Jisc Institution as E-Textbook Publisher project

Dissemination, distribution and discovery

1. UCL

Distribution/Discovery

In addition to featuring the titles (Key Concepts in Public Archaeology and Textbook of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery) on the UCL Press website in PDF format, users can find titles via:

- Directory of Open Access Books
- UCL Discovery
- UCL Press enhanced monograph platform
- Apple/Google app store
- JISC project website
- OAPEN
- Internet Archive
- Unglue.it
- JSTOR (from Oct 2016)
- Ingenta Open (from late 2016)

The books will also be catalogued by librarians at UCL and thus accessible in Explore (UCL’s online library catalogue). The books will also be listed on Moodle reading lists in UCL, and via reading lists @ UCL. Print copies (which are POD) will be distributed by NBN International. Titles will be distributed worldwide via Amazon in addition to other trade outlets and stores, served in the UK by a small team of freelance agents, who also cover the major library suppliers.

Our work with OAPEN means that the metadata will be available for librarians via WorldCat and Europeana. In addition, we are currently working to bring UCL Press records to librarians via ExLibris. Uploading the titles to JSTOR’s new open access area will also mean that the titles are more accessible and discoverable due to the popularity of this platform with students, lecturers and also alumni.

Promotion

We have a comprehensive marketing and distribution plan in place for all of our titles, which will cover both traditional and online methods. This title will benefit from the general marketing and promotion undertaken by UCL Press, which includes distribution of metadata, title indexing by DOAB (Directory of Open Access Books), the UCL Press e-newsletter and catalogue mailings (the UCL Press catalogue is distributed to more than 1,000 research libraries worldwide).

In addition to general marketing:
- Inclusion on UCL reading lists for the relevant courses
- Direct marketing and e-marketing to relevant course leaders and subject librarians worldwide
- Presentations at conferences worldwide in Archaeology and Surgery
- Where possible, inclusion of titles by conference booksellers at relevant conferences
- Social media by the authors and by UCL Press
- Promotion by the authors and publisher on subject-specific forums and listservs, such as JiscMail and H-Net
- Society partnerships where applicable
- Advertising in relevant journals and magazines, including student journals, specialist titles, conference guides
- Reviews of the books in relevant media
- Conference presentations about the project at international library and information conferences such as LIBER
- YUDU Media will also be helping to promote this, as we are a new client.

Adoption and library supply
In terms of driving adoption, we are working closely with the authors and course leaders to identify suitable external target courses, in addition to courses that the authors have links to. All books are also advertised across campus using posters, advertising on library screens, using flyers in the relevant departments and via emails sent by the library subject team. The authors’ department will also contact alumni and other relevant contacts that they have.

Awareness
As these titles have not yet published, it is hard to gauge awareness of them at this time. However, initial signs are promising, with enquiries about both the print and open access versions of both titles from a variety of sources. The challenges we face are varied; not least because many of the publishers publishing in these areas are resource rich. Whilst we lack the broad campus sales team of a larger publisher, open access enables us to have wider reach as there are fewer barriers to usage, and, in making these discoverable, this can be a massive advantage.

(In UCL Annual Report 2016, pages 5-6)

2. UHI and ENU

What is the distribution model you are testing?
The e-textbooks (How to Write a Research Dissertation and Undertaking Your Research Project) will be distributed and marketed quickly, efficiently and globally via the Amazon network. Kindle Select Publishing requires that texts are distributed exclusively to Amazon for the first ninety-day period, allow titles to be made available for free, for a five-day-period across ninety days. Other distribution services - Smashwords, whose premium catalogue extends distribution to Apple, Barnes & Noble, Gardners, Kobo and other retailers, are under consideration. Market analysis of the suitability of distribution through print on demand distributors like Amazon’s own Createspace and LightningSource has not been carried out.

Did the distribution model you selected work as expected? Did you change it? If so, how?
The distribution model – to the Amazon network, through Amazon KDP, worked without any surprises. No core changes to the process were made. Across a network where, on a daily basis, thousands of new items come into ‘stock’, the team have considered how to improve visibility and discoverability of the eTIPS eTextbooks. They have amended some internal metadata (keywords, description, title), as well as creating Amazon Author Central accounts for each eTIPS author. The price has remained the same.
The report has already noted the restrictions in providing eTextbooks, published through Amazon, to institutional academic libraries. The project is exploring offering a download-for-free code for students.

