



The White Horse Press

Edinburgh, Winwick, Isle of Harris

Scholarly books and journals on environment and society.

Annual Report 2025/2026
April 2026

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1. Who We Are

The White Horse Press (WHP) is a very small, fully independent family-run scholarly press specialising in ‘environment and society’ – by which we mean humanities and social sciences research with an environmental perspective.

We publish six journals and four or five books a year, with most of our current and forthcoming content now released on an open access basis. We have particular emphases on environmental history, environmental ethics, interdisciplinary plant studies and the study of nomadic cultures. Within that, we’re actively trying to develop our list in relation to Latin American and Eastern European topics; more-than-human histories; and histories (or other forms of HSS research) concerning mountains, the sea and walking.

The press originated on the Isle of Harris, but is now run mainly from Edinburgh and rural Cambridgeshire. We’ve been going since the early 1990s and have played an important role in supporting and developing the academic niches we work in.

The White Horse Press is an LLP in which the partners do the day to day work. We have no external owners; as a small partnership, we are ‘worker-owned’. We have no employees except for a few trusted freelancers who support production workflows. The partners at WHP believe that supporting the best, latest scholarship on environment and society can contribute to addressing the daunting environmental challenges we all face. That’s why we do what we do, and we also try to earn a living through our work in support of this mission.¹



Figure 1: A White Horse Press partner (and daughter) comb the beach at Scarista in South Harris, just across the (single-track) road from where the press was founded.

¹ During the reporting period, there have been no substantive changes to governance or management arrangements at The White Horse Press.

2. Context

WHP published books and journals on a traditional (gated) publishing model for over thirty years but is now working hard to transition to a fully Open Access (OA) future across all its outputs.

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 capacity 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, partnerships 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.

The key infrastructures enabling our OA transition for books include the [Open Book Collective](#) (OBC) for funding and [Thoth Open Metadata](#) for dissemination of both content and metadata. The approaches enabling our OA transition for journals are [Subscribe to Open](#) (S2O) plus collective funding through [KOALA](#) for certain titles; underpinned by our operational partnership with [Liverpool University Press](#) (LUP). Through these means, we continue to make excellent progress toward open access, with gated publication now representing but a small minority of our output.

That said, we have not yet found an open access publishing model that enables us to bring newly launched journals to financial stability within a reasonable timeframe; and there are some worrying signs that subscription support for our S2O titles may not remain solid for the longer term. Since we are committed in principle to financing open access journal publication without resorting to author fees, we currently view collective funding models as the likeliest route to a more sustainable journal publishing programme. KOALA is restricted to two journals and may end after 2027, so exploring other collective funding opportunities for open access journal publishing will be a key focus in 2026 and 2027.

In parallel with our progress in opening access, we made significant progress in 2025 towards making sure anyone with accessibility requirements can engage with our publications. As of March 2026, we are achieving production standards that comply with relevant accessibility legislation in the US, EU and elsewhere. That said, we recognise that there is more work to be done to improve accessibility, for example in regard to our websites. Our [Accessibility Statement](#) sets out a roadmap for further development.

The through line connecting all this activity is the goal of removing barriers to readership. We publish some of the best, latest thought on ‘environment and society’ – much of it policy-relevant – and we know that our publications will contribute most to the common good if no willing reader is excluded.

3. Books

We published three books in 2025 and two more in Q1 2026, all Open Access. Two of these five books benefitted from OBC funding support; the others were funded by the editors' research projects. In this period we also supported the release of an author-published photo-ethnography, which is primarily a large format hardback release and remains gated online at the author's preference. Our forthcoming book pipeline is healthy, with a number of projects in production or development and several excellent new proposals under review.

Funding our open access book publishing continues to rely on a mix of book processing charges (BPCs) or other author-side fees, plus OBC support where it's most needed; with an ambition to boost the sustainability of our programme by securing support in 2027 from [Knowledge Unlatched](#) (KU). We now distribute all of our Open Access books via Thoth Open Metadata, which has significantly improved our ability to provide our books, with clean rich metadata, to anyone who wants to read or catalogue them.

