



## The White Horse Press

March 2025

### Report 2024/2025: The Open Book Collective

#### Context

The White Horse Press (WHP) has operated on a traditional (gated) publishing model for over thirty years but is now working hard to transition to a fully Open Access future across its book and journal publishing. As a very small press, many of the Open Access publishing models commonly used elsewhere in the sector are impractical or impossible for us. More generally, we lack the resource to form and maintain a significant network of relationships with the many institutional libraries around the world, who form our natural customer base.

A priority for our OA transition is therefore to find approaches and infrastructures that allow us to access adequate OA publishing revenue despite not having the tools or labour capacity taken for granted at larger companies.

We joined the Open Book Collective (OBC) in early 2023, just as it was starting. The aim of participating in OBC is to accelerate our OA transition for books, with staged goals:

- 1 Make our book frontlist fully Open Access.
- 2 Eliminate reliance on author fees, BPCs etc.
- 3 Grow from 4–5 books to 8–9 books a year, while maintaining full OA publishing.

Since joining OBC, we have seen a steady accumulation of subscriber support, with revenue coming in at a level that has made a direct impact on our ability to publish OA books. The key takeaway for 2024/25 is that while we had a slow year for books overall in calendar 2024, we have a very healthy frontlist for 2025 – and thanks in large part to OBC support, our confirmed frontlist is currently 100% open access.

#### Cumulative Revenue and Expenditure to Date<sup>1</sup> (from Jan 2023 to March 2025)

- OBC revenue received, in total: GBP £31,067
- OBC funds allocated to books already published: GBP £6,500
- OBC funds allocated to confirmed forthcoming books to be published in 2025: GBP £17,500 of which £4,000 is provisional but likely, as the manuscript is due for submission in March 2025: Rainhorn.
- OBC funds received and allocated to longer term books: GBP £7,067
- OBC funds confirmed but not yet received: EUR €2,113 + USD \$612 + GBP £495.

We have held our average book production cost steady at GBP £8,000, despite inflation. Our aim in deploying OBC revenue is to maximise impact, where ‘impact’ is measured by the increase in the proportion of our frontlist that is published OA. At this stage of our development, the route to highest impact lies in allocating OBC funds judiciously in

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers are current as at 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

combination with other financial support that may be available for particular books. This way, every deployed penny of OBC revenue directly increases OA outcomes, without ‘wasting’ OBC funds on books that might become OA by other means.

We monitor this by tracking all OBC revenue in a restricted account and releasing funds from that account when allocated against specific book projects.

### Publishing Impact

In FY24/25, we published only one book. The slow pace of publication is connected with acquisition and production factors unrelated to funding or OBC. The one book we published in this period started out gated, specifically because it was in the running for Knowledge Unlatched. It was successful in that process, and is now Open Access.

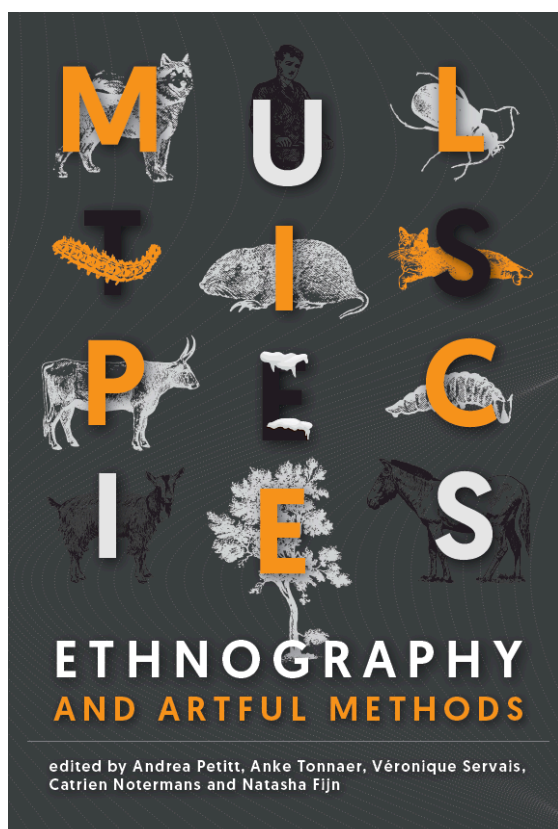
Looking ahead, as of March 2025 we have allocated £17,500 of OBC revenue towards three books currently in production, which would otherwise have to be published gated. We expect all these books to be published in FY25/26. To maximise ‘OA efficiency’ in the use of funds, we are accepting BPCs where available. Table 1 summarises the funding position for our forthcoming books.

