://www.buchpodcast.de/2020/12/14/folge-59-der-wal-und-das-ende-der-welt/).

from home, the publishing house adapted a home-office format for the spring of 2020 and a mixed form in the summer, when employees could be in the office every other day (42:50). Some manuscripts and new releases were postponed for later that year, as it had been unclear how long the lockdown would last and how the pandemic would develop (43:58-44:43). As a result, according to Schmidt, autumn 2020 had a higher number of new releases than in previous years; e-books showed a moderate rise in sales, but not as dramatic as in the USA (45:18). The podcast host Falco Löffler commented on the importance of the *Book Fairs* in Frankfurt and Leipzig for the publishing industry and stressed how complicated the conditions of the 2021 *Book Fair* in Leipzig were for organizers: “I wouldn’t want to be in their shoes: now they need to plan the full program, half-program or complete cancellation just in case” (46:34). The guest of the episode mentioned above, Natalja Schmidt, is the co-host of another bookish podcast, *Phantastik-Brunch*. The podcast was started in March 2020 as a response to lockdown limitations. The three hosts of this podcast decided to continue the discussions of books, publishing, and literature that they would usually have in person, only online in audio form (Episode 1). In their second episode, titled “German-language fantasy & bookstore promotions in Corona-times” from March 29, 2020, the hosts discussed the creative approaches of writers and booksellers who were missing the interactions of the *Book Fair* in Leipzig:

*NS: I think that's what a lot of people in the fantasy scene are missing now, probably in other genres as well, but especially when Leipzig was cancelled, and in the summer, what events will be cancelled there? I think a lot of authors have, of course, also some additional income – to be able to read there and to sell books. But it is also about the direct contact with the fans, definitely. (01:39-02:15)<sup>14</sup>*

Although Simone Murray stresses that the “bookish community has become saturated with commercialism in online-born literary spheres” (62) and increasingly resembles a marketplace, the discourse presented in bookish podcasts illustrates not only the interest in the financial side of things, but also the emotional connection between the readers, writers, and booksellers. It would be too naïve to completely ignore the need of bookstores to pay their rents and the publishers to present new titles to the readers, but the emergence of new podcasts in the pandemic, as well as the popularity and persistence of the already existing ones, reflects a human connection. Readers could escape the loneliness via bookish podcasts, while booksellers had an additional platform over which to talk about local bookstores and their relationships to local readers. Publishers were pushed to develop other means of communication with both readers and writers and learn to deliver on promises to the latter in the challenging situation of lockdown.

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14 ”Ich glaube, dass vermissen einfach gerade wahnsinnig viele in der Fantastik-Szene, wahrscheinlich in anderen Genres auch, aber da insbesondere als Leipzig ausgefallen ist, in dem Frühsommer was da an Veranstaltungen ausfallen wird. Ich glaube, eine Menge Autoren und Autor: innen haben natürlich für dieses auch ein Zusatzverdienst — da lesen zu können und Bücher verkaufen zu können, aber es geht natürlich auch um den direkten Kontakt mit den Fans.”

## Conclusion

Podcasts are not a new invention, but this media format has become even more ubiquitous since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. While there was already an established bookish community on YouTube and Instagram (Tolstopyat 91), the podcasts about book history, publishing, and books and reading in general are not widely studied. A lot of research focuses on the didactic usages of podcasts, although they can be researched from various angles.

Based on the examples of three German-language bookish podcasts, discourse concerning publishing, the book market, and generally reading communities' reactions to the pandemic and lockdown could be observed to a small degree. Several podcast episodes that were released in 2020 reflect attitudes towards the decisions made by the government, the cancellation of offline events like readings and book tours, and the ways different agents of the book industry dealt with the instability and uncertainty of working in the current situation. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of challenges for individuals and industries, and the complete impact is yet to be seen. Bookish podcasts present a well of discourse that is fluid and its production ongoing, so future researchers of reading communities and publishing should find book-related podcasts to be a welcome addition to their sources.

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# Bilder auf Speicherkarten

Ein Bild von dir  
Sonnenstrahlen auf weicher Haut

Ihr wart reisen Ich wandere aus  
Heute trägst du sein Kind im Bauch.

Ein Bild von mir  
Regentropfen auf roten Wangen

Ihr zieht um Ich musste raus  
Morgen bin ich weiterhin bange  
Von meinem iPhone gesendet.

# Myndir á minnskortum

Mynd av tær  
Sólstrálar á bleytari húð

Tit vóru á ferð  
Eg fari úr landinum

Í dag hefur tú hansara barn í búkinum

Mynd av mæð  
Regndropar á reyðum kinnum

Tit flyta  
Eg noyðist úti

Í morgin eri eg enn bangin  
Sent frá mínari iPhone.

# Pictures on memory cards

Picture of you  
Sunray on smooth skin

You have been travelling  
I move abroad

Today you carry his child in your womb

Picture of me  
Raindrops on red cheeks

You move houses  
I needed to get out

Tomorrow will I still be anxious  
Sent from my iPhone.

Berlin, January '22

Theresa Kohlbeck Jakobsen (they/them) is a German creative, who after spending ten years in the noisy party-metropolis Berlin, moved to an archipelago in the centre of the North Atlantic, exchanging the dirty streets of Germany's biggest city with the wild, untamed nature of the Faroe Islands. The challenges of living in another country were a propulsion to their creativity. Theresa creates mixed media art and writes multilingual pieces that circle around the theme of human relationships in a digital age. Recently their works got published in Third Iris Zine, Polemical Zine, CERASUS and Moon Cola Zine. Right now Theresa is working for the student magazine STUDENTLIV and finishing their Master in Nordic Language and Literature at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

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# Repetition as Openness in Literature

How Does Repetition Include the  
Reader in the Creative Process?

*Dimitris Prokos*

Dimitris Prokos was born in Athens, Greece in 1993. He majored in classics (BA) and acquired a master's degree (MA) in literary studies (Modern Greek Literature) from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Since April 2021, he has been conducting research regarding the functionalities of repetition in poetry as part of a PhD thesis under the supervision of Prof. D. Angelatos. Over the past few years, he has been working as an elementary school teacher of modern Greek language and literature, while moonlighting as a part-time professional musician with the Athenian group Dury Dava.

Repetition seems to escape definition and analysis. Even though it has, in many cases, found its place among the lines in literary criticism, it is still characterized by a peculiar conceptual status, which has been said to be in essence “paradoxical” (Rimmon-Kenan 151). As a result, scholars most often avoid dealing with the notion altogether. There is a relatively simple reason for this: repetition is a universal phenomenon – literature is only one, very specific field under its general influence. Thus, studying repetition in literature requires a set of appropriate theoretical aims and methodological tools. The same can be said concerning the notion of openness in literature, as the term has been used in various ways, leaving itself quite *open* to additional commentary. Among other things, this article aims to show how repetition, both intra- and intertextual (Metzidakis 53), supports the open work of art and the aesthetic values it promotes.

This relationship between openness and repetition is something we must delve into before reaching the main body of our argumentation. Umberto Eco (*Open Work* 4) states that all works of art are open to a certain degree, as they require reception, interpretation, and performance in order to actualize their inherent potential. Similar ideas are expressed by Wolfgang Iser, who believes that “reading causes the literary work to unfold its inherently dynamic character” (275). In a later stage of his seminal book, Eco presents his view of openness as “the guarantee of a particularly rich kind of pleasure that our civilization pursues as one of its most precious values, since every aspect of our culture invites us to conceive, feel, and thus see the world as possibility” (*Open Work* 104). It follows that the open work of literature acknowledges its potential and somehow tries to grant the reader access to it (9).<sup>1</sup>

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1 This aspect of openness as potentiality is closely related to our choice of *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* by Raymond Queneau of the Oulipo group (standing for *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*) as an example. Queneau’s own conception of the group’s objectives concerns “the search for new forms that may be used by writers in any way they see fit” (qtd. in Motte. *A Primer* 2-3), thus alluding to the way works should *educate* readers.

Now what does repetition have to do with this? Eco himself, alongside Girard (7), refers to the fact that, for classical aesthetics before the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, repetition in the form of mimesis was preferred to innovation (*Innovation and Repetition* 191), while the latter gradually became dominant in modern times and is still at the core of contemporary artistic creation in the context of the open work (Nankov 66). Here lies the *paradox* we mentioned above, concerning the notion of repetition: it represents formal confinement, the realization that possibilities are not endless, while at the same time embodying progress and possibility itself. Eco accepts and supports this oxymoron, as he writes about Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*: "The opening word of the first page is the same as the closing word of the last page of the novel. Thus, the work is finite in one sense, but in another sense it is unlimited. Each occurrence, each word stands in a series of possible relations with all the others in the text" (*Open Work* 10). In this scenario, the reader is confined to recognizing these repeated occurrences, but also invited to fill the gaps and (re)create meaningful interrelations.

The notion of recognizability is key to our view on repetition as openness. A conscious reading subject cannot ignore the fact that in Poe's "The Raven," to use a well-known example, certain words or phrases are constantly reiterated throughout the text. Each of these occurrences invite the reader to take part in a two-fold process: on one hand, the reader recognizes iterativity *per se* and derives pleasure "from the sense of identity," as the poet himself writes in his "Philosophy of Composition" (1300). On the other hand, it quickly becomes obvious that no mere sameness is to be found in these repeated occurrences; every time the reader comes across a word or phrase previously read, their meaningful relations with the totality of the work and its interpretation are rearranged (Iser 278). Repetition then oscillates between two poles of communication: meaning and information (Rogers, *Semiotics of Repetition* 584). As Eco states in *The Open Work*, meaning is the product of

recognition and understanding,<sup>2</sup> while information is “an unchecked abundance of possible meanings” (94); repetition embodies both of the above, as an inherently recognizable and polysemic textual phenomenon (Rogers, *Redundancy in Ambiguous Texts* 602).

This paper argues that these faculties of repetition help the reader gain access to the text. As we recognize repeated occurrences, we form meaning in the first degree of practical communication (Eco, *Open Work* 94). We thus understand the text in the simplest way possible, that of words in the form of sentences, which are organized in a certain way and indicate what is to come, while at the same time influencing what has passed (Iser 278, 288). In this spatio-temporal conception of reading,<sup>3</sup> repetition serves as a textual *landmark*, a universally acceptable point of interest in the body of the text, both spatially and temporally. Through acknowledging and memorizing these *landmarks*, the reading subject succeeds in grasping the text as a formal totality. This is how repetition produces plain meaning in the form of “conventional symbols,” which, as Eco thinks in relation to music, characterize a *traditional*, closed work, and obliges “the eventual performer to reproduce the format devised by the composer” (*Open Work* 3). In the case of “The Raven,” for example, the reader obviously does acknowledge the author’s intention in enriching the “artistic effect” and “piquancy” (Poe 1300) of his work through the use of the refrain. But how does granting the reader access to specific techniques and choices of composition imply closure rather than openness? In our view, it’s the other way around.

Repetition as meaning provides the reader with an example of authorial creativity. In the historical context of the closed work, this example might not have been practically useful, because the reader supposedly thought of the creative process as unknown territory, only discoverable by a gifted subject who composes “by a species of fine frenzy” (Poe 1297). But contemporary literary theory has taken a decisive turn towards

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2 It should be mentioned that Metzidakis moves a step further to state that “repetition is that process which allows the reader to grasp any meaning whatsoever” (50).

3 See also Hillis-Miller (93).

openness, notably shifting the weight from the independence of aesthetics to the importance of poetics (Robey xiii). This shift leads us to think that reading as a dynamic, dialectical process (Iser 294) now has an explicitly “educational” role; reading is the first step towards writing. In other words, we argue that works are characterized by different degrees of openness according to the historical conditions of their creation, but what is most important is the reader’s perceptive faculties. As Walter Benjamin believed, “what is regressive or progressive is determined not by the form of the work, not primarily by the visual constitution or content of the image, but by the conditions of its perception” (Haxthausen 61). The work suggests its potential meanings; the reader realizes these meanings by any means available.

It is all a question of potentiality then. When Raymond Queneau composed his “Cent mille milliards de poèmes” (“One Hundred Thousand Billion Poems,” first ed. 1961), in accordance with the declarations of the then newly founded Oulipo group (Motte, *Early Oulipo* 47), he had created a staggering amount of possible, yet unrealizable by a single subject,<sup>4</sup> texts and meanings. His collection of ten sonnets, each comprising fourteen lines following the formal tradition, is an excellent example of the *paradox* we have been dealing with in this essay. The fact that all lines comply with metrical and other constraints, while at the same time they can randomly combine with one another to create an “abundance of possible meanings” (Eco 94), describes, in our view, the role of repetition in texts: to embody the dominant, omnipresent oscillation between meaning and information, mimesis and innovation, law and transgression, signification and music (see Kristeva 433). By allowing the reader to comprehend this complexity, repetition serves as a fundamental trait of accessibility and openness in literature.

In this short article, we have tried to point out some of the very many aspects of repetition in relation to the open work of literature. By no means

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4 According to Queneau’s own calculations, going through all possible sonnets (1014) “would demand more than a million centuries of reading, at a rate of eight hours a day, two hundred days a year” (Queneau qtd. in Motte, *Early Oulipo* 47).



has this essay been exhaustive or even complete in its way of treating theoretical concepts and textual examples. Its goal has been to introduce the reader to an interesting discussion, which, for reasons very briefly mentioned here, has not been given enough attention, although interest has been growing in the past few years.<sup>5</sup> If we have succeeded in channeling to the reader at least some meaning and information, or something in between, we consider the effort to be worthwhile.