Funding Open Access Books: *The Open Book Collective*

We joined the 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 continues to make a direct impact on our ability to publish books open access. The key takeaway for 2025/26 is that while we had another slow year for books overall in calendar 2025, we have a very healthy frontlist for 2026 and beyond. Thanks in large part to OBC support, there is every chance our confirmed frontlist will be 100% open access,² though this is contingent on securing additional support from KU plus BPCs where available.

Cumulative Revenue and Expenditure to Date³ (from January 2023 to March 2026)

- OBC revenue received, in total: GBP £45,528.
- OBC funds allocated to books already published: GBP £19,300.
- OBC funds allocated to confirmed forthcoming books to be published in 2026: GBP £9,000.
- OBC funds allocated to longer term books: GBP £17,000.⁴
- OBC funds confirmed but not yet received: EUR €1,203 + USD \$612 + GBP £1011.

We have had to raise our standard book production budget to GBP £8,500, after several years of holding it steady at £8,000 despite inflation. The increased fee level reflects the cumulative effect of inflation across our production workflow.

² There is one exception to this, which is a commemorative or 'honorary' volume being produced on a print-only basis at the insistence of its editors. If an online version of this book is published in future, then we would aim to make it OA at that time.

³ These numbers are current as at 31st March 2026.

⁴ These funds may be re-allocated to other titles being published sooner, depending on the outcome of the KU Select round.

Our aim in deploying OBC revenue is to maximise impact, where ‘impact’ is measured by the proportion of our frontlist that is published OA. At this stage of our development, the route to highest impact continues to lie in allocating OBC funds judiciously in 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

We have now published three books with OBC funding support (Table 1).

Table 1: Current and Backlist Books with OBC contributions.

Title	Description	DOI	OBC £	OBC %	Date
Entire of Itself?	A multi-author edited volume exploring environmental histories of islands.	https://doi.org/10.3197/63831593227779.book	£6,500	81.25%	March 2024
Multispecies Ethnography and Artful Methods <i>See Figure 1</i>	A multi-author, multi-artist trans-disciplinary exploration of ‘artful methods’ in the field of non-human ethnographies; accompanied by an interactive website.	https://doi.org/10.63308/63878687083054.book See also: https://www.meamresearch.com/	£4,800	48% ⁵	July 2025
Moving Deserts <i>See Figure 2</i>	Policy-relevant anthropology monograph on resilience and development in the pastoral drylands of northern Kenya.	https://doi.org/10.3197/63831593227779.book	£8,000	100%	October 2025
TOTAL			£19,300		

Looking ahead, as of March 2026 we have allocated £26,000 of OBC revenue towards four books currently in development or production. These four books would otherwise have to be published gated. We expect all these books to be published in 2026 or 2027.

To maximise ‘OA efficiency’ in the use of funds, we are still accepting BPCs where available. We have also submitted seven titles forthcoming in 2027, for consideration in KU Select; our working assumption is that some but not all of those titles will attract KU support, which would be a critical boost to keeping our book frontlist fully OA for the next couple years. Table 2 presents the OA funding position for our forthcoming books.⁶

⁵ This was a technically ambitious volume incorporating a variety of multimedia elements, and thus had a higher production budget.

⁶ 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 2 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.

Table 2: Frontlist and Forthcoming Books 2026–28, with OBC contributions.