**Table 1:** Frontlist and Forthcoming Books 2025–27, with OBC contributions [green rows].<sup>2</sup>

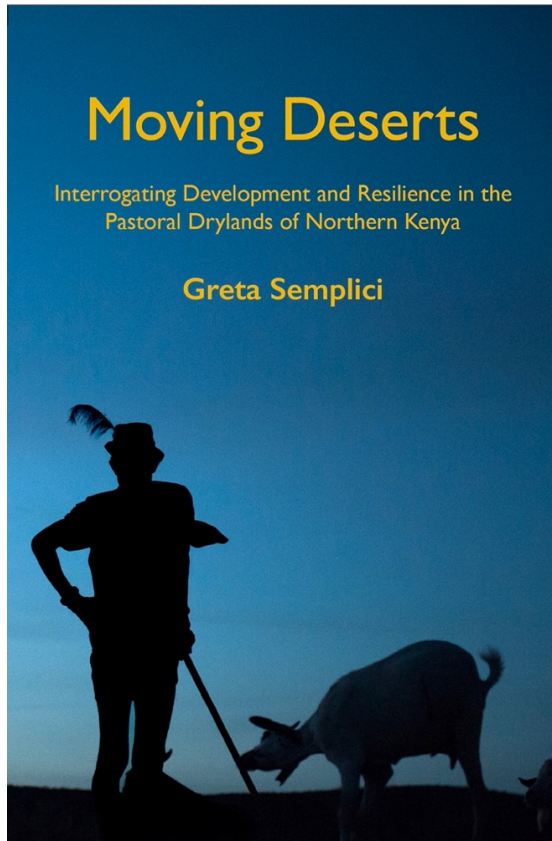
Title	Description	Budget	OBC Contribution	Confirmed OA?	Planned Date
Multispecies Ethnography and Artful Methods, eds Pettitt et al. <i>See Figure 1</i>	A multi-author, multi-artist trans-disciplinary exploration of ‘artful methods’ in the field of non-human ethnographies. This is a technically ambitious volume incorporating a variety of multimedia elements, and thus has a higher production budget.	£10,000	£5,500	YES	July 2025
Nordic Climate History, ed. Collet	An edited volume collecting climate histories from across the Nordic region.	£8,000	£0	YES	August 2025
Rural Transitions in Mongolia and Central Asia, eds Ahearn et al.	An edited volume focusing on pastoral and rural communities; this anthropology collection highlights ongoing transitions in rural Central Asia.	£8,000	£0	YES	October 2025
Moving Deserts, auth. Semplici <i>See Figure 1</i>	Anthropology monograph on resilience and development in the pastoral drylands of northern Kenya.	£8,000	£8,000	YES	Autumn 2025
White Lead, auth. Rainhorn	Translation of a French monograph, being an environmental history of the industrial use of lead – a ‘legal poison’.	£8,000	£4,000 [subject to receipt of manuscript]	YES	Autumn 2025

<sup>2</sup> Some of our forthcoming books have attracted BPCs to cover part of their costs, and we are using OBC funds to make up the difference. This is the most efficient and impactful way to deploy OBC funds. Cases in Table 1 where the book is confirmed OA but the allocated OBC funds are less than the budget cost reflect these cases where the remainder is covered from another source.