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5 Repetition was attracting significant amounts of scholarly interest for a decade or so, around the 1970s and 1980s, following the publication of central works by Gilles Deleuze ("Difference and Repetition") and Jacques Derrida ("Signature, Event, Context"). More recent scholars have been studying the role of repetition in music and poetry (see, for example, Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*, and Mazur, *Poetry and Repetition: Walt Whitman, Wallace Stevens, John Ashbery*).

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# Closing an Open Discussion?

Applying the Social Construction of Digital Technology Framework to the Open Access Movement

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The rise of digital technologies over the last thirty years has upended the traditional academic publishing model. Amidst calls from the scientific community for more free and open access to academic scholarship, major academic publishers have, in the age of the Internet, still maintained a “publishing oligopoly” over access to this material through establishing paywalls and online subscription models (Larivière et al. 10-15). Academic publishers have therefore been able to maintain and even increase profits by charging subscription fees to academic libraries. Because publishers have effective control over a closed market, this has resulted in a “serials crisis”, leaving libraries struggling to afford the high subscription rates offered by publishing firms, putting strain on budgets, and sometimes resulting in subscription cancellations (12).

The Open Access (OA) movement has gained ground in the last twenty years as an alternative to the traditional academic publishing model. This movement involves a complex ecosystem of digital technologies, business processes, and social actors offering proposed solutions to the problem of the academic publishing oligopoly and the serials crisis. This article will feature an analysis of the OA business model as a proposed solution to the academic publishing oligopoly and the serials crisis, with the help of two related theoretical frameworks that open up areas of inquiry into why some innovations succeed and others fail.

Pinch and Bijker’s Social Construction of Technologies (SCOT) framework, firstly, provides an evolutionary model of technological change that is non-linear and allows for the exploration of the success or failure of a given technological solution (411). SCOT takes the position that technological innovation and adoption is not a linear process, but rather one that is shaped by the social groups for whom a technological artefact is relevant (414). In SCOT, “the developmental process of a technological artefact is described as an alternation of variation and selection”, which results in a non-linear, multi-directional model of technological innovation (411). In this model, solutions to technological problems are proposed and adopted by different social groups that have been impacted by the artefact, and those solutions that are seen to solve the problem become more widely adopted (414). Not all social groups impacted by the artefact

will have found it to be problematic or will find the proposed solutions satisfactory; these groups will then propose alternative innovations, thus resulting in a multi-directional model of change. Those relevant social groups who have found the solution to be satisfactory will then, according to SCOT, attempt to close the discussion and “stabilize the artefact” (claiming the problem to be solved and entrenching the adopted solution) through a process of rhetorical closure and closure by redefining the problem (424). What is key here is that closure in technology

*involves the stabilization of an artefact and the “disappearance” of problems. To close a technological “controversy” the problems need not be solved in the common sense of that word. The key point is whether the relevant social groups see the problem as being solved. (426-427)*

Social groups can use “rhetorical closure” to simply claim that the problem is now solved. Social groups also attain closure by redefining the original problem “in such a way as to establish consensus with other social relevant groups – thereby neutralizing arguments for alternative interpretations” (Van Baalen et al. 3).

## **The SCODT Framework**

Secondly, Van Baalen et al. extend the SCOT theory to make it relevant for the digital era. They build upon the evolutionary implications of the variation/selection model of technological innovation described by SCOT by situating technological change with a digital ecosystem, defined by McCormack as “the combination of all relevant digital touchpoints, the people that interact with them, and the business processes and technology environment that support both” (qtd. in Van Baalen et al. 4). The SCODT theory that they propose takes “into account the nature of digital technologies underpinning digital ecosystems, networked individualists as active stakeholders, the sociodigital context, and the interaction between people

and digital technologies” (5). Van Baalen et al. extend SCOT along four dimensions:

*(1) Technologies – from organizational IS to digital technologies: Extending the unit of analysis to digital ecosystems from information systems;*

*(2) Interaction – from interpersonal interaction to interpersonal, person-technology, technology-technology and technology-physical environment interactions: Taking into consideration how humans and technologies interact;*

*(3) Social Groups – from relevant social groups to networked individualism: Recognizing that the Web has allowed for the growth of “fragmented, opportunistic, fast connecting individuals and organizations forming temporary relevant social groups”;*

*(4) Context – from social context to socio-digital context: Recognizing the power asymmetries which “give different relevant social groups asymmetric access to (information) resources that are relevant in the construction of technology”, and the implications these power differentials have on the construction of digital ecosystems (5).*

While OA is not a technology per se, some social groups in the OA movement see it as the solution to the problem of the publishing oligopoly and the high costs of accessing research articles and data. The SCODT framework extends the SCOT model so that its applicability reaches beyond the mere artefact, and the OA publishing movement can be viewed as a “digital touchpoint” open to analysis from the point of view of SCODT (5). Applying the SCODT framework to the OA movement, as a response to the problem of the academic publishing oligopoly and the serials crisis, illuminates the myriad ways in which social actors respond to technological change. Puehringer et al. distinguish five

*different actors within the debate evolving around OA, who have partly opposing goals, claims, possibilities and perspectives:*

(i) authors, (ii) publishing companies, (iii) (public) funding agencies (iv) universities and libraries and (v) the scientific community (4).

All these social groups have proposed solutions to the publishing oligopoly and the serials crisis, and their perspectives are worthy of exploration. For the purposes of scope, however, this study will be limited to the exploration of the response of academic publishers to the OA movement. As a social group within the OA ecosystem, publishing companies by virtue of their oligopoly over the market bear significant responsibility for the serials crisis and the OA movement which has arisen in response to it, and the OA business model they propose as a solution provides a useful case study in applying SCODT to digital technological innovation.

### **Applying SCODT: Academic Publishing and the Rise of OA**

The traditional print model of academic publishing can be traced back to the seventeenth century. The first scientific journal, the *Journal des Sçavans*, was published in 1665, and a few months later, Henry Oldenburg's *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* introduced the practice of peer review (Eger and Scheufen 12). Subsequently, the number of scholarly journals published on specialized topics began to increase exponentially, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the scholarly journal was recognized as "the fastest and most convenient way of disseminating new research results" (Larivière et al. 2). Journals at this time were usually published by learned societies, with university presses joining the field later in the nineteenth century (Eger and Scheufen 12). The mid-nineteenth century in Europe saw widespread university reform and the increasing professionalization of academic scholarship (Fyfe et al. 6). The now-widespread "concept of a university as a community of scholars, in which both students and staff engaged in critical enquiry, meant that professors were expected to engage in both teaching and research" (5). Thus, the quality and quantity of a researcher's publications



came to be central to their reputation as a scholar and their suitability for teaching appointments, and scholarly publishing became ever more central to academia (6).

After the Second World War, the academic publishing industry grew further, and commercial publishers came to dominate the market. These publishers relied on a subscription model whereby readers could access publications based on a fee; academic libraries and learned societies typically subscribed to print journals to allow students and scholars access to this material (Eger and Scheufen 12). With the advent of the Web and the PDF in the 1990s (van Baalen et al. 3), academic publishing moved mostly online. Although some saw this digital paradigm shift as a potential means of lowering subscription fee costs,

*the form of the scholarly journal was not changed by the digital revolution. The PDF became the established format of electronic journal articles, mimicking the print format. What was affected by the digital revolution is the economic aspect of academic publishing and the journal market (Larivière et al. 2).*

Academic publishers retained their subscription access model, instituting electronic toll access to academic journals. These publishers have generally seen their revenues increase, with profit margins of between 35 and 40 per cent (Eger and Scheufen 13). Currently, the ‘Big Five’ academic publishers – Wiley-Blackwell, Springer Nature, Elsevier, the American Chemical Society (ACS), and Taylor & Francis – control up to 75% of the academic publishing market (Puehringer et al. 2), and prices for access have only increased (Eger and Scheufen 55). Libraries are still required to pay high fees for access to research output, such that they are unable to keep pace with rising costs due to increasingly tight budgets for subscription purchases (Larivière et al. 11). Compounding the issue is that publishing is now central to the reward structure of academia, and so authors continue to submit their research to the high-impact journals owned by the Big Five academic publishers, thus further entrenching the problem (Eger and Scheufen 35).

## Multi-Dimensional Innovation

The development of the Web and the PDF represented a paradigm shift in the realm of textual media. Larivière et al. claim that, during the 1990s, it seemed that digital publishing could go one of two ways: although some saw the Web as a potential solution to the serials crisis, “most authors hypothesized that it would actually make the situation worse or, at least, not provide a solution” (2). In fact, through the lens of SCODT, one can trace the multi-directional lines of innovation suggested by the interdependent social groups invested in academic publishing and OA. It is useful to outline these here, as they constitute lines of innovation proposed by other stakeholders, to which academic publishers are in turn responding. The OA publishing ecosystem is complex, and SCODT takes into account “networked individualism,” whereby sub-groups and sub-interactions between and among social groups can take place. Relevant social groups considered here, aside from publishing companies, include authors, (public) funding agencies, universities and libraries, and the scientific community. Some members of these relevant social groups have also gone along with the OA business model and are happy to promote OA within their institutions and social groups; others have proposed alternative solutions. These myriad responses also constitute examples of multi-directional technological innovation as described by SCODT.

The OA movement arose in reaction to both the possibilities offered by the Web and to the nascent domination of academic publishing by major firms. It is a broad international movement that seeks to grant free and open online access to academic information, such as publications and data. A publication is defined as “open access” when there are “no financial, legal or technical barriers to accessing it... [W]hen anyone can read, download, copy, distribute, print, search for and search within the information, or use it in education or in any other way within the legal agreements” (“What is Open Access?”).

The scientific community, authors, and other relevant social (sub)groups of networked individuals began to promote the ideas of OA and open science, providing a possible path of innovation as well as an ideological

and ethical framework through which to view the digital textual revolution. For “cyber-optimists”,

*digital technologies offer[ed] collaborative, non-market approaches to scholarly publishing, releasing it from the grip of corporate publishers and breaking down the knowledge hierarchies and high paywalls that lock resource poor scholars out of subscription journals. (Meagher 342-343)*

The scientific community also began to endorse OA, suggested means of promoting OA, and securing funding for OA publishing. Three influential public statements, the *Budapest Open Access Initiative* (February 2002), the *Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing* (June 2003), and the *Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities* (October 2003) further defined and popularized the growing OA movement, fueling an interest in OA publishing that has continued apace (Suber 7). Authors, libraries, and research institutions developed green OA repositories such as CogPrints, arXiv, and the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) (Eger and Scheufen 13-15). Academic libraries promoted OA through instruction and advocacy, and by committing to investing in open scholarship (Scott et al. 368). Authors frustrated by the current academic publishing environment have decided to boycott major academic publishers and only publish in OA journals; some universities and consortia have also attempted this (Khoo). Some authors even banded together to create their own Open Access journals such as *PLOSOne*, “conducting rigorous quality monitoring and attracting excellent submissions” (Eger and Scheufen 110). Some members of the scientific community have gone even further, eschewing the OA business model completely and establishing rogue networks, such as Sci-Hub, that illegally download and share, for free, copyrighted academic publications (James 1502). All these innovations represent possible solutions to the problem of the academic publishing oligopoly, and it remains to be seen which of these innovations will continue to “survive”, and which will “die” (Pinch and Bijker 411).

## Stabilization and Closure

The digital paradigm shift of the 1990s did not inspire innovation among the major academic publishers; rather, they simply transferred their traditional subscription access model to the Web and continued to see their market shares and profits increase (Larivière et al. 10). As the OA movement gained popularity, partly in response to the serials crisis created by the academic publishing oligopoly, academic publishers have recognized the OA movement as a reality of digital publishing, if not as a threat to their traditional business model (Esposito). Thus, academic publishers proposed their own solution to the serials crisis: the OA business model. Publishers such as Sage and Elsevier established their own fully OA journals, or hybrid journals in which OA is granted to individual articles whose authors have paid an article publication charge (APC) (Eger and Scheufen 32). In this business model, costs of publication are shifted from the reader to the author, and to public funding bodies that can sponsor academic research and APCs. The Big Five publishers have also begun purchasing established OA journals and directories, and currently the Big Five academic publishers have now all adopted OA models to some degree. By offering OA options to researchers as the solution to the serials crisis, they have rhetorically *closed* the issue as per the SCODT framework: it is implicitly *solved* for academic publishers, because they can shift the burden of costs to readers and public funding bodies rather than authors. It is useful to remember here that, according to SCOT/SCODT, the “key point is whether the relevant social groups *see* the problem as being solved”, and *not* whether the problem has actually been solved at all (Pinch and Bijker 426-427). The OA business model does not effectively solve the serials crisis or the publishing oligopoly for any other actor in this ecosystem, but it does redefine the problem so as not to disrupt the publishing industry. The problem here is the massive profits that these publishers have been able to generate – through APCs and charging libraries exorbitant subscription fees – while still seeming to endorse the ideals behind OA. Rather than seeing the problem as one of high access costs and profits (and of course, profits are not the problem for academic

publishers) the problem is redefined as being about the cost to the user; shifting costs away from the user to authors, and therefore, to public funding bodies, *closes* the problem for the academic publishing industry and is thus the solution that they endorse.