Title	Description	Budget	OBC Contribution	Confirmed OA?	Planned Date
White Lead, auth. Rainhorn	Translation of a French monograph, being an environmental history of the industrial use of lead – a ‘legal poison’.	£8,500	£4,000	YES	2026
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.	£8,500	£0	YES	2026
Lifeworld, auth. Foster	Developing an alternative to environmental philosophy to that hitherto practised.	£8,000	£5,000	YES	2026
Border-Crossing Battle, auth. Kaucka	A history of bark beetle blight in Bohemia, Austria and Bavaria (1868–1929).	£8,500	TBC	TBC – KU Select	2027
Beyond Environmentalism, auth. Lucarelli	This book explores JB Jackson’s contribution to the development of environmentalism in the postwar years.	£8,500	TBC	TBC – KU Select	2027
Shepherding the Wild, auth. Vargas	Presenting 20 years of research on wood pastures, forest grazing and pastoralism in the Trans-Danubian region.	£8,500	TBC	TBC – KU Select	2027
Frozen Witness, eds Fedchenko et al.	An edited volume that offers an eco-biography of the Fedchenko Glacier in Tajikistan.	£8,500	£0	YES	2027
Line after Line, auth. Watson	Environmental histories of North-East England’s Transportation Networks, c.1730–1914.	£8,500	TBC	TBC – KU Select	2027
Narrating Gwaii Haanas, auth. Vlachos	A monograph exploring sovereignty, governance and environmental stewardship among the Haida Gwaii on British Columbia’s coast.	£8,500	TBC	TBC – KU Select	2027
Wetland Worlds, eds Gruppuso et al.	An interdisciplinary group of international scholars explore wetlands as dynamic socioecological environments.	£8,500	£8,500 (tentative, subject to KU results)	TBC	2027
Wild or Domestic?, eds Jørgensen et al.	An edited volume exploring histories of artificial bird nesting structures.	£9,000	TBC	TBC – KU Select	2027
Heritage Diplomacy at Sea, eds Pinfold et al.	Analysis of practical interactions between militaries and the protection of underwater cultural heritage.	£8,500	TBC	TBC – KU Select	2027
Horses and Humans, auth. Marchesini et al.	Examines the horse–human relationship through zoo-anthropological and ethological lenses.	£8,500	£8,500 (tentative, subject to KU results)	TBC	2029
TOTALS		£118,500	£26,000 (OBC allocated)		

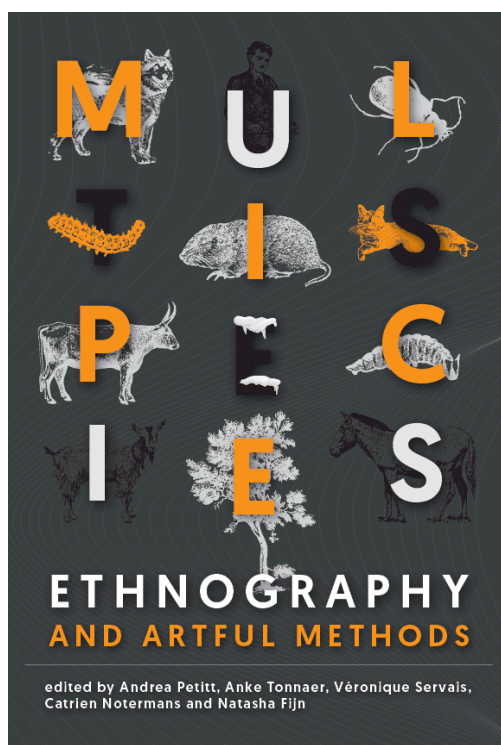


Figure 2: *Multispecies Ethnography and Artful Methods*, published in July 2025, is open access under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 thanks to OBC support. It is an edited volume (and interactive website) that explores the potential of multimodal art practices in doing qualitative research beyond the human. Through 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. We encourage readers to explore the book's own website:

<https://www.meamresearch.com/>

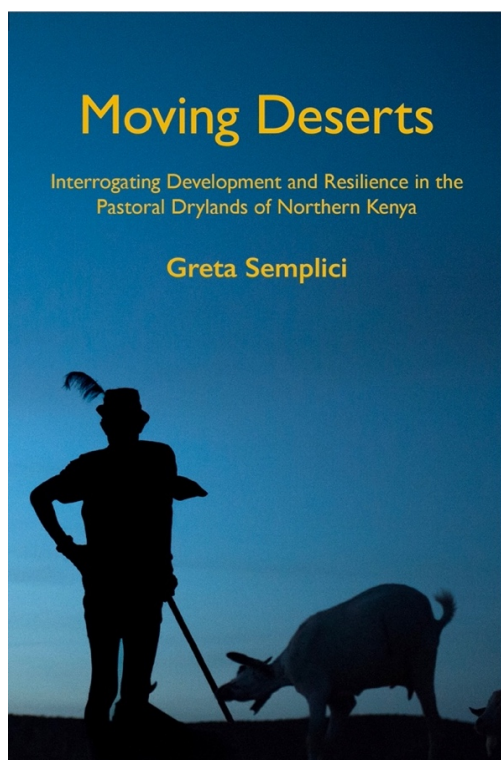


Figure 3: *Moving Deserts: Interrogating Development and Resilience in the Pastoral Drylands of Northern Kenya*, published in October 2025, is open access under CC BY 4.0 thanks to OBC support. This policy-relevant monograph re-examines the concept of resilience, as applied in the development sector. 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 our [Open Access Thanks](#) webpage (unless they prefer anonymity), alongside others who are supporting our OA transition in other significant ways (outside OBC).