Grasping Soil, ed. Brownell	An edited volume offering various essays and a co-authored syllabus in the field of soil history.	£8,000	£0	YES	Late 2025
Towards a History of Agrarian Colonisation in Post-independence Latin America, eds Fischer et al.	Edited volume on land, conflict and visions of rural order in Latin America.	£8,000	£0	YES	Spring 2026
Border-Crossing Battle, auth. Kaucka	A history of bark beetle blight in Bohemia, Austria and Bavaria (1868–1929).	£8,000	£8,000	[contingent on new OBC support being confirmed]	Autumn 2026
Frozen Witness, eds Fedchenko et al.	An edited volume that offers an eco-biography of the Fedchenko Glacier in Tajikistan.	£8,000	£0	YES	2027
Line after Line, auth. Watson	Environmental histories of North-East England's Transportation Networks, c.1730–1914.	£8,000	£8,000	[contingent on new OBC support being confirmed]	2027
Five Local Exercises of Environmental History, auth. Beltrametti	A monograph presenting environmental history case studies in and of the Alps and Apennines.	£8,000	£8,000 [subject to receipt of manuscript]	YES	TBC
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>£89,000</b>	<b>£25,500 (committed)</b>		
			+ £16,000 (subject to new OBC support)		



**Figure 1:** *Multispecies Ethnography and Artful Methods*, forthcoming in July 2025, will be open access under CC BY 4.0 thanks to OBC support. It is an edited volume (and interactive website) that explores the potential of multimodal art practices in doing qualitative research beyond the human. Through artful endeavours such as creative writing, photography, filmmaking, drawing and poetry, the volume aims to overcome the shortcomings of conventional, anthropocentric and logocentric methods in multispecies research.



**Figure 2:** *Moving Deserts: Interrogating Development and Resilience in the Pastoral Drylands of Northern Kenya*, forthcoming in Autumn 2025, will be open access under CC BY 4.0 thanks to OBC support. This monograph re-examines the concept of resilience, as applied in the development sector. It gives central stage to the voices, experiences, memories and everyday lives of the people whose resilience is the subject of much international attention and financial aid flows.

### Supporter Credits

We list all OBC supporters on the ‘Open Access Thanks Page’ on our website (unless they prefer anonymity), alongside others who are supporting our OA transition in significant ways (outside OBC).<sup>3</sup>

We also credit supporters on the verso of the book(s) towards which their OBC subscription funds have been allocated. The institutions that will have verso credits<sup>4</sup> based on OBC funds currently allocated to our frontlist books are:

Bath Spa University  
Bern University Library  
Edge Hill University  
Iowa State University  
KU Leuven Libraries  
Macalester University  
National Library of Scotland  
National Library of Sweden  
Tilburg University  
University College London  
University of Arizona Library  
University of Bristol

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.whpress.co.uk/publications/oasupporters/>

<sup>4</sup> This list omits three institutions whose funds will support forthcoming books, but who have chosen not to be credited publicly.

University of Edinburgh  
 University of Groningen  
 University of Leeds  
 University of Loughborough  
 University of Manchester Library  
 University of Pennsylvania  
 University of Salford Library  
 University of Southampton  
 University of Sussex  
 University of Waikato Library  
 Utrecht University  
 Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
 York University

### Usage Impact

Our OA books reach far more online readers than our gated books. The following statistics from JSTOR (the only hosting platform that holds both our gated and OA books, thus enabling direct comparison) illustrate the impact of open access. For context, please note that we only started focussing on online eBook publication of any kind (gated or OA) at the start of 2022, when we loaded all our books onto JSTOR. We had only partial online availability before then, and there was little usage, so our meaningful book usage dataset starts in 2022.