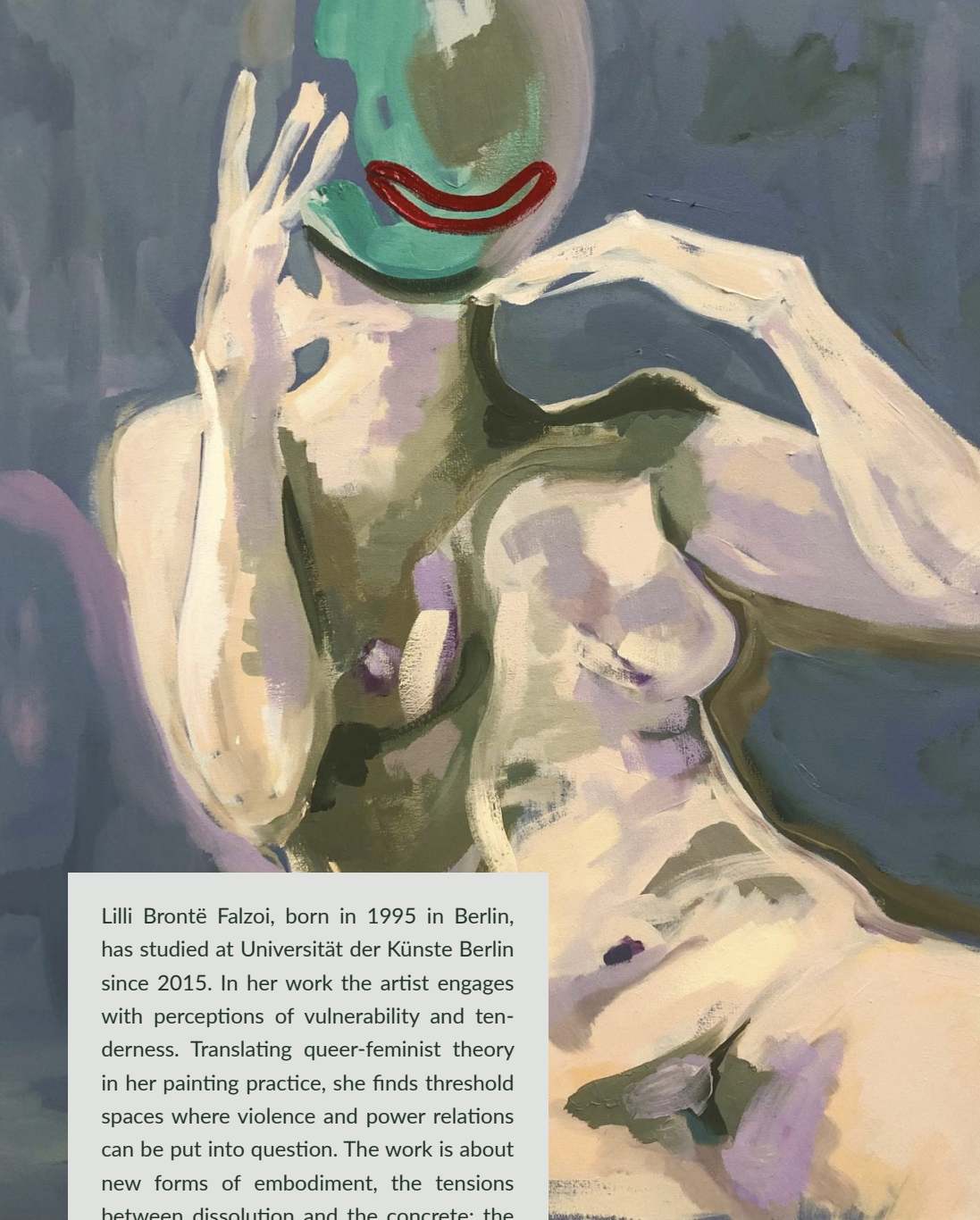
## Discussion

Rhetorical closure and redefining the problem within other relevant social groups is useful to explore as well, for it may be the case that the co-optation by academic publishers of OA as a viable solution to the serials crisis is given cover when other social groups appear to acquiesce to this solution. Arguably, university libraries have rhetorically closed the issue, implicitly, by endorsing the OA movement and promoting OA publishing among their research communities (Scott et al. 366). Many universities and research institutes worldwide have signaled their support for OA through advocacy and IT infrastructure support (368). International funding bodies and advocacy groups have taken on the cause of OA publishing through legislation such as Plan S, which requires researchers who receive public funds to publish their work in OA repositories or journals (Björk 189). This would indicate that, for some relevant social groups, the OA business model is the solution to the problem of the academic publishing oligopoly and the serials crisis. Certainly, from the point of view of academic publishers, the problem is now *closed*. Arguably, however, the only parties who are truly served by the OA business model are academic publishers, while other social groups do not substantially benefit. Despite the implicit acceptance of the OA business model by these social groups, sub-groups within each of these social groups have arisen to provide their own solutions to the academic publishing oligopoly and the serials crisis. The SCODT framework takes into consideration multi-dimensional innovation, and the solutions proposed by these other social groups within the academic publishing ecosystem, as well as the role of authors, funding agencies, universities and libraries, and the scientific community in the OA movement, is also worthy of deeper analysis through this lens.

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Lilli Brontë Falzoi, born in 1995 in Berlin, has studied at Universität der Künste Berlin since 2015. In her work the artist engages with perceptions of vulnerability and tenderness. Translating queer-feminist theory in her painting practice, she finds threshold spaces where violence and power relations can be put into question. The work is about new forms of embodiment, the tensions between dissolution and the concrete; the invisible and the visible. To whom do we endow our gaze and what is being overlooked?

*i'll kill the final girl, Carol*  
January 2022  
Oil on canvas,  
50 x 70 cm





# Raising Awareness of Open Access through Game-Based Learning

*Samaneh Borji*

Samaneh Borji is an independent researcher. In 2020, she received a master's degree in *Knowledge and Information Science* from Shahid Beheshti University. After earning an award as one of the top young Iranian early career researchers for her master's thesis, she opted to continue her fascinating research adventure. Her work focuses specifically on the application of technologies in the field of information science. Her favorite place to study and conduct research is libraries, where human science and knowledge have flourished.

Scholars require access to relevant academic material to further the growth of knowledge. Today, the preferred way of access is to download a digital copy and read it directly from the screen or as a printout. As literature becomes increasingly interdisciplinary, global, and digital, it also becomes more expensive; costs are concealed behind technical barriers and license constraints (Bailey 2). To facilitate access to articles without any restrictions posed by subscriptions, many researchers and scholars are taking steps to make their work available online digitally, and free of most copyright and license limitations (Suber 4). This is commonly referred to as Open Access (OA). OA is already having a major positive effect on the accessibility of scientific journal literature (Björk et al. 2). Nevertheless, the potentials of OA are not yet widely used (Siler and Frenken 29), in large part due to a lack of awareness. The implications of OA and its publishing models are still unknown among some academic scholars (Emojorho et al. 3; Rafiq and Sultan 2; Rodriguez 605). Authors who have not previously published in an OA journal attributed this to various reasons, most common being a lack of familiarity with such publications and the benefits of OA publishing (Swan and Brown 220). In contrast, faculty members who have a high level of awareness or use of OA perceived it positively (Kaba and Said 95). Open Access awareness and expertise could be increased through ongoing advocacy programs and training (Kassahun and Nsala 10). Additionally, training and online courses can assist researchers in overcoming obstacles associated with the use of OA resources (Bala et al. 139).

Certain educational institutions and universities have taken a bold, courageous, and curious approach to increase engagement in OA training by developing educational OA-themed Games (OAGs). These games were developed to raise awareness and teach the concepts of openness and OA, resulting in great engagement from students, academic staff, and professional services staff (Sundsbo 5). The OAGs have provided a positive environment for conversations around OA (Hoffner et al. 424). Moreover, it is expected that these games will create incentives for scientists to engage with OA (Mazarakis and Bräuer 62).

It is suggested in this study that using OAGs as a tool in educational centers, notably in universities and academic libraries, is an effective teaching strategy. In addition to outlining the various efforts and nine connected games, it identifies and discusses the presently available OAGs in the world. Following that, the OAGs' features will be identified using a checklist developed in accordance with the game-based learning model (GBL model).

### OA-Themed Games

The author found nine games developed to teach players the concept of OA. There are two kinds of OAGs – physical games and online games. The materials of physical games, such as cards, boards, rules, and pictures, are available as PDF, PowerPoint, and Word files to be downloaded and printed by users. The online games are played virtually, and players must visit the websites. Some OAGs also aim to teach many other research-related themes. The studied games with their types and themes are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Educational Games which teach Open Access

Name	Type	Themes
Academia: Bioscience Edition	Physical	Open Access; Research methods
Creative Commons Card Game	Physical	Open licenses
Game of Open Access	Physical	Open Access
Impact Game	Physical	Data; Impact; Open Access
Open Access Escape Room	Both	Open Access
Open Access Mystery	Online	Open Access
Open Axis: The Open Access Video Game	Online	Open Access
Publishing Trap	Both	Authorship; Copyright; Data; Impact; Open Access; Open licenses
Researchers, Impact, and Publications (R.I.P.)	Physical	Data; Impact; Open Access

## 1 *Academia: Bioscience Edition*

In the game *Academia: Bioscience Edition*, players must collaborate with their fellow scientists to create a cancer cure. This game is designed to teach about OA by introducing some generalities and more specific conditions about OA processes. This game is also a resource that covers information related to carrying out research more generally, such as teaching research methods. To do so, they must collaborate to investigate and publish at least five key ideas. Idea cards, rules cards, events cards, tool cards, OA cards, restricted access tokens, and player actions cards are among the seven cards and tokens available on Figma (“*Academia: Bioscience Edition*”). There is also a printable game deck that users can utilize.

The player must turn over their next event card and resolve the challenge immediately at the start of their turn. After that, the player can take up to four actions before passing the baton clockwise to the next player. Players can select from two or more activity types, such as *ponder*, *research*, *publish*, *learn*, *teach*, and *collaborate*. A player is considered to have access to a research output if they either researched and published it themselves or if one of the other players did. Due to role or event limits, even if the output has been published with restricted access, some players may still be unable to access it.

## 2 *Creative Commons Card Game*

Cambridge University Libraries came up with the idea of the *Creative Commons Card Game*. Simple cards in this game allow educators to introduce the concept of creating a Creative Commons license to students. It also allows them to consider what the various components of license types signify and how they may be combined to produce a custom license. Individuals or small groups can play the cards, and the game can be competitive or just for fun. The game can be played using any materials; however, the instructions include several examples and copies of the cards to print in a *PowerPoint* file (“*Creative Commons Card Game*”).

Instructors must first print and cut out as many sets of *Creative Commons Cards* as they require for their students. Then they must provide learners with an example resource (for example, a photograph or a presentation) to which a license should be attached. Then they must define the usage they want to allow/prohibit and invite learners to generate a license using the cards. When students have completed the course, instructors show them a genuine license. If learners have questions regarding the licenses and how they are put together, this can be utilized to start a discussion.

### 3 *Game of Open Access*

The *Game of Open Access* is a board game created by workers from the University of Huddersfield's Computing and Library Services. The goal is to familiarize researchers with the main ideas and tools needed to comply with OA requirements. It seeks to create an awareness of the function of OA from the original concept for an article through its acceptance for publishing through the use of creative learning. The game comprises three files: the *Game Board*, a deck of cards, and the *Rules*, which are available on the University of Huddersfield's website ("The Game of Open Access"). In this game, players must throw the dice to move their playing piece around the board, following the instructions. If they answer the question correctly, they may keep the card. When two or more players are playing, all players must reach the end and publish their article before the game is complete. Then, they take an OA card whenever they land on the relevant spaces. If they answer the question incorrectly, they must return the card to the bottom of the pile. The winner is the person with the most OA cards, not the first to publish their article.

During the University of Antwerp's *OA Week 2021*, a group of students organized an *OA Student Event*. The project's objective was to increase student knowledge of OA and *Open Science* conversations and practices. To enhance the enjoyment of this experience, they customized previous versions of *The Game of Open Access* for the University of Antwerp's event. They made the customized game's digital assets available through

Zenodo (“Open Access Student Event – The game of Open Access”), in anticipation of other institutions being interested in repurposing and altering them for use in various contexts. Promisingly, the game has been translated into French by the University of Lille and enriched by the University of Réunion. It has also been adapted to the Belgian context by the Libraries of the ULB (van Nieuwerburgh).

#### 4 *Impact Game*

*The Impact Game* is inspired by *Snakes and Ladders* and created by Cranfield University. Participants compete to be the first to reach the end of the game board, answering questions and discussing things like research data management, research impact, and OA. Materials relating to the game are available on Figshare (“The Impact Game”).

#### 5 *Open Access Escape Room*

*Physical Version:* The University of Essex designed this OA-themed escape room, the *Open Access Escape Room*. Instructors will find all they need to set up their own *OA Escape Room* in a project published on Figshare (“Open Access Escape Room”). The instructions provide a general overview of how the game works. The script instructs the host and villain on how to interact with the audience. The *PowerPoint Timer* and *Hints* feature a countdown timer and a clue system to assist players. The layout provides a visual representation of the puzzles. Finally, downloadable components and props have been supplied to make the game as simple to develop as feasible. However, there will be some objects that the escape room instructions will need to make, buy, or borrow in order to put up.

*Online Version:* *Hunt for Open Access* is the name of the online version of this game (“The puzzling hunt for Open Access”). Players will appear in the future – 2120 – and all research will be freely available to readers and authors. *Diamond OA* is the term for this. It was different in 2020 because

making research freely available may be costly or time-consuming. As an advocate for OA, the player must lend a hand. A villain has sequestered all research at the University of Essex and has threatened to sequester all research worldwide. The player's goal is to stop them, unlock the research, and restore access to everything. According to legend, there are two ways to reopen everything: the *Green* and the *Gold Routes*. Before they can start uncovering the research, the players must first solve the clues for both pathways.