We also credit supporters on the verso of the book(s) towards which their OBC subscription funds have been allocated. At the time of writing, the institutions that will have verso credits⁷ based on OBC funds currently allocated to our frontlist books are:

Amherst College
 Bath Spa University
 Delft University of Technology
 Edge Hill University
 Iowa State University
 KU Leuven Libraries
 Macalester University
 Max Planck Digital Library
 National Library of Scotland
 National Library of Sweden
 Swansea University Library
 Tilburg University
 University College London
 University of Arizona Library
 University of Bristol
 University of Edinburgh
 University of Exeter
 University of Leeds
 University of Leicester
 University of Manchester Library
 University of Nottingham
 University of Pennsylvania
 University of Salford Library
 University of Sheffield
 University of Southampton
 University of Southampton Solent
 University of Sussex
 University of the Arts London
 University of York Library
 Utrecht University
 Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
 York University

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 and 2025 were relatively light years for our books programme for unrelated reasons, we still do not have a lot of data to show a trend in BPC

⁷ This list omits three institutions whose funds will support forthcoming books, but who have chosen not to be credited publicly. The list is current as of 31/03/2026.

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, and we hope a reinvigorated KU (now part of [Annual Reviews](#)) will also play an important role. 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.

Disseminating Open Access Books: *Thoth Open Metadata*

We started using Thoth to store and disseminate our book metadata in 2022. In the time since then, Thoth have developed a range of important services which are now at the core of how we disseminate book content and metadata. Since our current and forthcoming books are all open access in the near to medium term, we are able to make consistent use of Thoth services. Our book metadata may be downloaded in [ONIX 3.1](#) or in [other formats](#). We now link to Thoth's book-specific metadata pages, such as this one for [Grasping Soil](#), from our own main landing page for each OA book.

We rely on our partners at Thoth for all the following:

- Metadata capture, improvement and storage.
- Open metadata dissemination via the Thoth database and its many outputs.
- DOI deposit.
- Hosting of OA book files.
- Distribution of OA book content and metadata to a range of important platforms and archives including JSTOR, OAPEN, DOAB and many others.

In addition to these specific processes, we have found the team at Thoth to be an invaluable resource in terms of insight and knowledge about best practice and thorny problem-solving in the area of OA book dissemination.

The upshot is that our ability to provide clean, rich book metadata and to make our OA books widely and easily available to readers everywhere is orders of magnitude better than it was before we partnered with Thoth. This evolution has happened in parallel with our general OA transition in book publishing, and has been a critical part of enabling that transition.

As of March 2026 we are not far from the launch of Thoth 1.0, which will include important new tools to facilitate tracking of OA book usage. Continuing to work with Thoth holds much promise for the future development of our book publishing practice.

Open Access Book Conclusions

Our book publishing programme is now fully open access in the near term, and will remain so for the long term if funding continues to be available at current levels.

Our ability to make such a swift and complete transition to open access for books has been directly enabled by two Open Access infrastructures in particular: the Open Book Collective and Thoth Open Metadata, both projects of [COPIM](#). We continue to rely on funding from other sources as well, and securing KU Select support would make a huge difference from

now till end 2027, but it's the flexibility of the OBC support that really enables us to cover the significant range of books that do not come with institutional funding.

A primary risk to our OA book publishing is thus that OBC or Thoth might cease operating, or cease to be open to a publisher like us. A primary opportunity for our open access book publishing is to move away from BPC funding, and eventually to increase our annual publication rate, as support from OBC grows. Accessing strong book proposals is relatively easy for us, since the scholarly communities in which we are embedded tend to rate the experience of publishing with us very highly – so, publishing more books annually is achievable. The main challenge is around funding.

