

Ally Laird

# Supporting Open Access Monographs

## Penn State University Libraries' Participation in the TOME Initiative

In 2017, Penn State pledged to participate in the then newly established Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem (TOME) Initiative. TOME was launched by the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and the Association of University Presses (AUPresses) as a five-year pilot with two main types of participants: colleges and universities and university presses.<sup>1</sup> Penn State was one of the first universities to commit funds to participate in TOME, which was designed to support peer-reviewed, open access monographs in the humanities and social sciences. Each participating university committed \$225,000 total for the five-year pilot, split out into \$45,000 per academic year to support three grants of \$15,000 per monograph. This number was established based on the recommendation from the Ithaka S+R Report “The Costs of Publishing Monographs.”<sup>2</sup>

The Penn State Libraries partnered with our Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost for TOME, with the Provost's Office providing the funding and the Libraries managing and distributing the funds. Additionally, university presses signed on to participate in TOME as the publishers of these open access monographs, receiving the funding that the universities pledged. The Penn State University Press was one of the original presses to participate, though many more joined as the pilot progressed. Over the course of the pilot, we worked with 11 of the participating university presses, including Duke University Press, Cambridge University Press, University of Michigan Press, and more.

Each university participating in TOME was left to create their own eligibility guidelines and requirements for receiving TOME support, with a shared commitment to only support monographs published by nonprofit publishers, such as university presses. Penn State chose to solicit submissions for consideration through an open application process during each academic year. Applications were limited to monographs with a written acceptance for open access publishing from a press participating in TOME that were authored or co-authored by a full-time Penn State faculty member. We chose to exclude textbooks, works of fiction, creative works, edited anthologies, critical editions, and translations of previously published works during this pilot. Our reasoning was that we wanted to specifically support traditional monographs in the humanities and social sciences that often struggle to receive funding, but which are instrumental in the careers of faculty researchers in those subject areas. We also limited our TOME funding to one award per author, per year.

We also set requirements for the open access edition of the supported monographs which were described on our TOME website,<sup>3</sup> and also outlined in the TOME agreement.<sup>4</sup> Each

---

Ally Laird is the open publishing program coordinator at the Penn State University Libraries, email: [alaird@psu.edu](mailto:alaird@psu.edu).

university press that received funding to make the monograph open access was required to complete and sign the TOME Agreement. The university press that published each monograph was required to fill out the application and acknowledge that they would be required to sign the TOME agreement to receive the funding. We had the press submit the application and sign the TOME agreement, rather than the author, because we wanted to transfer the funds directly to the press rather than having the authors serve as intermediaries. We were very conscious of ensuring that it did not appear that the authors were benefiting monetarily to remove any possibility of confusion around declaring the TOME funding as grants earned, or funds personally received during the year. The press was also best situated to provide the budget information in the application and acknowledge that they would sign the TOME agreement.

TOME applications were primarily reviewed by me and accepted on a rolling basis so long as they met all the criteria. We were able to fund at least three monographs in each of the five years, and some years we supported more with either extra funding from the University Libraries, or due to some presses requesting less than the full \$15,000 to make the monograph open access.

## **Open Access Monograph Requirements**

When an application was chosen for TOME funding, the prepared TOME agreement was sent to the press to review and have their director sign. The agreement outlined all the requirements to be met for the press to receive TOME funding. Of note, each press was required to agree to publish the no-cost, DRM-free version of the book no later than the date of publication of the print edition, under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY)<sup>5</sup> or Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC)<sup>6</sup> license. We deliberately chose to limit the Creative Commons license options to only these, as we wanted to ensure the books would be as open as possible and that the work could be translated when needed.

At the outset, we had a press push back against these being the only two options, but after explaining our reasoning and bringing our library administrators into the conversation, they relented and agreed to proceed and chose the CC BY-NC license. Most of the presses who published the TOME books we supported chose this license option, however many began choosing CC BY toward the second half of the pilot period. The requirements also detailed that the open access version would always be the most recent version of the book, and that it would follow all the same editorial guidelines and requirements as a non-open access publication and to use best practices in metadata provision and search engine optimization to indicate that the book is available open access.

Other requirements that we included in our agreement were for the open access version of the book to conform to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 or later; for preservation copies, both PDF and EPUB, to be provided to us for inclusion in our institutional repository ScholarSphere;<sup>7</sup> for the press to include the standard TOME acknowledgement and a DOI on the copyright page; for the press to provide that copyright page to us for review and accuracy before publication; and for the press to distribute the OA version via one of the following platforms: the Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB), HathiTrust Digital Library, Internet Archive, JSTOR's Open Content, MUSE Open, and/or the OAPEN Library. Each of these requirements were chosen to ensure that the publication would have

the widest reach possible, both in user access as well as digital accessibility, and to allow us to serve as partners in the publication process and help each press meet our requirements.

## **Implementation and Lessons Learned**

The requirements outlined in the agreement were a bit of a learning curve for many presses we worked with in the early days, especially because not many universities had as detailed an agreement as we did in the beginning. However, we did hear positive feedback over time from some presses who were very appreciative of the expectations we had which made it easy for them to reference and gave them good guidance in the often-new process of open access publishing. For example, the requirement for us to review the title page of the publication was as much for our purposes as it was to support each press. We were requesting a good bit of unique information to be added to the title pages for these publications and we often identified missing information, especially in the early years, and thankfully most presses were appreciative of our eyes on the new content. We also used it as an opportunity to support the presses as they navigated new copyright language, since the inclusion of the Creative Commons license required changes to the template “all rights reserved” language most were used to including.