## 6 *Open Access Mystery*

The University of Essex developed the *Open Access Mystery* to connect colleagues, friends, and strangers through an online role-playing mystery game during the COVID-19 pandemic period in 2020, when many conferences and networking opportunities were postponed or canceled. This game was created for virtual play via *Zoom*, *Skype*, *Microsoft Teams*, or other such online platforms. The *Open Access Mystery* chronicles the encounters of eight very diverse persons at a symposium. During the conference, calamity strikes, and it is up to the players to determine who is responsible for what turns out to be a global lockdown on all research. While solving this mystery, the player becomes familiar with the concepts related to OA, as well as its obstacles and benefits. The contents supplied will include everything necessary for players to create their own *OA Mystery*, including character packs and a host information bundle (“Open Access Mystery”).

## 7 *Open Axis: The Open Access Video Game*

The librarians of the University of UCLA invented *Open Axis: The Open Access Video Game*, a *choose-your-own-adventure* game. The players take on the role of a scholar navigating the world of research and scholarly publishing. They click on various links to progress as they make decisions.



Within the adventure, there are several distinct sorts of 2D platformer minigames. The game's goal is to teach players how to engage with open research techniques in various ways, highlighting best practices and further resources. The game is available online on the website ("Open Axis: The Open Access Video Game").

## 8 Publishing Trap

*Physical Version:* The *Publishing Trap* is a board game developed by the UK Copyright Literacy team that enables participants to examine the consequences of their academic communication decisions and debate the significance of OA in research ("The Publishing Trap"). The game is about intellectual communication and research distribution in higher education. It chronicles the academic careers of four characters, who are confronted with various circumstances at various stages of their careers, from *Ph.D. Submission* through *Professorship*. The characters choose how to distribute their research through conferences, academic journals, monographs, and textbooks. The game teaches researchers how money, intellectual property rights, and open and closed publishing methods affect their research's diffusion and impact. By teaming up to play the game, players can discuss the consequences of each character's choices. The game concludes at the end of the character's life when players realize their choices' financial, intellectual, and social ramifications.

*Online Version:* The game is a team game in which up to 24 participants compete in up to four teams. It retains many of the original board game's characteristics, with the exception of the board. It is intended to be used in conjunction with a virtual classroom program that has break-out room features. This simulates the team talks that would have occurred as players gathered around the board to make character-related decisions. *Publishing Trap Online* is available to download ("The Publishing Trap Online").

## 9 Researchers, Impact, and Publications (R.I.P.)

*Researchers, Impact, and Publication* was created by the University of Bristol. Based on *Cards Against Humanity*, this game tries to teach players about various research-related subjects, such as OA, through a humorous approach. The game can be played with as few as four players and as many as eight. There is no upper limit, but it is most enjoyable with six to eight players. For the group, each player reads aloud their card combination. Players should be prepared to justify or explain their decisions, whether appropriate or improper. The *Card Czar* then chooses their favorite play and awards one *Awesome Point* to the person who submitted it. The game materials are available on the university's website ("Researchers, Impact & Publications (R.I.P) Game data (01-2020)").

### GBL Model Factors in the OAGs

In this part, the studied OAGs are categorized according to their features, based on a GBL model proposed by Shi and Shih (5). Their study, entitled "Game factors and game-based learning design model," extracted primary and essential factors affecting the design of an educational game, and divided them into four main factors and their components based on their importance and relationships:

- 1 **Goals:** Learning goals turn into game goals after designing the game. All OAGs aim to teach OA and other research-related themes (shown in Table 1).
- 2 **Mechanism:** Katsarov et al. defines the mechanism as follows: players' choices and actions, roles, perspectives, goals, feedback, rewards, and probable consequences (347). The OAGs' mechanisms are categorized in Table 2.

**Table 2** Categorizing the OAGs according to their mechanism

Mechanism	Name
Snakes and Ladders	- Impact Game
Card	- Academia: Bioscience Edition - Creative Commons Card Game - Researchers, Impact, and Publications (R.I.P.)
Board Game	- Game of Open Access - Publishing Trap
Escape Room	- Open Access Escape Room
Adventure and Mystery	- Open Axis: The Open Access Video Game - Open Access Mystery

- **Interaction** involves any type of communication during the game, from the user interface to monitoring the character (Coutinho et al. 1). Generally, each OAG has its unique interactions; for example, in the Open Access Mystery game, players virtually interact through an online role-playing mystery game via online platforms.
  - **Freedom:** It refers to the player’s access to different game parts (Wilson et al. 217). Some OAGs were presented as an open education resource (OER), meaning they can be edited and personalized according to the (educational) needs of the user.
- 3 Fantasy:** The use of fantasy in games has several benefits; it provides users with a unique environment in which it is safe to experience and explore a decision’s consequences (Garris et al. 448). For example, in some of the studied games, users’ access to research in the world is blocked imaginatively.
- **Narration:** Juul specified this as a story including game characteristics, existents, situations, and actions. For example, in *The Puzzling Hunt for Open Access*, the game’s story takes place in the future; 2120. A villain locks all the research at the University of Essex and threatens to lock all of the research in the world. In this game, the user (a supporter of Open Access) must prevent the villain from carrying out their evil plan, and unlock the research and re-release access to the investigation.

- **Sensation:** The most common word used to refer to *sensation* is “simulation” (Kim). In *Open Axis: The Open Access Video Game*, at the stage where the user needs to collect resources, a library view is simulated in which the researcher collects resources by feeling the presence of a library while identifying the appropriate resources.
- 4 **Value:** The factors that motivate the user to start the game are *game value*. Achievements will be obtained despite the challenges facing the players and will eventually lead to rewards. For example, in *Game Impact*, participants compete with others and overcome challenges, trying to be the first to reach the endpoint. Players can reach the endpoint and be rewarded by answering questions regarding research data management, research impact, and free access as they follow the right path.
- **Challenges:** These are the obstacles the player confronts to achieve their goals (Denisova et al. 2511). For example, in *Open Axis: The Open Access Video Game*, a stage has been designed to acquaint the player with virtual communication methods using research help (librarians, professors, and facilitators). At this stage, the player must find a path, work through obstacles, and familiarize themselves with OA methods along the way. In some games, challenges have been designed to assess the knowledge and skills of the researcher, such as games in which the player can progress by answering questions in the field of OA.
  - **Sociality:** The social behavior within a game is divided into *communication, cooperation, competition, and conflict*. Existing OAGs can be played both in groups and individually (some allow for either option).
  - **Mystery:** The game arouses curiosity and encourages exploration by the player. This is mentioned as an essential but unnecessary component in the GBL model. This factor is present in some OAGs, particularly games with escape room mechanisms. According to the GBL model, each OAG was explored and evaluated to determine the game’s status concerning the factors and their components (Table 3).

**Table 3** The GBL factors and their components in the OAGs

Game Name	Components of the GBL Model							
	Goals	Mechanism		Fantasy		Value		
		Interaction	Freedom	Narrative	Sensation	Challenges	Sociality	Mystery
Academia: Bioscience Edition	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Creative Commons Card Game	✓	✓					✓	✓
Game of Open Access	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Impact Game	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓
Open Access Escape Room	✓	✓		✓				✓
Open Access Mystery	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Open Axis: The Open Access Video Game	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Publishing Trap	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Researchers, Impact, and Publications (R.I.P.)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓

## Conclusion

Open Access continues to have a considerable impact on the academic publishing landscape. Nonetheless, many scholars are unfamiliar with the concept of OA. Many educational institutions have taken a curious approach to raising awareness of OA by developing educational OAGs, resulting in great engagement. Identifying and categorizing the OAGs' features in this study provides a detailed picture of their meaningful role in the teaching process to educators and gives them a vivid idea of how to implement them better in university instruction modules. The findings also assist educators in designing educational modules and courses using OAGs and developing new OAGs using the presented checklist and analysis.

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# Towards a Conceptualisation of Replication in the Digital Humanities

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During the last few decades, researchers, funding agencies, academic publishers, and governments have increasingly exerted themselves to make the final and the intermediate results of academic research publicly available, with as few legal, practical or financial restrictions as possible (OECD 15; European Commission, *Open Innovation* 52). Nowadays, such efforts to enhance the transparency and openness of scholarly workflows are often subsumed under the wide umbrella of the Open Science movement. Advocates of Open Science mostly aim to ensure that the data, the publications, and the software that are created by researchers become accessible under terms that foster reuse and collaboration (Vicente-Saez et al. 433). This endeavour to transition to open research is frequently motivated by the conviction that such transparency can help to safeguard academic integrity and accountability. It is often assumed that when researchers share their data and methods alongside their publications, this enables peers to scrutinise the findings and to verify the conclusions. Eventually, this possibility to replicate the findings of research projects should instil a higher degree of trust in science and in scholarship, both within society at large and among the academic community itself (European Commission, *Open Innovation* 15).

Such attempts to replicate the results of earlier research projects have often proven problematic, however (Ioannidis 696). In a meta-analysis of 100 studies in the field of psychology, it was found that only 39 of the results could be corroborated (Open Science Collaboration 6; Baker, “First Results from Psychology’s Largest Reproducibility Test” 1). Similarly, in a survey conducted for *Nature*, it was found that 70% of all researchers who have tried to reproduce the experiments of their colleagues failed to arrive at identical results (Baker, “1,500 Scientists Lift the Lid on Reproducibility” 452). Reproducibility issues such as these came to the surface initially within disciplines such as psychology, biomedicine (Bustin 36), and pharmaceutical sciences, but, at the moment, it is often argued that the problem is more widespread (Munafò et al.). It has been claimed that, at present, numerous academic disciplines are in the throes of a rebarbative “replication crisis” (Baker, “1,500 Scientists Lift the Lid on Reproducibility” 453). Evidently, such failures to confirm research results can have

deeply detrimental effects on the esteem of scientific work. Academic research often builds on the results achieved by predecessors, but when such cumulative work is based on spurious findings, this will invariably lead to a waste of time and financial resources.

At the same time, it can be observed that the debate regarding the reproducibility of research has predominantly taken place within fields employing empirical and quantitative methodologies, such as the life sciences, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. So far, the concept of reproducibility has been of lesser relevance within the humanities, a field in which findings and analyses are often based on interpretation and on qualitative methods (Britt Holbrook et al.). Humanities scholars are generally interested in the meaning or the value of cultural or historical artefacts, and the interpretation of such artefacts often depends strongly on the background knowledge, the intentions, and the theoretical perspective of individual scholars. Even when the steps that have been followed within a study have been meticulously documented, it may still be the case that different researchers, faced with the same data and applying the same analytic methods, will arrive at divergent interpretations. In many cases, peers also lack access to the sources that have been consulted in a study, especially when such objects are located at distant sites or in remote heritage institutions. Scholars often place a degree of trust in the claims of their peers, accepting the findings that are published without examining the primary sources these claims are based on themselves (O'Sullivan; Bode 84ff).

The prominence of hermeneutics and idiosyncrasy notwithstanding, there are distinctly several humanistic subfields whose research protocols and outcomes may reasonably form the object of independent replication. Studies in the field of linguistics, for instance, typically draw on strict statistical methods, applied to carefully delineated corpora of language samples. By the same token, and more generally, the call of the Open Science movement for more transparency can presumably be answered readily by humanities researchers who make use of computational methods. In the research field that is commonly referred to as the *digital humanities*, scholars typically make use of digital data and

of algorithmic methods to address humanistic questions (Fitzpatrick 12). The application of digital tools and algorithms invariably requires a standardisation and an objectivisation of scholarly practices. This article aims to develop a conceptualisation of the term *replication* that is appropriate for the form of research that takes place in the digital humanities and intends to clarify the conditions that contribute to the replicability and the reproducibility of this specific area of research.

Such clarification of the central concepts is necessary, as the terminology used in this context continues to be convoluted (Plesser 2). The ambiguity stems in large part from the fact that different academic disciplines also have dissimilar notions of the rationale and the exact nature of reproducibility. Differences with respect to methodology, types of research data, epistemic values, and analytic tools may all affect the views on how studies can or should be replicated. Terms such as replication, reproduction, and repeatability have sometimes been defined in distinct and sometimes contradictory ways.<sup>1</sup> Despite such disagreements, it can be stated, in very broad terms, that reproduction and replication both describe a relationship between two studies. The first of these is an original study, and the second study aims to reuse or recreate specific elements of this earlier work.<sup>2</sup> The objective of such a revisitation is usually to determine whether the new study can achieve the same results as the earlier study. Reproductions and replications are considered to be successful if the results of the two studies are sufficiently congruent. Peels also emphasises that the results of the new study should not be determined or affected in any way by the results of the earlier study, and that it ought to reach its results independently, reusing only the data, the protocols, or the tools of the earlier study (3). While the general principles underlying reproduction and replication may be clear, researchers planning to reuse

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1 Plesser notes that Jon Claerbout and the Association for Computing Machinery have proposed contradictory definitions of the terms 'replicability' and 'reproducibility' (2). This article largely follows the definition given by Claerbout.

2 The KNAW defines a replication study as "a study that is an independent repetition of an earlier, published study, using similar methods and conducted under similar circumstances" (18).

or to evaluate parts of an earlier study will still need to translate these general principles into concrete operational steps, closely attuned to the methodological and epistemological traditions of particular academic fields. As part of such an operationalisation, a decision needs to be taken on whether the study aims to reproduce or to replicate the earlier work. The term *reproducibility* refers, more specifically, to the ability to repeat all the stages of the workflow that were followed in a study precisely, based on data and methods documented or made available by the original author.<sup>3</sup> This specific conceptualisation of *reproducible research* was developed by computer scientist Jon Claerbout. He encouraged his colleagues to ensure that the readers of a textual publication could duplicate the full analytic process that was implemented for the study, starting from raw data and eventually leading to the exact same results (Claerbout and Karrenbach 602; Donoho et al. 4). Reproduction implies the ability to redo a full experiment by following a set of instructions, and it may, for this reason, be viewed as a mechanical activity.<sup>4</sup> To underscore the idea that procedures such as these concentrate on the re-enactment of a method, Goodman et al. refer to reproducibility as *methods replication*.<sup>5</sup>

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3 The question whether two separate datasets can be considered identical may of course give rise to a more principled debate about the nature of identity and of equality in this context. In the case of a collection of digital data, we can assume that the data values can be copied from one location to another without any loss of information or quality. If no digital data are available, however, researchers aiming to reproduce a study may attempt to recreate the original results, by following the exact same protocol that was followed in the earlier study. Researchers aiming to reproduce results obtained in a laboratory setting, for instance, may try to regenerate these results by repeating the experiment under identical circumstances, as far as possible, but the data that result from the repeated experiment may not be fully identical. Evidently, for observations of unique historical events or one-off natural phenomena, such a faithful recreation of a data set would be impossible. To forgo difficulties such as these, the current discussion will limit itself to the case of digital data used in computational research.