A key theme is that our OA transition in book publishing has been greatly accelerated by aggregative infrastructures that help a tiny press like us access some of the benefits of scale, which larger presses may take for granted.



Figure 4. The foreground is Carminish on the shores of the Sound of Harris, managed as a croft by the two founding partners of The White Horse Press. They developed the press in large part at their house immediately adjacent to this place, and ran it from there for many years.

4. Journals

We published six journals in 2025, of which one remained hybrid, and the rest were 100% open access in the year:

Table 3: White Horse Press journals in 2025.

Title	ISSN	OA Status 2025	Model
<i>Environment and History</i>	0967-3407	Hybrid	Subscriptions + APCs
<i>Global Environment</i>	1973-3739	Open	Subscriptions + Collective Funding
<i>The Journal of Population and Sustainability</i>	2398-5488	Open	Diamond
<i>Nomadic Peoples</i>	0822-7942	Open	Subscribe to Open
<i>Plant Perspectives</i>	2753-3603	Open	Subscribe to Open
<i>Worldwide Waste</i>	2399-7117	Open	Subscriptions + Collective Funding

In addition to these six titles, we continue to support the editorial process at *Environmental Values*, now published on a hybrid basis by SAGE on our behalf; and we are working with another publisher to find a new home for *Climates and Cultures in History*, whose entire output under our stewardship was OA. As of Q1 2026 we also have one new born-OA journal project in advanced development; and we are actively seeking other opportunities to grow our open access journals list.

Partnership Working: Liverpool University Press

Since 2024 we have benefitted greatly from our partnership with Liverpool University Press. LUP manage all our subscriptions across S2O and other journals, and they host our three most established journals on their Atypon site. LUP's support has become central to our journal publishing programme, partly because their support frees us up to focus our efforts on business development and actual publication work; and partly because the team there have proven so willing to share their expertise and far-ranging insight on a range of practical and strategic matters.

LUP recently launched several new services, including for rights sales and book distribution. At the time of writing we are considering whether these new services might be a good fit for us.

Regardless, our partnership with LUP is another example of an approach that helps us access some of the benefits of scale, which would otherwise not be open to us.

Open Access Journal Models

We use several different models to maximise OA publishing for our journals. We are simply too small, and our author base too widely distributed globally, for read & publish deals or comparable models to work. Our ambition is to publish all our journals fully Open Access with no author fees.

Subscribe to Open

We currently publish two journals, *Plant Perspectives* and *Nomadic Peoples*, under S2O. *Nomadic Peoples* is now in its thirtieth volume and its fourth year open access under S2O, confirmed for 2026. *Plant Perspectives* is in its third volume overall and third year OA under

S2O, also confirmed for 2026 – albeit operating with an S2O threshold that falls far short of covering its production costs.

In line with S2O's theoretical framework, our experience has been that the model works well for converting established journals to OA, but is not effective for launching new journals. We have thus far chosen to run *Plant Perspectives* under S2O on a significant loss, in order to keep it open – which we recognise is far better for establishing and growing the journal's editorial profile, as well as for maximising general impact. In order to continue publishing *Plant Perspectives* open access for the longer term, however, we need to find a way for it to generate enough revenue to cover its production costs.

We are active members of the S2O Community of Practice (S2O CoP), which has proved a tremendous way to form connections, learn about new developments and opportunities, and align our work with emerging best practice. The S2O CoP is another approach that helps mitigate the problems that come with being very small.

Collective Funding: KOALA

We publish two journals, *Global Environment* and *Worldwide Waste*, with support from the KOALA consortium augmented by subscriber support. Acceptance of the KOALA grants (covering 2025–2027 only) required an immediate commitment to OA publication (thus removing S2O conditionality), but the grants are not sufficient to cover costs. We thus had to commit to OA for these two journals before knowing we could cover costs.

The KOALA grants have been a huge help for these two journals, but in order to have a chance of achieving financial sustainability, we have continued to seek subscriber support. Subscriptions held reasonably steady in 2025 but have shown a pronounced decline in 2026. This suggests that a mixed model lacking S2O's conditionality is not likely to be a long term solution to funding these two journals.