**Table 2:** Usage Impact of OA publication on JSTOR; calendar years.

	2022	2023	2024
Total Online Booklist	45	53	55
Gated eBooks	39	40	41
OA eBooks	6	13	14
Total JSTOR Usage (Gated)	791	816	985
Total JSTOR Usage (OA)	5,861	10,461	14,842
Percentage increase (Gated)	n/a	3%	21%
Percentage increase (OA)	n/a	78%	42%
Ave. Usage per Title (Gated)	20	20	24
Ave. Usage per Title (OA)	977	805	1,060
Busiest Book (Gated)	62	149	128
Busiest Book (OA)	2,800	2,970	2,640

The JSTOR numbers compellingly illustrate the impact of making our books Open Access. Not only is usage radically higher for our OA books, but we also see that volume of usage across our booklist is rising much more rapidly for the OA titles – and that’s in a context where even our gated books are clearly gaining readership at a healthy pace year on year.

We are currently working towards making all our OA books available in full-text form in both Thoth and OAPEN. Some are already on OAPEN (and also ORL), but usage there or elsewhere is *not* captured in the JSTOR data. Table 1, as dramatic as it is, thus *understates* the usage impact of open access. Making sure all our OA books are on both Thoth and OAPEN will further improve our authors’ ability to reach more readers.

There are clearly far more people interested in our books than can readily access them under a gated publishing model. This is one reason that our initial experiments with OA, after we started focussing more closely on online publishing in 2022, swiftly evolved into a greater determination to make our books open to all. The White Horse Press chooses to spend all its effort supporting specifically environmental perspectives in the HSS because we believe that doing so will help in some way to address the serious real-world environmental challenges that we all face. Reaching more readers helps us serve that mission better.

### **BPC Impact**

One of our objectives is to eliminate reliance on BPCs (and any other kind of author fee) for OA book publishing. Since 2024 was a slow year for our books programme for unrelated reasons, we still do not have a lot of data to show a trend in BPC use in the context of OBC funding. We are still relying on judicious use of BPCs for our frontlist, when available, so as to maximise the impact arising from OBC support.

Our preference and intention remains to find our way to a sustainable basis for OA book publishing that does not use BPCs at all, so we see the current situation as transitional. OBC is an important part of moving towards that goal. Until non-BPC book revenue is enough to fund all our frontlist, however, we will continue to accept BPCs where available so as to maximise the proportion of our books that are published open access, one way or another.

### **Outlook**

After a slow year in FY24/25, the coming 12 to 18 months look very busy for our book programme. We currently have a reserve of £24,567 in OBC funds, GBP £17,500 of which is now allocated towards confirmed frontlist titles, with another £7,067 allocated subject to receipt of manuscript (and topped up to £8K with funds confirmed but not yet received). Our total budget for OA publication of all confirmed frontlist and forthcoming titles is GBP £89,000, which means OBC support is covering 29%, with the rest coming from BPCs or elsewhere. Meanwhile, indications are that support on OBC will at least hold steady, or perhaps even grow as the platform attracts support from a wider population of libraries.

We are thus increasingly optimistic that we will be able to:

- A) Have a strong run of book publishing in the next eighteen months, perhaps even exceeding our long term average annual books per year.
- B) Publish our whole book frontlist open access for the foreseeable future.

We have made very significant progress since we started OA publishing in 2022, and the OBC has played a key part in enabling this rapid evolution. The challenges we now need to address are:

- A) Ensure that 100% OA book publication remains stably achievable, by continuing to engage with OBC and to support its effort and growth where we can; and by seeking other equitable funding sources where possible, to reduce risk and volatility by diversifying funding streams.
- B) Work towards reducing our reliance on BPCs and similar author-procured funds.
- C) Incrementally grow our book programme to our target of 8–9 books a year.
- D) Flip the gated books in our backlist to OA through our [Adopt-a-Book programme](#) and/or any other means we can find.

### **Governance and Management**

During the reporting period, there have been no substantive changes to governance or management arrangements at The White Horse Press.