4 Facilitating this stringent form of reproducibility can obviously pose some challenges. Research software may have a dependency on specific code libraries, for instance, and these libraries may also be available in different versions.

5 Goodman et al. define the term as “the ability to implement, as exactly as possible, the experimental and computational procedures, with the same data and tools, to obtain the same results” (2).

Importantly, reproducibility does not imply that we can verify whether a certain finding is correct or truthful. If there are mistakes in the reasoning underlying the code, these will clearly be reproduced as well. Computational reproducibility is concerned first and foremost with creating transparency. Because of such openness, peers can ascertain whether the data and the methods are indeed as they are represented in a publication. To be able to corroborate academic results, it is usually necessary to replicate the study. In contrast to reproduction, which essentially implies an exact repetition of an experiment based on the same data and the same code, replication refers to a re-implementation of the experiment. It demands a critical revisitation of the study, which attempts to determine whether the findings of this earlier study were correct (Plessner 1). A replication may potentially be based on data and code made available by the original author, but, if this is the case, the data and the code must also be subjected to a close and careful examination. Alternatively, scholars carrying out a replication can reconstruct or re-engineer a method, based on the documentation of the original methodology (Rougier et al. 5). In addition, they may choose to recreate or recollect the dataset discussed in the earlier work. Replicability demands transparency, which may result from the original author's attempts to make the research reproducible.<sup>6</sup> This type of replication, in which all the steps of the original study are revisited critically, can be pertinent if there is a suspicion of academic misconduct or fraud. Through a duplication of the study, peers can evaluate whether the data and its analysis genuinely lead to the findings as represented in a publication. Framed more positively, this strict form of replication can also be motivated by a need to corroborate or confirm earlier findings, and to ensure that follow-up research can reliably build on robust results. Next to such stringent forms of replication, in which researchers attempt to approximate the original methodology faithfully,

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6 Goodman et al. describe replication as the process of “obtaining the same results from the conduct of an independent study whose procedures are as closely matched to the original experiment as possible” and suggest that replication can also be referred to as “results reproducibility” (3).

a number of other laxer forms of replication can be distinguished. For example, researchers may apply the method that was developed within an earlier study to a new data set, to evaluate the generalisability of this approach, or attempt to answer the same question using the same data, but with a different method. This enables them to gauge the robustness of specific findings.

Following the conviction that, for the digital humanities, transparency is not a goal in itself, but rather a means to cultivate reuse and collaboration, it may be argued that replication is ultimately more relevant than mere reproduction. Replication actually implies a critical examination of the data and of the method, as well as an attempt to corroborate the findings of earlier research. To repeat and scrutinise the work that was performed in an earlier research project, first, it is necessary to acquire the raw data, and, potentially, the processed data. As is the case in virtually all disciplines, researchers in the humanities are increasingly stimulated to publish their dataset in agreement with the FAIR data management principles (Wilkinson et al.) and openly, if this is permitted within the constraints of intellectual copyright laws and data protection regulations. Within the digital humanities, primary data may consist of a wide range of resources, including images, videos, sound recordings, social media posts, or machine-readable text. Evidently, it is not possible in all cases to facilitate open access to all the materials that have been used. Research may be based on resources that are still protected under copyright law, or on resources that have been shared with specific teams of researchers following bespoke agreements with publishers of content providers. When data has been generated from dynamic online resources, such as social media platforms, researchers can also decide to develop and share code for the reconstruction of these datasets. This solution was implemented in the code developed for the research project described in Bourrier and Thelwall's article "The Social Lives of Books", published in the *Journal of Cultural Analytics*. The article examines readers of Victorian literature by comparing data from the Open Syllabus Project and the MLA International Bibliography with data extracted from Goodreads (Bourrier and Thelwall). The article contains a link to the GitHub repository



containing software that can download ratings of books directly from the Goodreads website. The dynamic nature of the Goodreads data creates a challenge for reproducibility, however. Since many new reviews and ratings have been added since the publication of the article, it can be difficult to confirm whether the results that are reported in the publication are accurate. Such differences are less problematic, nonetheless, when the aim of the replication is mostly to evaluate the validity of the method that is discussed.

Secondly, in addition to acquiring or reassembling the original data, scholars who seek to replicate a study need to criticise the method that was applied to analyse these data. In many cases, such criticism can take place through a reconstruction of the method, based on the documentation of the methodology offered in a publication. When the researchers responsible for the original study have published their research software in open source, the necessary criticism can obviously focus on the code. Fortunately, many scholars have begun to share the code they have developed openly using software repositories such as GitHub or Zenodo, under a licence that stimulates reuse. Such activities are propelled in part by the Open Science movement, which often sees open software as one of its central pillars (Lowndes et al.). In recent years, many developers of research software have also begun to make use of notebooks which combine code and human-readable documentation. Such notebooks are often based on RMarkdown or iPython, and enable programmers to develop code in the spirit of literate programming, a concept developed by Donald Knuth (Knuth 1ff). The central concept underlying literate programming is that programmers should intersperse the computer code with messages in a natural language explaining what they want the computer to do. Subsequently, these messages enable peers to develop an understanding of the logic that is implemented in the software. Such documentation can clearly be very helpful during replications, although it needs to be added that, while the development and the use of open source code continue to increase (Open Source Initiative), it can still be difficult occasionally to match code repositories to publications. At present, there is no firm tradition of citing software in scholarly articles yet.

Growing numbers of journals have adopted a data availability policy, implying that papers can be submitted exclusively if the reviewers and the readers can access the data, but very few journals have put in a place an analogous software availability policy.

Replication work may thirdly concentrate on the conclusions that are drawn from the results. Even if it is found that the data and the method indeed generate the results that are reported, scholars may still disagree, fully or partially, with the concluding statements inferred from these results. Goodman et al. refer to this aspect of replication as “inferential reproducibility”.<sup>7</sup> Scholars engaged in replication studies should consider whether the methods that were applied were suitable for the research question and whether the central claims that are made in the publication follow logically from the outcomes of the experiment. In fact, such attentiveness to conclusions is essential, as replication studies generally aim to determine whether particular methodologies can genuinely advance the production of credible and reliable knowledge.

The central objective of reanalyses, as discussed earlier, is to establish whether a new study can obtain the same results as an older study, but currently, there is no discipline-wide consensus concerning the precise nature of this sameness. When the numbers that are generated in a replication study are not fully identical to the numbers that are presented in the earlier paper, this evidently poses the question to which degree discrepancies are still acceptable. When should we conclude that replication is unsuccessful? It has been suggested that results agree sufficiently if the “replication shows a statistically significant effect ( $p < .05$ ) with the same direction as the original study” or when “the original effect size is within the 95% confidence interval of the effect size estimate from the replication” (Open Science Collaboration 77). Peels argues that two independent findings can be considered commensurate when they “have the same direction”, when they have a “similar effect size”, or when they display

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7 Goodman et al. define the term as “the making of knowledge claims of similar strength from a study replication or reanalysis” (3).

a “similar p value, confidence interval, or Bayes factor” (4). It may be argued, for example, that, when one study discovers a positive correlation between two variables, a second study can be seen to confirm these earlier results if it likewise establishes a positive correlation between these variables. Ultimately, it is probably undesirable to define fixed and generic margins for such deviations since the importance of such variations will often strongly depend on the goals of individual research projects. In the end, it will be the responsibility of individual researchers engaged in replication work to determine whether the results that are obtained in the new study still support the main claims that are made in the study that is revisited.

In sum, it can be stated that replication in the digital humanities entails a critical evaluation of the results of an earlier study, based on a close examination or a re-implementation of its scholarly workflow, including the data and the analytic software. Such replication studies can be expedited considerably via the open availability of all the scholarly resources that were generated in the original study, in step with the central tenets of the Open Science movement. When the eventual results of the new study agree with the results of the study under scrutiny, this is a good indication of the reliability of these outcomes. It simultaneously suggests that the original study’s methods can be reused productively in follow-up research. The conceptualisation of replication that is given above is admittedly rather lenient, and, given this leeway, it may prove difficult to create exact numbers about the number of studies whose results can genuinely be corroborated. If it is accepted that the aim of replication is mostly to prompt methodological discussions, the question of whether the digital humanities face a replication crisis immediately becomes less relevant. A recent EU report about reproducibility and replication also argued that, rather than framing the high number of irreproducible studies as a crisis, it is more beneficial to view replicability as an ideal to be pursued and to concentrate more closely on its benefits (European Commission, *Reproducibility of Scientific Results in the EU*: 8–9). Replicability implies a high level of transparency, which should enable peers to evaluate the correctness and relevance of findings. It can lead to a better understand-

ing of the methodology of academic fields, and, as such, it can buttress collaboration and interdisciplinarity. Taken together, these various consequences eventually help to strengthen the reliability and integrity of academic research.

Considering that the methodology of the digital humanities is, to a large extent, still in development, all attempts to replicate published findings can be highly beneficent for the advancement of the field. Next to evaluating the technical accuracy of findings, replication studies additionally ought to stimulate debates on the overall relevance and scholarly value of specific methodologies. Such tests of the suitability of these methods may stimulate other researchers to develop these analytic processes further. If a method has been shown to yield useful results within a specific context, colleagues can attempt to test the generalisability of the approach by applying it to other data and other domains. Replication studies accordingly form a vital prerequisite for the maturation of the field's methodology. For researchers in training and early career researchers, replication work may also entail education. By redoing some of the field's seminal studies, and using the numbers mentioned in published articles as a benchmark, scholars can effectively familiarise themselves with the practicalities of specific research methods and begin to learn about the history of their discipline.

The Swiss painter Paul Klee famously stated that art does not aim to reproduce what we can see, but, instead, to make us see.<sup>8</sup> Instead of solely imitating an existing reality, a painting should bolster a specific way of looking at the world. It ought to expose what is essential. Along similar lines, a scholarly replication can be viewed as a creative and critical interaction with an earlier work of scholarship, and the aim of such an exercise is not necessarily to replicate every single detail of the research design with the highest level of exactitude. The goal is first and foremost to revisit the essence of the study and to evaluate whether all the activities followed were adequate and effectual. Digital humanities research

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8 "Die Kunst gibt nicht das Sichtbare wieder, sondern macht sichtbar" (Klee 28).

ultimately seeks to discover those computational methods that enable us to explain languages, cultures, and societies, and, if executed well, such revisitations of past scholarly activities make us see and understand those methods that work.

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Oil on canvas, 90 x 120 cm





# Wattpad.com and fanfiction.de On the Rise

How Online Writing Platforms  
Open Up Literary Discourse

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Online writing platforms, such as the Canadian [wattpad.com](http://wattpad.com) or its German counterpart [fanfiction.de](http://fanfiction.de), are becoming increasingly popular. The importance of these story collection sites has grown rapidly, especially in recent years. They have established themselves as independent internet-based reading and writing locales, separate from the traditional literary scene.

Predominantly young people read, write, share, and comment on literary works hosted by these locales. Many share their first writing attempts in this way or look for suitable test readers for texts that they might want to submit to a publisher one day. However, Wattpad and similar platforms do not only have advantages for budding author – readers also benefit from the platforms' low financial and social barriers, as do publishers who are increasingly showing interest in this literary phenomenon.

The possibilities that online writing platforms offer for authors, readers, and publishers, and how they consequently open up literary discourse, will be discussed in the following article. For this purpose, it is first clarified what online writing platforms are and how they are used. Building on this, the question of why online writing platforms are (or should be) used by writers, readers, and publishers is explored. In this way, the influence of these platforms on the literary world and its participants will become apparent.

### **What are online writing platforms?**

Online writing platforms are sites on the internet where people can read and publish texts. Access to such platforms is usually free both for readers and writers. Authors only need an account with a username, then they can upload their stories and share them with others. Those who only want to use the platforms for reading can usually do so even without an account. However, those who do not create an account are limited in terms of functions. For example, they cannot save or comment on stories, engage with other users, and are often only allowed to read a limited number of stories or chapters per day.

The texts that can be read on these platforms are primarily literary works such as novels or short story collections. But there are also occasional guidebooks or non-fiction works. The writing is done both independently and in the form of fanfiction based on existing stories (“Hi. We’re Wattpad”).

In neither case do the authors earn money from their texts. With fanfiction, this is obviously not possible because of legal problems due to copyright. Independent works, though, are usually not remunerated on these sites either. Wattpad has been offering to generate income through cross-chapter advertising for some years now, but it is not possible for authors to earn money from their texts alone. Although Wattpad and fanfiction.de are often referred to as e-book platforms, their concept differs from conventional e-book providers such as Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing. In most cases, the e-books cannot be purchased, but only stored in a virtual library within the account. Moreover, the stories can only be read in the designated application. This usually includes a website that can be accessed via a Web browser and an app (“Hi. We’re Wattpad”). The stories can thus be read on a laptop, mobile phone, or tablet, but not via an e-reader. Accordingly, the reader remains committed to the platform and is, like the author, dependent on it and its applications.