Benchmarking across relevant comparative titles has been made easy, and the evaluation team have followed the movement of the first eTIPS eTextbook in three genres, alongside others and compared written Amazon reviews.

Overall, Amazon KDP provides a simple, workable mechanism for distribution, and makes it easy to update small changes. The integrated real-time statistical package allows the project to understand which world territories, and when, purchases have been made. The first eTIPS eTextbook is most popular in the UK – around two-thirds of purchases are made from that store. But interest has come from the US, Japan, Canada and Australia, too. Rich data, for example the ‘Customers Who Bought This Item Also Bought’ and ‘What Other Items Do Customers Buy After Viewing This Item?’ panels – permit iterative change to SEO and item metadata. The eTIPS publication is purchased alongside premium-priced and traditionally-published eTextbooks, it seems – at the time of this report, these ranged from £0.85 to £7.04.

Is the distribution model sustainable? Provide data to support this alongside qualitative feedback.

To some extent, the distribution model tested here offers sustainability, promoting content to students of partner institutions in a format which many find accessible and easy to use. The eTIPS team intend to work with academic colleagues to discover how Kindle content may be embedded to online modules – for example, through the institutional VLE. Partnered by companion online materials, the options for internal distribution are greater. In the case of both publishing to Amazon and through the companion materials, some local knowledge is required. The model adopted by eTIPS presents no technological barriers to those wishing to exploit it, with Amazon KDP offering a user-friendly route to publication.

Is the distribution model scalable? Viable?

For an academic institution exploring commercial publishing, the Amazon KDP route presents a number of strong and attractive benefits – distribution is to the largest marketplace in the world, changes to the text can be made available very quickly, and core sales data can be analysed efficiently. These have all been observed in the eTIPS project, and have led the team to believe that Amazon KDP is a simple, viable and continuous model for distribution. It’s scalability, if Amazon KDP were the only distribution channel, is questionable, and the project recommends looking at additional commercial channels – Smashwords, iBook, Barnes & Noble, as well as print-on-demand options such as Createspace and LightningSource.

Did you encounter any particular issues with distribution. If so, what, and how did you overcome them?

The team did not encounter any distribution issues, beyond those highlighted elsewhere in this chapter around availability of titles to its libraries and therefore directly to its students. The distribution model tested by the project had always intended to be Amazon and, in testing it, eTIPS’ intention was to motivate learners to acquire their own copies, there, rather than to supply them directly.

(In UHI and ENU Annual Report 2016, pages 10, 46-49)
3. University of Liverpool / Liverpool University Press

Distribution model

The e-textbooks (Using Primary Sources and Essentials of Financial Management) will be distributed and marketed using the following strategies:

- Press releases leading up to and upon publication. These will go to the publishing industry, academic forums and libraries.
- Telemarketing campaign with Accucoms to target UK and US libraries and academic libraries in these subject areas.
- Discoverability: Liverpool will work with Discovery Service Providers (such as WorldCat, EBSCO EDS and Ex Libris Primo Central) to ensure compatibility with, and searchability within library cataloguing systems.
- Direct e-marketing to academics for course adoptions.
- Academic forums/listservs: Announcement of new e-textbooks to specifically targeted academic forums and list-servers.
- Print publicity: Production and dissemination of promotional flyers to academics and relevant conferences. Inclusion in LUP’s seasonal catalogues.
- Advertising in relevant academic journals.
- Exhibitions and conferences: Attendance at two key academic conferences/exhibitions per e-textbook. Advance information, show cards, flyers, catalogues and other promotional material will be made available at additional relevant conferences.
- Social media: Twitter accounts will be set up to promote the e-textbooks prior to and post-publication. The LUP Twitter account and website will also be used.
- Author/contributor suggestions: Publicity questionnaires will be sent to all contributors to complete, so that their expertise in their fields, contacts and suggestions can be utilised. All contributors will be provided with a flyer on publication for their use to distribute to colleagues and during lecture tours. In addition, authors will be asked to provide a list of individuals to send flyers to as part of Liverpool’s direct mail campaign.