Assuming the KOALA programme does not renew for another 3-year term, we will face a challenge in funding these journals in 2028 and beyond.

Diamond: Full Sponsor

The Journal of Population and Sustainability continues to benefit from full production cost support from [Population Matters](#), a not-for-profit campaigning organisation, and is thus published on a diamond OA basis. The journal's editorial independence remains solid under the stewardship of longstanding editor David Samways.

Hybrid: Environment and History

Environment and History (E&H) is our flagship journal, and provides a critically important share of our annual revenue – including a sufficient contribution to development funds that we can afford to take a loss-making position on multiple new journal projects while they become more established. *E&H* is green OA, as all our publications have been since 2007; and we accept APCs to make the version of record OA for individual articles.

Given this title's central importance to our company's financial health and to our ability to launch exciting new projects, we have thus far maintained a minimal-risk approach. We cannot take the risk of moving *E&H* to full open access until such time as a model is available to us that would enable OA stably for the long term, while consistently generating revenue around the current level. Open Access publishing models for journals are evolving

rapidly, so we hope that once the sector as a whole is closer to full OA, there will be a model open to us that would allow us to confidently move E&H to full OA. Until that time, the risk in doing so (whether by S2O or some other way) appears to great.

Developing Our Portfolio

We are actively seeking to develop our journals programme for future.

Other Collective Funding Infrastructures?

Given that we have seen mixed results with S2O and S2O-adjacent subscription models, and that R&P agreements and similar approaches are not open to us due to our scale, we are now focussing on collective funding approaches as a possible route to more sustainable OA journal publishing. This direction is informed by the huge beneficial impact the OBC has had on our book publishing programme, as well as by seeing in practice how powerful KOALA has been in helping smaller journals cover their costs, at least for a few years.

One of the challenges we have found so far is that some collective funding infrastructures apply eligibility requirements that exclude a press like ours. Although we are a mission-driven press, we operate as a small partnership. The way we make a living from our work is thus through an annual profit distribution, not through salaries. This sometimes (but not always) excludes us from schemes that require an asset-locked legal structure.

We are thinking through new ways of structuring our journal publications, or of presenting our way of working, that might make us a better fit for collective funding models – since these seem potentially the most promising approach to sustaining our journal publishing programme for the long term.

Launch to Open?

[EMS Press](#) recently announced ‘[Launch to Open](#)’ (L2O), an S2O variant that uses deep financial transparency to encourage subscriber support for journals that do not already have a subscriber base. We are unlikely to try L2O in 2027 but will monitor the evolution of this variant closely, as it might present a more effective way to bring new journals into financial sustainability on a workable timeframe.

More Journals?

Meanwhile, we are near to confirming a new journal title for launch in 2027, working with two veteran environmental historians as founding editors of a really interesting project backed by a truly impressive editorial board. We are also exploring the possibility of acquiring one or more other journal titles to augment our programme.

Open Access Journal Conclusions

Journal publishing remains at the core of our work, with five titles fully OA and one hybrid in 2026. Our more established titles are mostly doing well. Our newer titles are doing very well editorially but moving them into financial sustainability remains a challenge.

We continue to explore different journal funding models. S2O has proven effective in some contexts but less so in others; collective funding models have provided significant help in some cases, and we’d like to try more of that, but we face some barriers to entry.

Our partnership with LUP has become central to our journal publishing, and is yet one more example of an approach that helps us mitigate the limitations of small scale.

5. Usage Impact of Open Access

Our open access content enjoys higher usage than our gated content. When one publication moves from gated to open, usage increases by very significant margins in almost all cases. Higher usage can be helpful in a business sense if it allows us to demonstrate to potential supporters (e.g. librarians) that our publications are relevant. More importantly, however, reaching more readers means that our work is likely to have greater impact on the environmental challenges we all face.

Against all this, we maintain a level of scepticism about online usage statistics, since we do not have a way to be sure how well noise from bots and other automated processes has been stripped out. That sort of activity seems to have increased greatly in the context of the rapid evolution of AI, not only for our publications but also in terms of general website traffic, for example. This caveat should colour all the following commentary.