Incidentally, online writing platforms are not a recent novelty. They already existed quite a long time before they became well-known, with users across the world. Wattpad, for example, was founded as early as 2006 (“Hi. We’re Wattpad”), but it is only in the last ten years – approximately – that has it achieved explosive popularity. As of today, it is used by “a global community of 94 million people – including five million writers – who have written more than one billion uploads on the platform” (“Naver Completes Wattpad Acquisition”).

As a result of this remarkable success, these platforms are constantly being developed further and their functions expanded. Consequently, the financial aspect comes increasingly to the fore. Wattpad, for example, not only provides paid premium accounts and promotes monetisation, but also organises various writing competitions, which are partially

rewarded with prizes (“Wattys 2021”). The winning texts are, usually, determined by reader voting.

In addition to the competitions (“Writing Contests”), there are various tutorials that have been added to most online writing platforms in recent years. Usually free of charge, authors get tips on all sorts of topics related to writing and publishing. Fanfiction.de, for instance, offers its users free tips on such topics as finding ideas, beta readers, dealing with reviews and reader comments, as well as the path to a publisher (“Tutorials”). These tips are often, such as in the case of Fanfiction.de, written by users. This fact may call the quality of the content of the tutorials into question but underlines the community idea that online writing platforms follow.

### **Why use online writing platforms as a writer?**

Using these platforms has various advantages for writers. A significant advantage is the low hurdles involved. While writers depend on the favour of publishers and editors in the regular literary market, on websites like Wattpad they are completely free in their work. All that writers have to do to start sharing their stories and ideas is creating an account. In this way, they are spared the search for the right publishing program, the writing of an exposé, the possible search for a literary agency, and the long (and often frustrating) wait for a response from desired publishers.

Publishing on online writing platforms thus has great similarities with classic self-publishing. The latter has long since established itself as an alternative to traditional publishing and is enjoying ever greater popularity among authors. But not every writer can afford the costs involved. Even though it is difficult to make general statements about how excessive costs for self-publishing are, it is clear that they are significantly higher than those for publishing on an online writing platform, since these usually amount to zero.

The reason for this is not, as one might think, the publication via a corresponding provider itself. This is indeed rarely associated with a high financial burden. Publishing via Amazon’s Kindle Direct Publishing

(“Kindle Direct Publishing”), for example, is free, and so are many other e-book providers. Regular self-publishing requires a substantial budget for the professionalisation of the texts. This includes editing, proofreading, typesetting, cover design, and the subsequent marketing of the texts. With online writing platforms, money is rarely spent on this. Instead, the texts are usually proofread by beta reader friends and covers are created independently using providers such as [canva.com](https://www.canva.com), or design tools offered by the platforms themselves. The typesetting of the text is usually omitted completely, as the platforms have prefabricated type areas in which the authors have only limited leeway for adjustments. The professionalisation of texts remains correspondingly low on these platforms, but so does the financial risk for the writers. In turn, however, there is little to no financial gain for the writers. While e-books can be bought by readers from providers like Kindle Direct Publishing, this is not possible with Wattpad and its likes, as mentioned above.

The financial aspect is thus not the main incentive for writers using these platforms. The motivation of writers to upload their texts to these websites instead seems to be to share their texts with others, to get feedback on them, and to be able to communicate with other people interested in literature, as well as with the other members of the fandoms to which they belong. And all this in a comparatively safe environment.

After all, the legal responsibility that comes with publishing a book should not be underestimated: authors who self-publish their books are responsible when it comes to rights infringements, as well as managing the exploitation and use rights of their book. Naturally, they are also in charge of the content of the stories they publish. On their own, they must ensure that their content does not violate any moral, copyright, or personal rights regulations. In addition, there are topics such as: how do I get an ISBN number? Is there fixed book price-legislation that I have to observe? Do I have to pay tax on my income? (van Enberg) These are all questions that self-publishers must contend with. Those who publish through a publisher are not completely spared from this but often receive help from the publisher, who can refer them to experienced industry staff. In both cases, with self-publishing and publishing through a

publishing house, legal advice is recommended. Many lawyers and law firms even specialise in advising authors, literary agencies, and book publishers (Nasson), in order to provide legal support to these players. Online writing platforms are not exempt from regulations. Copyright, moral etiquette, and more also apply here. At Wattpad there are even dedicated information pages for writers on what legislation applies to them; likewise, what rights they acquire through their publications. Wattpad, for instance, promises to have taken various measures to limit copyright infringements on their platform (“Häufig gestellte Fragen zum Urheberrecht”). In this way, it initially appears as if online writing platforms have a comparatively high legal standard to other publishing instances on the book market.

The concept of fanfiction suggests, however, that the legal aspect is handled less strictly there than in traditional literary discourse. Although it is obviously a violation of copyright to use another author’s diegesis and characters without seeking permission from them, there are 53,393 fanfictions on fanfiction.de in the *Harry Potter – FFs* category alone. In addition, there are stories about J.K. Rowling’s fictional world in the categories *Harry Potter – MMFFs*, *Harry Potter und das verwunschene Kind* (“Harry Potter and the Cursed Child”), *Harry Potter: Hogwarts Mystery*, and *Phantastische Tierwesen* (“Fantastic Beasts”). Furthermore, the platform has *fanfiction* in its name and calls itself a “fanfiction archive“. If fanfictions were illegal, this would naturally cause problems. So, why are they not, despite the obvious copyright infringement?

In fact, fanfictions are a legal grey area. “In America, fanfiction falls under the regulation of ‘fair use’” explains the German public publisher *Ullstein* on its homepage, which allows the use of protected material under certain conditions:

*The condition: The texts must “serve the public education and stimulation of intellectual production” (cf. § 207 of the US Copyright Act). In Germany, writing fan fiction is in a legal grey area: even if the stories are not distributed commercially - as soon as*

*they are published on the internet, the rights holder is free to have them deleted (“Plagiat oder Inspiration? Ausleuchtung einer Grauzone”); translated by the author).*

However, there are authors and celebrities who ban fanfiction about themselves and their characters. Those who nevertheless post stories about them on the internet risk being sued. Since online writing platforms do not want to get into legal trouble, they explicitly point out such prohibitions to their authors. Fanfiction.de, for example, has published a list of *banned fandoms* and *fandoms with restrictions* on their site for this purpose (“Verbotene Fandoms und Fandoms mit Einschränkungen”). No stories about these fandoms may be published on the platform. Since it is not possible to trace the basis on which this list was compiled and when it was last updated, it is not clear whether this list is complete or not. It does show, however, that fanfiction is not tolerated by everyone, as is often assumed. Instead, authors and celebrities can get offended by what at first glance may appear to be harmless stories.

Nevertheless, for the most part, the legal regulations of the literary market on online writing platforms are clearly suspended. This makes publishing with them easier and less worrying for authors, which is an advantage, especially because most users of Wattpad (around 90%) are minors (“Hi. We’re Wattpad”).

A further advantage is that websites like Wattpad give writers the chance to get in touch with their readers without hurdles. They can exchange direct messages with them via the platform, ask for feedback, and react to feedback given. This way, they can practise dealing with readers’ praise and wishes but also criticism, again, in comparatively safe terrain.

The tone among users is mostly friendly and personal. Everyone is on a first-name basis and supports each other in their writing projects. Competitive thinking is almost non-existent on these platforms. Similarly, hate messages or excessive criticism are just as rare, unlike other platforms on the internet (especially social media like Instagram or Facebook). It is mostly about having fun writing and sharing fandoms together.



## Why use online writing platforms as a reader?

According to its own data, Wattpad had 94 million users in 2021, of which around five million were writers (“Naver Completes Wattpad Acquisition”). That makes about 89 million pure readers. How does such an impressively high number come about?

It can be assumed that the most decisive reason for most of the readers to use Wattpad is that it is inexpensive, in most cases even free of charge. Readers have access to millions of stories that they would have to pay a lot of money for on the regular book market. On social reading platforms, they can read millions of stories, mostly for free.

The use of online writing platforms for reading not only saves them money, but also the walk to a bookshop or setting up of an online payment account to download an e-book. Both have the advantage of lowering the inhibition threshold of the mostly young readers. For online payments, minors, for instance, need the permission of their legal guardians. This means they must ask permission and thus actively report their reading plans. In terms of financial consequences, the parental hurdle may make sense, but it can build up inhibitions in the young reader that ultimately discourage them from reading. Social reading platforms can be used independently and thus without the consent of parents. Users only need an e-mail account, which – if not already available – can be created quickly and free of charge with various providers. Parental permission is rarely required for this (“Parental consent and Microsoft child accounts”).

To visit a bookshop, minors do not usually need their parents’ permission either. Nevertheless, going there can be fraught with hurdles for some people, even adults. The phenomenon connected to this is called *threshold anxiety*. The term refers to insecurity towards the unfamiliar, which triggers an inhibition in the potentially interested party to enter a certain business or, for example, the building of a public institution (“Schwellenangst, die”). The specific reason for shying away from bookshops is the fear of not being educated enough to be able to go there. Due to the limited access to books until a few centuries ago, bookshops still seem elitist to some people. Dieter E. Zimmer addressed this problem in

1971, in his essay *Bücher: Aspekte einer Strukturkrise*. Nevertheless, there are still initiatives today that try to fight this issue which often results in little reading (“Libri Campus-Ideenwettbewerb”).

Social reading platforms solve this difficulty through their virtuality and associated anonymity. Unrecognised and without social pressure, readers can browse through digital books there. In this way, they can gain access to books and immerse themselves in the world of literature without the fear of embarrassing themselves. Again, social reading platforms can thus be understood as a safe place for inexperienced people who want to give something previously unknown (in this case, reading) a chance. In addition to reading, users can also engage with other users as well as with the authors of the stories they read through commentary sections and direct messages. *Social reading* is the name of the phenomenon that is encouraged in this way (Pleimling 1). Users can comment on chapters, but also on individual sentences and even words. This enables an intensive discussion of what has been written, as well as interaction with each other and with the authors of the texts. Researchers from the University of Basel in Switzerland stated that:

*[s]ocial reading is rising to prominence among all the various reading practices, namely thanks to the use of digital media. Looking ahead, we have to acknowledge that Wattpad readers are the generation of new readers. A generation who is nurturing a passion for reading being immersed in the use of digital media (Lauer et al. 39).*

Apart from the digital, however, this concept of literary communication does not seem new. Instead, it is strongly reminiscent of the tradition of reading societies and salons that were widespread in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, which we would probably call *reading clubs* today. Even back then, people talked about literature – sometimes more superficially, sometimes more intensively – and celebrated their love of the written word, whether by reading or writing. Instead of talking orally about the texts read, this is now done in writing. The advantage of the digital reading club of the

21<sup>st</sup> century is, of course, its freedom of time and place: it allows people from all over the world to get in touch with each other from anywhere, at any time.

In addition, the digital space into which the conversations have been transferred offers the possibility of indirect literary communication through reading lists. These are generally digital lists created by readers and authors in which they collect stories they have read on a particular platform and want to save for others to see. A user can create an unlimited number of lists, which can be sorted by topic, for example. Through these lists, readers can get inspired for their own reading and keep track of which stories their favourite authors have read and enjoyed (“Creating a reading list”).

Readers can also be inspired in another way on these platforms: to write their own texts. Through the low-threshold access to reading material and literary communication, readers learn – often at an early age – that the path to their own text and publication can be easier than it first seems. Thus, after some time, the platform’s readers often become writers themselves and profit from the advantages mentioned above.

### **Why use online writing platforms as a publisher?**

Using online writing platforms as a publisher is initially less obvious than as a reader or author. Nevertheless, publishers can benefit from them, as examples from recent years prove. Think of book successes like E. L. James’ *Shades of Grey* or the *After*-series by Anna Todd. These books were first published as fanfictions, respectively about *Twilight* and the boyband One Direction, on Wattpad. Due to their high traffic volume, publishers became aware of them and, after being slightly modified for copyright purposes, they were published on the regular book market. Both book series then became worldwide successes within a noticeably short time. The first volume of the erotic novel trilogy *Shades of Grey* sold more than ten million copies in the USA in less than two months. Two months later, it was already 20 million (Reich).

Examples like these have long ceased to be isolated phenomena. Online writing platforms, primarily Wattpad, are producing an increasing number of texts that later become real blockbusters on the book market. They turn these self-made embossed writing forums into veritable treasure troves for publishers, and young people's attempts at writing thus suddenly become potential future bestsellers.

Increasingly, publishers are taking advantage of these opportunities and should do so. By looking at online writing platforms, they can (1) discover previously unrecognised writing talents, and (2) get a longer writing sample than regular publisher submissions from a text that (3) has already been tried and tested by the target audience, and commented on in a publicly readable way. Complete blunders are thus quite unlikely. However, publishers must consider that readers of stories uploaded on fanfiction.de expect less in terms of quality (both storyline and writing style) than in regular publications, for which they pay accordingly. As such, success on Wattpad does not immediately mean similar success in traditional publication – although it is possible, as *After Passion* and so on show. However, even if publishers do not locate a successful novel on these forums, they can still become aware of literary trends. A look at these pages can therefore be worthwhile for publishers in any case.

## Conclusion

As shown, online writing platforms such as Wattpad and fanfiction.de hold a lot of potential for literary discourse and its actors. A distinctive feature of these platforms is their low barriers. Anyone with internet access can use them, regardless of financial or cultural background, gender, and age. This results in innovation in three directions: from the perspective of readers, authors, and publishers.

