Open access and monographs
Where are we now?

A position paper by the British Academy
May 2018

Recent announcements about a requirement that monographs submitted to REF2027 should be made available open access have been met with expressions of concern, including from many Fellows of the British Academy. Monographs are a crucial form of academic dissemination in the humanities and social sciences, and the preservation of a sustainable future for this medium is a matter of acute interest to the British Academy.

A new dialogue on the development of workable policies for extending open access to academic monographs now needs to begin, and the British Academy stands ready to contribute to those discussions. The issues which the Academy believes need to be considered – particularly those concerning money, exceptions, timing, and transparency – are laid out in the following paper.

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1. digital first, not digital only
While the *language* of openness remains ‘powerful and persuasive’, UK *policy* needs to be seen as a mechanism for regulation, cost-cutting, tech-based efficiencies and privatization
The drift toward increasingly tech-based publishing captures the current ideology of automation. Whether or not reviewer selection, for example, can be automated in AHSS as well as STEM fields, automation remains a longstanding reach that exceeds its grasp. It offers to make scholarship systematic and publishing apolitical
The strength of the UK sector, not just of Goldsmiths, is its distinctiveness. The drive toward OA as the quasi-automation and privatization of scholarly publishing will threaten this if we let it. I do not think we have to