Book Usage

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.

Table 4: Usage Impact of OA publication on JSTOR; calendar years.⁸

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total Online Booklist	45	53	55	61
Gated eBooks	39	40	41	42
OA eBooks	6	13	14	19
Total JSTOR Usage (Gated)	791	816	985	636
Total JSTOR Usage (OA)	5,861	10,461	14,842	13,189
Percentage change (Gated)	n/a	3%	21%	-35%
Percentage change (OA)	n/a	78%	42%	-11%
Ave. Usage per Title (Gated)	20	20	24	15
Ave. Usage per Title (OA)	977	805	1,060	694
Busiest Book (Gated)	62	149	128	111
Busiest Book (OA)	2,800	2,970	2,640	2,017

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 tends to rise more rapidly for the OA titles in high usage years, and remain more resilient than gated titles in low usage years such as 2025. Our understanding is that JSTOR usage metrics are relatively well controlled for AI bots etc.

We are not sure why there was an overall dip in usage in 2025, but this may be an artefact of our relatively high pace of book publication in 2023 (translating into high 2024 usage for

⁸ 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.

recent titles) followed by a relatively low pace in 2024 (meaning there was less recent content to attract usage in 2025).

All our OA books are available in full-text form in both Thoth and OAPEN, and more recent titles are on a range of other platforms via Thoth's dissemination service. Usage on other platforms is *not* captured in the JSTOR data, and all other platforms are OA – JSTOR is our only gated book platform. Table 1, as dramatic as it is, thus significantly *understates* the usage impact of open access.

Partnering with Thoth for dissemination of our new OA books has hugely improved our authors' ability to reach more readers. We look forward to exploring the usage metric tools in Thoth 1.0.

All of this illustrates again the importance of open infrastructures that help us mitigate the problems of small scale.

Journal Usage

The available data suggest that OA's impact on journal usage is similarly pronounced. Our ability to analyse this is limited by the fact that our move from hybrid to fully OA models across multiple journal titles coincided with a move of hosting platform from ingentaconnect to a combination of LUP and the OJS. It's thus difficult to run like-for-like comparisons. Nevertheless, after smoothing as best we can for the differences in methodology between platforms, the impact of open access seems substantial (Tables 5 and 6).⁹

Table 5: Impact of OA publication on usage of *Global Environment*.

	Platform	Access	Full-text Usage
2021	Ingentaconnect	Hybrid	1,916
2022	Ingentaconnect	Hybrid	2,621
2023	Ingentaconnect (nine months) and LUP's Atypon (three months)	Hybrid	4,182
2024	LUP's Atypon	Open	9,796
2025	LUP's Atypon	Open	24,970

Table 6: Impact of OA publication on usage of *Nomadic Peoples*.

	Platform	Access	Full-text Usage
2021	Ingentaconnect	Hybrid	3,210
2022	Ingentaconnect	Hybrid	2,118
2023	Ingentaconnect (nine months) and LUP's Atypon (three months)	Open	2,260
2024	LUP's Atypon	Open	7,526
2025	LUP's Atypon	Open	28,421

⁹ For context, we have made all our journal articles available online since the late 1990s, via BIDS and then ingentaconnect; moving to LUP + OJS in 2023.

Context provided by LUP has improved our confidence that the rise in usage in 2025 is real (i.e. from actual human readers). LUP's site has safeguards that exclude crawlers and bots from the data. Alongside that, a large proportion of the usage is institutional, which can be assumed 'real'. Looking at event referrers across our three journals on their platform, LUP advise that ChatGPT is #13 and Perplexity AI is #26. They continue: "The other external referrers around them are all ones we would expect to see, specifically search engines like Google, Google Scholar, Bing, Duck Duck Go, Ecosia. Google is by far the biggest referrer and, in comparison to the total requests that come via Google, Chat GPT and Perplexity are some 4% and 0.6% respectively." This suggests that the increased usage really is mostly human, arriving through established search portals rather than novel AI channels. Our working assumption is thus that the impressive 2025 increase was driven largely by opening access, combined with improved discoverability through LUP's Atypon platform.