Readers, on the one hand, have the opportunity to read stories anonymously and free of charge. This makes inhibitions disappear both from a financial and a social point of view. Additionally, they can contact other readers and even authors through comment functions. This way, they can

exchange ideas with others easily on a personal basis. Authors, in turn, can share their stories with others without being dependent on publishers or restricted by editors. In contrast to the classic self-publishing, no money needs to be spent on this, because publishing is also free of charge on these platforms. For those who are looking for a way into regular publishing, Wattpad and related platforms also open up the possibility of attracting the attention of publishers. Collaborations like this have already led to multiple international bestsellers (and a film series). Online writing platforms thus provide an important opportunity for readers, authors and publishers. They pave the way for writing, reading, and discussing literature, promote exchange between authors and readers, and open a way into the traditional literary market.

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# Boccaccio's Irene – All Alone in Rainy London

*Giusy Perretti*

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Why was a wonderful French manuscript's cutting of an ancient Greek painter in Flemish dress left all alone in London? Where is the original manuscript? These are the questions that this cutting, seen during a (desperate) visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum triggered in my mind. This post attempts to answer to them and explores Boccaccio's cutting and its mysterious story by exploring the different digitized materials related to it.

It was a rainy morning at the beginning of October in London. The sky was grey, and the sidewalks were covered with yellow and red leaves. Somewhat heartbroken, I decided that I would try to cheer myself up and enjoy my last two days alone in London. What better way to overcome a break-up than visiting a museum? I have always believed that being surrounded by statues and paintings of mythological or historical episodes puts your problems into perspective – treating the eyes with art is always a great remedy. So that morning, I decided that my remedy would be the V&A Museum.

After a short queue in the rain, I finally got into the museum. Excited like never before (yes, museums and a big plate of carbonara in a restaurant are the things I missed the most during lockdown), I started the magic *time travel* that only art make possible: from Ancient Greece to Rome, from India to the Middle Ages and Renaissance in Europe. That day, on the second floor in the rooms 88A-90, there was an exhibition entitled *Fragmented Illuminations: Medieval and Renaissance Manuscript Cuttings at the V&A* ("Fragmented Illuminations"). I found myself surrounded by the highlights of the V&A's Medieval and Renaissance manuscript cuttings (over 2,000 of them!). As I am a student of the MA Book and Digital Media Studies at Leiden University with an obvious passion for books and manuscripts, my level of excitement grew.

Initials, music sheets, miniatures, and pages with decorated borders were brought together in a sort of *collage* from all over Europe (the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, France, etc.). They were shining before my eyes in all their beauty, with their peculiar colours and fine details. However, I cannot deny my disappointment in seeing all of those magnificent cuttings alone, far away from their original manuscripts. Like orphans, the

cuttings had been *cut away* from their mothers, the original manuscripts, because of the ghastly practice of collecting single leaves, miniatures, and other ornamentation. This practice started in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and became very popular during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Wieck 234, 240). There are several reasons for the 19<sup>th</sup> century popularity of these fragments: first, due to breakthroughs in the publishing industry (like the refinement of wood engraving techniques and chromolithography), high-quality reproductions could be easily printed, meaning more people could be exposed to and appreciate these visual themes (243). Secondly, illuminations had a high value, “both literally and philosophically” (243). Indeed, many of the cuttings displayed by the V&A were cut and collected during this time.

Monks singing and playing the organ, brave medieval knights fighting against each other, and saints imparting their blessings transported me to the Middle Ages. But suddenly, one particular *orphan* miniature, different from the others, caught my eye: a woman – a painter – dressed in 15<sup>th</sup> century clothes, intent on painting a portrait (Fig. 2). Her dress is an intense blue, with thin gold decorations, that mirrors an object hanging above her, also seemingly made of fabric (like a lamp. But it could not be a lamp! A lamp in the fifteenth century? No). Behind the easel there is a table with two other portraits on it and small wooden bowls containing the colours used by the painter. Next to the small bench where the painter is seated, there is another table (or some piece of furniture) with two other male portraits. The room is hexagonal with high, narrow windows. It seems to be in the upper part of a castle. In fact, the sky above is visible. Bas-reliefs of (possibly) Ancient Greek women surround the top (Fig. 2). The whole miniature (from the dress to the style) seems to suggest that it was made in the Netherlands. My mind was straining to recognize the painter depicted. Her figure stood out from the other women represented in the cuttings present in that museum room: she was not a saint, nun, or scribe, but an artist. The cutting must have come from a non-religious manuscript. But who was that woman painting in the loneliness of her studio? And where did that cutting come from? Was the original *mother* manuscript still in good condition, preserved somewhere in the world?

To answer to my questions, I approached to read its description: “Irene, attributed to circle of François Le Barbier, from Giovanni Boccaccio, *Des Cleres et nobles femmes*, about 1460-70, Prais, France” (“Fragmented Illuminations”). I was wrong about the origin of the manuscript – it was not from the Netherlands, but from France. The manuscript *Des Cleres et nobles femmes* was in New York – Spencer Collection Ms. 033 (“Des Cleres et nobles femmes”). I had been on the wrong track about this Boccaccio. (Sorry Prof. Grasso, my high school Italian and Latin literature professor! I know, for shame!) But I was curious and wanted to discover more about the manuscript and the figure depicted, especially since it was Boccaccio’s work. After finishing my visit to the museum, I began my research.

Soaked by London’s rain, I arrived at my hotel and turned on my laptop. I started to look for information about Irene. Irene (or Eirene) was an ancient Greek painter, the daughter of Cratinus, who was a painter himself (“Irene (fl. 200 BCE?)”). She was first described as a great artist by Pliny the Elder in his *Naturalis Historia* (“Irene”). During the Renaissance, Boccaccio decided to include Irene in his *De mulieribus claris*, a collection of the biographies of 106 women that stood out in history (for better or worse) – it is an inspiring inheritance for future generations of women (“Irene”). What impressed me was the number of miniatures featuring Irene in other manuscripts of *De mulieribus claris* scattered around the world that appeared on Google. (Most of them catalogued on the *Casa del Boccaccio – Ente Nazionale Giovanni Boccaccio* site.) Irene had always been portrayed while painting, but not only in manuscript miniatures: a fresco (Fig. 3), a small, portable altar (Fig. 4) and a statue (Fig. 5) were some of the examples I found. However, in his *Naturalis Historia*, Pliny only mentions one of Irene’s paintings – a painting portraying a young woman (*puellam*) at Eleusis (“Irene”). This is reminiscent of the Irene of the V&A’s cutting.

Having acknowledged my ignorance about this painter, I decided to look again at the photo of the miniature I had taken at the museum: it was too blurry to see the details (Fig. 2). Moreover, I had forgotten to take a picture of its description. The only way to get the information about the

manuscript was to visit the museum's website. Funnily enough, in the last paragraph of the webpage about the exhibition, Irene's miniature was described as "one of the major discoveries made during the research for the display," ("About the Fragmented Illuminations on Display") as it belongs to a non-religious book (see Fig. 5). As such, I was not wrong about its uniqueness (although I reinvented the wheel somewhat).

In the description there was a hyperlink to the digitized version of the original manuscript, *Des cleres et nobles femmes*, preserved in the New York Public Library ("Des Cleres et nobles femmes"). I opened the digital manuscript, and I started looking for the page from which Irene's miniature was cut out. I was not successful. After searching for almost half an hour, my glance fell on the notes on the side of the manuscript: some leaves were missing and only 76 miniatures of the original 105 were present in the manuscript. One of these was Irene's miniature, displayed on the other side of the ocean. At this point, another question came to my mind: how did the manuscript end up in New York? My question was immediately answered by the first note: "Ownership: Arms f. 3, attributed to Claude, seigneur de Vissac (dates exceed 1415-1476). Obtained in early 18<sup>th</sup> century by Hobart passed to Lord Mostyn. His sale at Sotheby's (1920) to Sabin. Mme. Theophile Belin. Purchased for Spencer, 1936" ("Des Cleres et nobles femmes"). From France to England, then from England to New York.

But there was one last mystery I wanted to solve. Despite the French name of the miniature's illustrator (François Le Barbier), the style used seemed too Dutch/Flemish to me. There must have been a connection to the Low Countries. Unfortunately, information about the French illuminator was obscured by results about a more famous, homonymous French painter from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier. But after a while, I finally found a website dedicated to book illuminators, with a page on the correct François Le Barbier. Employed in Paris, he worked as an illuminator between 1450 and 1480. His art was strongly influenced by Flemish and Northern French illuminations ("Maître François – François le Barbier (de oudere)"). So I was not totally wrong in

thinking that there was a Dutch/Flemish twist to the miniature. The Low Countries can be added to the story behind Irene's miniature.

It is incredible how many stories, places, and people are hidden behind a single manuscript cutting. Unfairly and tragically cut from their original manuscripts, unique miniatures like Irene's still have powerful meanings and messages to share with later generations. In some lucky cases, thanks to the new technologies and the openness of the internet, it is easy to bring together the *orphan* cuttings with their *mother* manuscripts. Moreover, it can also be said that Boccaccio's main message continues to live through these colourful miniatures: women from the past are still here to teach us. For instance, they show that art can be a remedy for a broken heart – or at least a helpful distraction.

## Figures and Captions



**Fig. 1** Red Telephone box on the way to the museum, sheltered from the rain (author's own).



**Fig. 2** Photo of Irene (author's own).



**Fig. 3** albot Master (1440 c.)  
Detail of a miniature of  
Irene painting a fresco.  
London, British Library,  
Royal 16 GV, f. 73v.



**Fig. 4** Master of De Clères Femmes  
and collaborator (1403)  
Irene painting a face. Paris,  
Bibliothèque Nationale  
de France, Fr. 598, f. 92r



**Fig. 5** Master of the Coronation of the Virgin (1401-1402), Irene painting a statue of the Virgin with the Holy Child, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Fr. 12420, f. 92v.





**Fig. 6** Irene, attributed to circle of François Le Barbier, from Giovanni Boccaccio, *Des Cleres et nobles femmes* (1460-70), Paris, France. Museum no. 4280. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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# Liquid Voices

To cry is to break through in the midst of matter.  
That is, perhaps, to break the silence of the soul.  
It is to give an unappealable ruling against the *nihil novum sub sole*.  
It is to rain on the harsh settlement of the real  
(why in the image and likeness?)  
of men with calvary.

To cry is the poetry that manifests itself in the first person.

Since I lose hope,  
and with wine in my hand I conclude nothing,  
then I placate that ectoplasmic memory  
(I fall into the damned shelter they promise)  
and I dance with them in a cavern of light  
hearing liquid voices so close to my sight.

I had heard it: to cry is to find the instant where language is opened.

Ramsés Oviedo Pérez was born in 1993 in the city of Irapuato, Guanajuato. He studied philosophy at the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro. He was editor-in-chief of the magazine *Diseminaciones*. In 2011 he won first place for poetry in the XXVI University Contest of Bachilleres College (UAQ). In 2014 he received second place in the essay category at the “Somos UAQ” cultural meeting. In 2015 he won third place in the short story contest “Yo escribo para los niños y los no tanto” (CONCYTEQ). He is currently studying for a master’s degree in Documentary Information Sciences at the Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí.



# The Digital Incunable

Opening or Closing the Book  
through Digitization?

*Anna Dlabačová*

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Over the last decade, the digitization of manuscripts and early printed books has soared. Many libraries and cultural heritage institutions have engaged in and set up programs to make their historical collections available online. For researchers working with this type of material, these initiatives have been a true godsend, especially during the pandemic when digital reproductions were often the only way to consult material from special collections. Of course, digitization brings various new issues to the fore: a digital representation of a manuscript can be viewed as a virtual object in its own right, with its own affordances.<sup>1</sup>

It seems to me that issues of digitization – loss of the feel of the book, of the sound of a page being turned, and of the actual size of a book, to name a few instances – but also what research gains through digitization have until now been much more profoundly explored for manuscripts than for early printed books.<sup>2</sup> As a researcher who has predominantly worked with the earliest printed books – incunabula, books printed before 1 January 1501 – over the last few years, I would like to address a few issues that I have encountered when working with digitized incunabula. In all cases, the solution is relatively straightforward: treat incunabula as medieval books – or one could say as manuscripts, which is essentially what they are – and do not impose standards of the modern book on them. The fact that they are printed does not mean they are modern.

## Closing the ‘Sammelband’

Book and literary historians are increasingly paying attention to the materiality of the early printed book and to the phenomenon of the *Sammelband* (i.e. a book in which copies of various editions have been bound together, sometimes also combined with manuscript quires).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, this recognition of the importance of studying – and hence viewing

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1 See e.g. Albritton, Henley, and Treharne.

2 See e.g. Porter.

3 See Knight, ‘Sammelband 15-16’ and ‘CERL.’

– incunabula within the context 15<sup>th</sup>- or 16<sup>th</sup>-century owners and readers created for them has not yet seemed to have reached digitization policies. To the frustration of those interested in the book as a whole, books that contain copies of more than one edition are often presented digitally as a set of separate records or files, one per edition. While one would never think of cutting up a manuscript into smaller sections that contain the single texts or production units, this is standard practice when it comes to *Sammelbände*. The dismembering of these books does not only disconnect texts that were once used and read together (be it in the medieval or a later period), it can also lead to a loss of information about the binding or the owner of the book.

The roots of the practice lie in the cataloguing customs that have developed over centuries: printed books are catalogued per edition, which is generally assumed to contain a single text, with separate records for each of them. Careful researchers are of course aware of the fact that additional numbers behind a shelfmark, often between brackets, indicate that what they see on the screen must be part of something bigger, if they are not already alarmed by the fact that the book in virtual form appears to have no front or back board, or no binding at all. Some digital platforms like Early European Books (EEB) conveniently provide a link to the other parts of the book in the ‘Bound with’ field but tend to omit the additional numbers behind the shelfmark in the relevant field.<sup>4</sup> This can make it difficult to retrieve the exact order in which the dissected digital copy should be read.

