

Statement on the Proposed Open Access Mandate to the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program

About the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program (ASPP)

- The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funds the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (CFHSS) to administer the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program (ASPP).
- The mandate of the ASPP is “to assist with the publication of books of advanced scholarship in the humanities and social sciences that make an important contribution to knowledge.”
- The ASPP funds up to 180 books annually with grants of \$8,000 per title to support production costs.
- The funding envelope for the program has been frozen since 2006.

Proposed ASPP OA Mandate

- In June 2019, the CFHSS informed ACUP that SSHRC requested a plan by October 2019 for an ASPP OA mandate in order to secure its funding. No policy details were shared except that the plan must be aggressive in scope. After consultation, the deadline was extended to April 2020.
- Subsequently, SSHRC revealed to ACUP that its goal is to have *full and immediate OA (no embargo period) for all ASPP-funded titles no increase to the funding envelope.*

Impacts for Canadian Scholarly Publishing

- **Projected lost revenues resulting from an OA mandate for ASPP-supported books carry a real threat of closure for presses**, including mid-size and large presses. An OA mandate will have a knock-on effect with other funding supports for Canadian publishers that tie sales and marketing benchmarks to funding outcomes.
- The hybrid business model of university press publishing distributes costs between non-profit and market sectors. **The proposed OA mandate will erode market viability**, destabilizing this balance.
- A survey of ACUP members, including presses publishing under an OA model, indicates that **an OA mandate at the ASPP without embargo or an increase in grant amount will result in a projected loss of 60% of sales of OA published titles, increasing ACUP members’ overall annual losses by more than \$3.3 million to \$4.6 million.** This is a best-case scenario based on those projections.
- There is **increasing evidence internationally that the approach requested by SSHRC is fundamentally flawed**, and places effective scholarly monograph publishing at risk:
 - The Universities UK Open Access Monographs Group recommends that “immediate open access for all monographs may not be feasible. Rather, policy should consider a mixed-model approach that offers various routes to policy compliance (including one which offers a suitable delayed access period).”¹

Impact on Canadian Scholarship

- **An immediate and adverse effect on early-career scholars and authors.** ACUP presses will no longer be able to risk publishing the same number of first-time scholars, nor will they have resources to continue editorial development of those scholars. These authors will struggle to publish their work at international presses due to small markets for Canadian content. This will negatively impact careers, affecting hiring, tenure, and promotion evaluations.
- **An immediate and adverse effect on Indigenous authors and other diverse minority researchers.** ACUP is particularly concerned with the lack of consultation with Indigenous scholars, as many have expressed objections to our members to an OA mandate as it perpetuates a colonial entitlement to control and distribute Indigenous knowledges.

¹ <https://re.ukri.org/news-events-publications/news/publication-of-universities-uk-open-access-monograph-report/>

- **An immediate and adverse effect on the availability of peer-reviewed and published works in emerging fields.** ACUP members could no longer afford to publish works in areas that do not have a proven market track record. A fundamental purpose of scholarly presses would be adversely impacted.
- **An immediate reduction in Canadian published research on Canadian topics** in the social sciences and humanities.
- These effects will negatively impact the broad dissemination of Canadian scholarship by reducing access for all SSH researchers to venues of professional publication of their long-form work, particularly on Canadian subjects. This policy will effectively function in opposition to the objective stated in SSHRC's current strategic plan of connecting social sciences and humanities research with Canadians.
- **This directive diverges from Tri-Council OA policy**, which acknowledges the substantial complexities of the SSH monograph publishing environment.

Impacts for Universities

- Institutional costs will be increased in order to support publication of faculty research. These costs may include, but are not limited to:
 - **Increased reliance on parent institutional support** to ensure sustainability of university presses. With existing budgetary constraints, most parent institutions do not have funds available to provide additional support to presses, with some struggling to maintain current levels.
 - Potential book-publishing charges or other subventions requested by faculty from their institutions in order to publish with commercial presses offering an OA option. These **charges can range from \$2,700USD for a chapter to \$17,000USD for a monograph.**²
 - If university presses close, **increased administrative costs for offices of research, libraries, and other departments** to reproduce the professional support for scholarly publishing formerly supplied by university presses.

ACUP response

"Monographs are complex, longitudinal pieces of work that represent years of scholarly activity and are particularly significant for communicating excellent research in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Open Access policy should support and not compromise this excellence."

Roger Kain, Professor of Humanities at the School of Advanced Study, Universities UK Open Access Monographs Group

ACUP does not oppose OA in broad principle but has serious concerns about the lack of fiscal sustainability for Canadian scholarly publishing and evidence-based, consultative decision making in the policy directions that have been expressed to date.

ACUP's Request for Support

Require that SSHRC adopt OA at the ASPP only if it adequately increases resources to the program. Financial modelling sets these support options as:

- **ASPP increases by \$18,000 per title to a total of \$26,000.** This is similar to the cost of publishing a work according to the ITHAKA study³ (study in USD). **OR**
- **ASPP increases by \$9,500 per title to a total of \$17,500, contingent on an OA embargo in effect for the first two years after the title is published.**
- Implementation of the policy **no earlier than Spring 2022** so presses can plan for new conditions.

Broad consultation with ALL stakeholders including a *full* consideration of impacts must be considered before making major policy changes. This must include the financial consequences for Canadian university presses, as without adequate resources, the sustainability of a fundamental infrastructure for Canadian scholarly communication will be at unnecessary risk.

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² For one example, see <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/rights-permissions/open/faq>

³ <https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/the-costs-of-publishing-monographs/>