Interestingly, there appears to be a lag between a journal going full OA and usage beginning to climb significantly. We attribute this to the fact that it may take some time for information about a journal's new OA status to percolate out to more diverse reader communities.

Usage Conclusions

Even allowing for the perplexing problem of bots and crawlers affecting the numbers, there do clearly appear to be far more people interested in our books and journals than can readily access them under a gated publishing model. This is one reason that our initial experiments with OA in 2022 and 2023 swiftly evolved into a greater determination to make our publications 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.



Figure 5: The [Isle of Shillay](#) in the outer [Sound of Harris](#), part of a nature reserve that the WHP partners (plus another two cousins) manage through a charitable trust. This island is a breeding ground for grey seals, storm petrels and other seabirds; and home to unique botanical variants.

6. **Accessibility**

We don't want anyone to be prevented from reading what we publish.

Removing Sensory Barriers: *Production Workflows*

As of March 2026, we are producing WCAG 2.2 AA (or better) versions of all our new publications and are compliant with the [European Accessibility Act](#) (EEA) and [ADA Title II](#). In addition to providing compliant PDFs for all new books and journal articles, we also now provide compliant ePubs for all our new books; compliant XML versions for three of our journals (thanks to LUP); and compliant or partially compliant reflowable HTML for all the other journals.

Achieving this level of accessibility is the result of a considerable amount of work, undertaken mainly in the second half of 2025. It was necessary to research all the requirements, learn a number of new techniques, adjust our production workflows, and create whole new workflows for ePub and certain HTML outputs. We handle a large proportion of our production work in-house, but have now also extended accessible workflows to our freelance support. Guidance and support from the OBC was hugely helpful in enabling us to make this progress.

Much of our back content remains only partially accessible. It will be a large project to remediate all of it. In early 2026, we worked with a technical supplier, [CodeMantra](#), to establish costs and practicalities for this project. Their proof of concept remediation tests have been successful, so the remaining challenge for backset remediation is primarily budgetary.

Our website likewise remains only partially accessible. We have made a lot of progress on improving it in recent months, but we remain reliant on certain third-party plugins or widgets that we cannot control ourselves. We will continue improving our website incrementally over time.

We now have VPATs for both [books](#) and [journals](#). Our [Accessibility Statement](#) sets out a roadmap for further development.

Removing Socio-economic Barriers: *Research 4 Life*

We have begun the process of making our remaining gated content (for both books and journals) available via [Research 4 Life](#) (R4L) to readers in a number of countries where the average institution is unlikely to be able to afford the cost of access. We will be providing *all* our gated content on R4L, without exception; and we will be making it freely available to *all* R4L countries, without exception. Our open access publications are already available via R4L.

7. Outlook

Over 2025 and early 2026, we made significant progress in removing barriers to readership. The two main areas in which we have done this are through development of our open access programme, and improvement in production workflows with regard to sensory accessibility. We have also improved discoverability of much of our content by partnering with Thoth for books and LUP for three of our journals.

Alongside this important progress, our programme has remained healthy in its fundamentals. Although we saw a slow period for books in 2024–2025, the coming 12 to 18 months look very busy. Our six journals remain very strong editorially and we have one (possibly more) exciting new journal project in the pipeline. We continue to make an impact on the world through our publishing, and we're still able to earn a living from our work.

In order to maintain this position while pushing even further towards an open access future, and making greater progress on improving accessibility, we need to find our way to stabler OA publishing models. Our strategy so far has been to seek aggregative infrastructures, partnerships and other collective approaches that dilute the challenges of small scale – even as we make full use of the nimbleness and freedom that larger entities may lack, but we enjoy. This is the right way. Finding truly sustainable OA publishing models, however, remains a challenge – especially for journals and in particular for launching new journals.

We don't know what the solution to these challenges will be, or what our prospects are beyond the next few years. We do know that values-alignment with our supporters – libraries, funders, open infrastructures, others – is more important than ever before. We understand our values because they underpin everything we do, and we think we are already well aligned with the vast majority of our stakeholders. We hope that has come across here. We recognise, though, that we may need to wear our values and mission more 'on our sleeve' in future than we have done before. That will be part of our focus in the coming months.



Figure 6: The White Horse Press includes a border collie called Nellie.