Examples of the digital dismemberment – and hence closing off – of *Sammelbände* are available in overwhelming numbers. A single illustration from my own research will have to suffice here. It stems from my exploration of the printing and reception history of a book that became known as the *Spiegel der volcomenheit* [Mirror of Perfection], which consists of a collection of texts that developed on the presses of the workshop

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4 See “Early European Books,” for example (restricted access): [*Tafel des Kersteliken levens*]. Add: Antonius de Rovere: Lof van den heiligen sacrament. Gouda: Gerard Leeu, 20 Aug. 1478 (ISTC it00010800). The Hague, National Library, shelfmark 169 G 94.



of the prolific printer Gerard Leeu (active 1477-1492) over the span of a nearly a decade.<sup>5</sup> In three treatises, the book transmits basic catechetical knowledge, an elucidation of what happens during Mass, and a conversation about the Eucharist between Christ and the Soul. A (partial) copy of a later edition of the book, published by the Leiden printer Hugo Janszoon van Woerden in 1499 and held at the University Library in Freiburg im Breisgau, tells an interesting story about the reception of the text (Freiburg i.Br., University Library, Ink. K 4205).<sup>6</sup>

The original owner combined the final, dialogic text from the *Spiegel der volcomenheit* with a copy of an edition of the *Souter onser liever vrouwen* [Our Lady's Psalter], published by the same Leiden printer in 1498 (Freiburg i.Br., University Library, shelfmark Ink. K 4205). The Marian Psalter was placed before the dialogue. Even though the book no longer has its original binding, other material elements show that these texts were intentionally combined early on in their lives. For example, the same hand added initials throughout the whole book. Moreover, at the end of the book, a handwritten prayer to Mary has been added. The reader is instructed to recite this prayer while kneeling, and the psalms while standing or lying down (prostrate position) in front of an image of the Mother of God (Freiburg i.Br., University Library, Ink. K 4205, fols. 46v-47r.) (Fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> The reference to the Marian psalms at the start of the book confirms that the texts were brought together around 1500 and functioned as a whole – as a book – in the hands of readers.

Additionally, the position in this volume of the dialogic text taken from the *Spiegel der volcomenheit* is interesting. Here the text functions without its preface and starts in medias res with the words of Christ, the heavenly bridegroom. The woodcut on the verso of the last page of *Our Lady's Psalter* forms an opening with the first page of the dialogue taken from the *Spiegel der volcomenheit*. The image of the Lamentation of Christ,

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5 On the printing history of the *Spiegel der volcomenheit*, see Dlabáčová, 70-92.

6 Titles of incunabula are cited according to the ISTC.

7 'Dat ghebet salmen lesen op die knyen ende die psalmen staende of neder liggende voer dat beelt der moeder gods', handwritten text.

with John and the two Marys gazing at Christ and drawing the reader's attention to Him, functions effectively as an indicator that the words on the right page of the opening are the words of Our Savior (Fig. 2). Yet, when consulting the digital copy of the book provided by the library of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität – and I want to emphasize here that I would not have been able to conduct my research without this digital version – the reader is presented with two separate records that provide an overview of the content of the digital copy. Both overviews – and hence the PDF-files that can be downloaded – start and end with the front and back board but cut out the other part of the book. The latter is replaced by a white page that contains the pointer 'weiterer Titel vorgebunden' [additional title pre-bound] in the case of the partial copy of the *Spiegel der volcomenheit* and 'weiterer Titel angebunden' [further title attached] in the instance of *Our Lady's Psalter*. In the latter case this page has been inserted after several blank leaves right before the back board, suggesting that the dialogue taken from the *Spiegel der volcomenheit* does not immediately follow the last page of *Our Lady's Psalter* with the woodcut of the Lamentation (Fig. 3). When one looks carefully, however, one can see the tail ends of an initial added with red ink to the start of the dialogue in the scan of the page with the woodcut (Fig. 2). If one wants to view the opening as it appears in the book, one must download the images from the two records and place them next to each other, thus engaging in a reconstruction of what has been cut up and lost in the digital version of this book. In this case, this is relatively easily done and on their starting page the records provide a link to the other copy also contained in the volume. Some libraries, however, for example only provide the indication that a digitized incunable is part of a convolute, leaving the researcher to complete the puzzle and reunite what has – often for centuries – belonged together but is now digitally dismembered.

## Closing the Book

Another phenomenon, that thankfully seems to occur far less frequently and that I will touch upon only briefly, is the digital presentation of a multi-text edition – of a single edition that contains several texts – in separate files that each contain a single text. A copy of the edition of the *Croon Onser Liever Vrouwen* [Crown of Our Lady] and other texts published by the Deventer printer Richardus Pafraet in 1492 and kept at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, has been digitized by the Munich Digitization Center (MDZ) in three separate records: the first contains the *Croon Onser Liever Vrouwen*, the second the *Onser Liever Vrouwen Mantel* [Our Lady's Mantle] – which is in fact the last text in the book! – and the third record contains the *Onser Liever Vrouwen Salter* [Our Lady's Psalter] as well as the Rosary, the second and third text in the book (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Inc.c.a. 128 m-1/3).

The choice for three separate records, moreover in the wrong order, for a book that was published as a single edition is baffling, and so is the result. It not only leads to confusion, but also to images that are outright misleading. The final page of the first section (*Croon Onser Liever Vrouwen*) is, for example, shown next to one of the flyleaves in the back of the book, suggesting these pages belong together as an opening and can be viewed as such in the physical book.<sup>8</sup> This is the product of imposing the standards of modern books, that usually contain one text, onto incunabula, that in many ways are still embedded in manuscript culture. The nonsensical three-tiered digitization of Pafraet's edition was likely made this way because the printer included title pages at the start of each of the three sections and because each section has its own quire sequence. This, however, is something that happens more often in early printed books and is no reason for cutting a book up. Pafraet placed and published these texts together. They are all announced on the title page (Fig. 4). On the

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<sup>8</sup> The opening can be viewed via [www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb00035178?page=68,69](http://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb00035178?page=68,69). München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Inc.c.a. 128 m-1/3, scan nos. 68-69.

final folio, Pafraet printed a colophon in which he states that the book was issued ‘in honour of God and Mary his blessed Mother’ (‘Ter eeren gods ende maria synre gebenedider moeder’) (München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Inc.c.a. 128 m-3, fol. K7r). This is a single edition of several texts that belong together and that should be presented as a book. There is no valid reason for chopping it up and hence closing the book for readers.

### **Stop Cutting up and Start Opening up Books**

Why not present the reader with scans of the full book and let them leaf through the book and look up the part they are interested in? This would best replicate what happens during a visit to the reading room: the whole book is handed to the reader instead of only the gatherings of the edition required. This allows for the occasional surprise that one is given a voluminous volume while intending to read a relatively short text only. The reader is then left to their own devices to look up what they came for. Presenting the book in the same way digitally – as is done with manuscripts – would further raise the awareness of the materiality of the early printed book and diminish the risk that the presence of contextual evidence is overlooked. Many researchers would be relieved to be handed the whole book, instead of snippets one must piece together – or worse: that are pieced together in a misleading manner. Cutting up books, even if only digitally, should be strictly forbidden.

Figures and captions

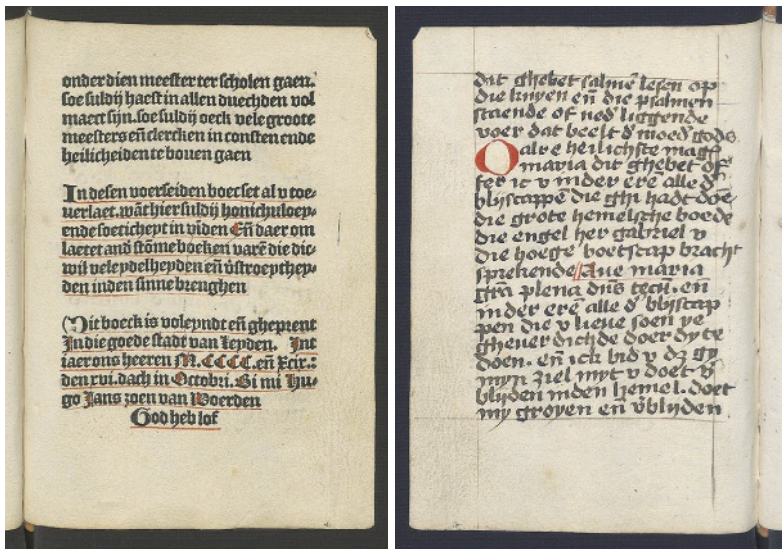
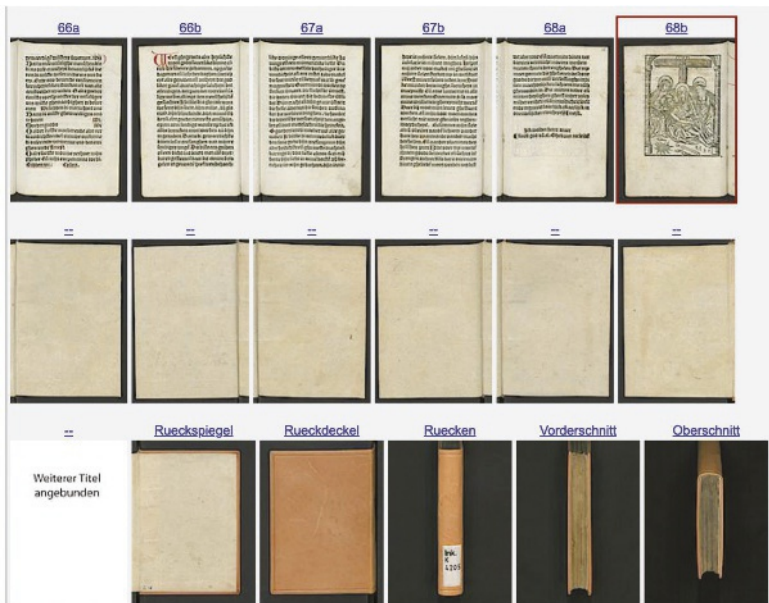


Fig. 1 Colophon and prayer written on the verso of the folio in the 1499 Leiden edition of the *Spiegel der volcomenheit*. Freiburg i.Br., University Library, shelfmark Ink. K 4205, fols 46r and 46v.



Fig. 2 Final page of the *Our Lady's Psalter* with a woodcut of the Lamentation and the start of the dialogic text from the *Spiegel der volcomenheit* that form one opening in the Freiburg copy. Freiburg i.Br., University Library, shelfmark Ink. K 4205, fols 68v-1r.



**Fig. 3** Screenshot of the overview presentation of the digital copy of *Our Lady's Psalter*, Freiburg University Library, [www.dl.uib.uni-freiburg.de/diglit/bernardus1498/0001](http://www.dl.uib.uni-freiburg.de/diglit/bernardus1498/0001).

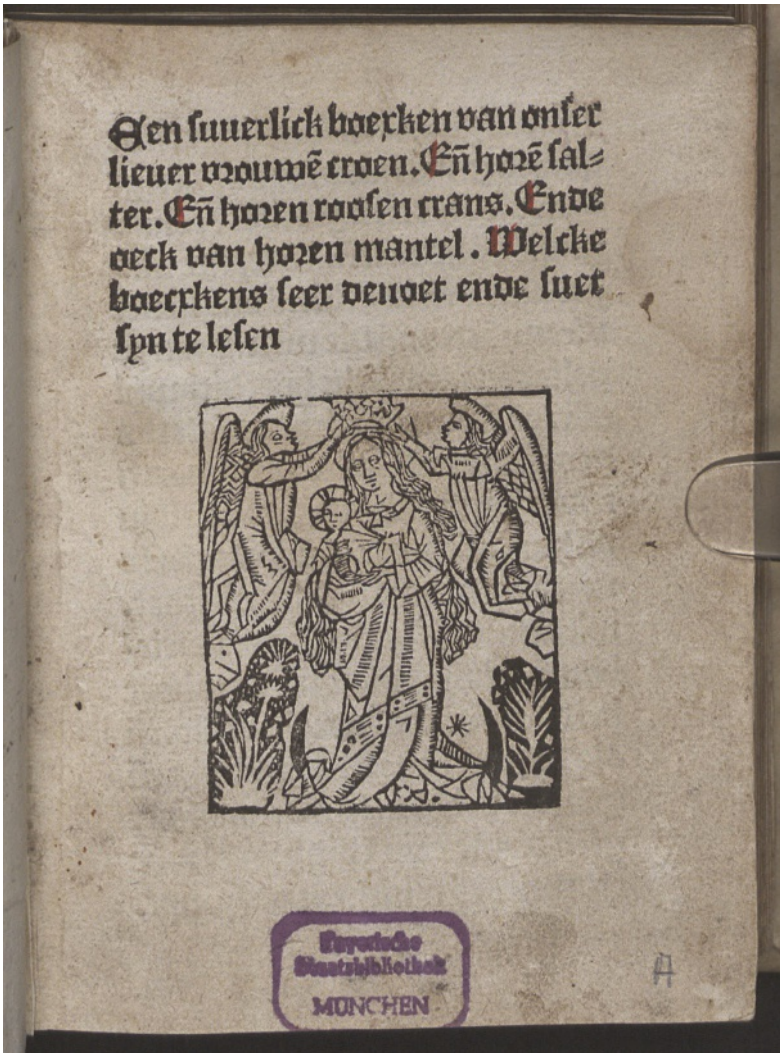


Fig. 4 Title page presenting the full content of the book in Pafraet's 1492 edition of the *Crown of Our Lady* and other Marian texts. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, shelfmark Inc.c.a. 128 m-1/3, fol.1r.



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