However, the difficulty with this was that often publication dates for books are changed and updated depending on how long the review and revision processes are taking, making it difficult for us to determine exactly when to follow up about reviewing the copyright page. The copyright page review was also a new step for presses, which meant that most forgot to send it to us on their own without a reminder, and because our reminder was hard to plan, there were times where the book had already gone to print before we were able to review the copyright page. It also made it difficult to know when to request the final PDF and EPUB versions of the books, and if the press was not familiar with the requirement to send those files to us upon publication, this also took some reminding on our end. As a pilot program, we knew that there would be bumps and growing pains, and over time this process did get better, but with each press having their own processes and publication schedules, it posed a real challenge.

Similarly, we did not have the capacity to review each final publication for accessibility conformance, and neither did we have a process to provide feedback and request accessibility changes during the publication process. Accessibility is still something that many publishers, let alone university presses, are learning to incorporate into their workflows, and as the pilot progressed, we knew that we did not have the capacity or opportunity to follow up with the accessibility requirement as we would have liked. This is definitely an area for growth as we move past the pilot, but we wanted to include accessibility in the pilot agreement to demonstrate our commitment to making scholarship digitally accessible as well as open access.

## **Impact**

Over the five years of the TOME pilot program, Penn State was able to support 18 publications, four of which are still in production. Most of these monographs were supported at \$15,000 each, however some publications only requested half of the amount to offset their cost, enabling us to provide support for more than three monographs per year. Additionally, the Penn State Libraries was able to provide an additional \$15,000 in FY 2020–2021, on top of what the Provost’s Office provided. The TOME initiative supported monographs

from the College of Education and eight departments and the Rock Ethics Institute in our College of Liberal Arts at the University Park campus, as well as a monograph from Liberal Arts at the Penn State York campus. Only one author applied in multiple years to support two books, and in all we supported 18 authors, since one publication was coauthored. We collaborated with 10 university presses in total, and because of the additional support from the University Libraries, we only had to deny two applications due to incompatibility with our TOME agreement. However, other individuals emailed over the years to inquire about eligibility, and some did not apply if their books were not being published by a university press or equivalent nonprofit publisher, thus making their monograph ineligible.

The impact of TOME as a pilot program has been assessed in the final report published in August 2023 titled “TOME Stakeholder Value Assessment” by Nancy Maron.<sup>8</sup> Peter Potter, the visiting program officer who oversaw the TOME initiative from 2017 to 2022, also discussed the impact on the usage and sales of TOME monographs.<sup>9</sup> He found that making these books open access allowed their average usage per book (7,754) to be significantly higher than the average unit sales per book (590). At Penn State, we have seen generally high usage just with the copies we have stored in our institutional repository ScholarSphere of 171 downloads on average, with the count for one of the older books at over 700.

The impact on our faculty authors has also been significant. Many have cited the importance of making their work openly available, and that the topics they have written on are important for a wide audience to access without barriers. These authors have participated in Open Access Week<sup>10</sup> events through the Penn State Libraries and have spoken with their colleagues and students about the importance of making their work open.

Despite the bumps in implementation of the TOME Initiative at Penn State, the outcome has been well worth the effort. We continue to see interest in making monographs open access and have seen the impact it makes on our scholars as much as the scholarship.

## **Future of Monograph Support at Penn State**

The TOME pilot formally concluded in the 2022–2023 fiscal year, but with the success of the initiative and the libraries’ commitment to supporting open access publishing, the University Libraries has continued the program. It has been rebranded as “Open Access Monograph Funding,” and is currently funded on a yearly basis without a formal ongoing commitment. We hope to continue supporting open access monograph publishing, whether through continued funding for a TOME-like program or some other model, well into the future. ¶¶

## **Notes**

1. “About,” TOME: Toward and Open Monograph Ecosystem, accessed December 1, 2023, <https://www.openmonographs.org/about/>.
2. Nancy L. Maron, Christine Mulhern, Daniel Rossman, and Kimberly Schmelzinger, “The Costs of Publishing Monographs: Toward a Transparent Methodology,” Ithaka S+R, February 2016, <https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.276785>.
3. “Open Access Monograph Funding,” Penn State University Libraries, accessed December 1, 2023, <https://libraries.psu.edu/open-access-monograph-funding>.

4. “Penn State University Libraries Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem (“TOME”) Agreement,” ScholarSphere, accessed December 1, 2023, <https://scholarsphere.psu.edu/resources/4add73a0-6c35-44ca-8ad9-3c6de607760b>.
5. “CC BY 4.0 Legal Code,” Licenses, Creative Commons, accessed December 1, 2023, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.
6. “CC BY-NC 4.0 Legal Code,” Licenses, Creative Commons, accessed December 1, 2023 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/legalcode>.
7. You may view the full collection of TOME books in Penn State’s institutional repository, ScholarSphere, at <https://doi.org/10.26207/p40b-pf02>.
8. Nancy Maron, “TOME Stakeholder Value Assessment,” Association of Research Libraries, August, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.29242/report.tome2023>.
9. Peter Potter, “TOME Sheds Light on Sustainable Open Access Book Publishing,” *Digital Science Blog*, February, 16, 2023, <https://www.digital-science.com/blog/2023/02/tome-sheds-light-on-sustainable-open-access-book-publishing/>.
10. Penn State’s Open Access Week 2020 TOME events (2 parts) can be viewed at [https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/TOME+Author+Discussion+1+-+2020/1\\_jaj7wr57](https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/TOME+Author+Discussion+1+-+2020/1_jaj7wr57) and [https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/TOME+Author+Discussion+2+-+2020/1\\_yko pjax1](https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/TOME+Author+Discussion+2+-+2020/1_yko pjax1).