The following technological channels will be used:

- Discovery Service Providers (such as WorldCat, EBSCO EDS and Ex Libris Primo Central)
- Email lists
- E-marketing
- Social media

(In Liverpool Case Study 2014, pages 8-9)

4. University of Nottingham

Distribution model

The University of Nottingham will be self-publishing the Applied Ethics title. The Smashwords premium service will facilitate availability of the book into a number of distribution networks as follows:

- Apple iBooks Store
- Barnes and Noble
- Kobo
- Sony
- Flipkart
- Oyster
- Scribd
- Baker and Taylor
- Diesel eBook Store
- Amazon
- Google Books
- Project Guttenburg
- Smashwords also supports Tweets, Google Shares, Pin it, Reddit, Delicious book marking and Stumble Upon functionality from each books metadata page

It will also be made available via Nottingham University Libraries, Research and Learning Resources outlets and in a number of OER search engines and repositories:

- U-Now
- Jorum
- MERLOT
- OER Commons
- Open CourseWare Consortium
- XPERT
- www.philpapers.org

The University of Nottingham and the ICCRS plan to utilize existing means to distribute and publicise the e-textbook Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability in Practice. Both partners are high-profile organisations in the field of business and society and can leverage academic, business and media channels. E-textbooks for students of Nottingham University Business School are expected to access content through existing library channels while ICCRS members will be given access as part of their membership. Other initial outlets being considered for this title are Amazon Kindle and possibly GooglePlay. The project team further plan to use existing university and library networks to distribute the open access versions of each text. They will also investigate the viability of including each title in other institutional collections and the potential for them to be re-used within the taught curriculums beyond the University of Nottingham.

(In Nottingham Case Study 2014, pages 9-10)

Social Media

Author, Project team and institutional level social media will be leveraged to support dissemination of the books. This will include Twitter and Facebook accounts. There is commitment from the University’s Social Media team within the Marketing and Communications department to support dissemination. Including identifying and promoting the works directly to potential consumers of the e-textbooks, both in and beyond the HE sector. In addition to the Social Media campaign that will be delivered as part of this project, support from the University press office will also be sought to disseminate through traditional press coverage routes. The CR&S e-textbook will also be promoted through NUBS and ICCSR social media channels and be featured in ICRS launch and social media campaigns.

Library Services

Library services at Nottingham can help disseminate the e-textbooks in a number of ways:
- Catalogue the titles on the (open access) library catalogue, UNLOC, including a link to the full text, with password protection (usual university username and password for Nottingham students and staff) promote the e-textbooks via library blogs, Twitter feeds and information skills sessions delivered by library staff include publicity about the texts and the project via the library webpage that focuses on ebooks: http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/libraryfinding/ebooks.aspx
- Include publicity within the Moodle modules that the e-textbooks support (by supporting authors in achieving this)
- Ensure that modules supported by the e-textbooks have Talis reading lists, including links to the e-textbook content

(In Nottingham Annual Report 2015, page 10)

5. Dissemination, distribution and discovery of e-textbooks by Alison Fox, UCL Press

UCL press published two open access e-textbooks with Jisc as part of the ‘Institution as e-textbook publisher project’. The first was Textbook of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. Published in June 2016, content from this book was downloaded 23,067 times in 156 countries and with 3998 page views of the HTML version in the year to December 2017. This was followed by an HTML edition of Key Concepts in Public Archaeology in February 2017 (with 15559 page views to the end of December 2017) and PDF version in September 2017, from which content was downloaded 4011 times to the end of 2017. They were both also made available for sale in print via traditional retail channels.

Both textbooks are available in a variety of formats, each requiring a different strategy in order to reach the target readership. For this blog post, we’ll concentrate on our open access formats (PDF, HTML and app) and how each of the decisions that we made makes the books more discoverable.

Both textbooks are based on popular, well-respected courses at UCL, and their publication reflects a UCL Press goal to provide open access textbooks to students in order to enhance their experience, something which is captured in UCL’s 2034 strategy. Open access textbooks are increasingly important to both provide high-quality educational materials to students, as well as open important research to a wider audience for free. With this in mind, our marketing and distribution strategies are inevitably different from a commercial publisher, as are our goals and the markets we wish to serve.

Textbooks follow a unique pattern — those who make the decision about which book is used (faculty members), aren’t the same as those who use the textbook (students) or those who make the book widely available (librarians or booksellers). This cycle still applies with open access, and, though there are fewer barriers to reach the reader directly, students still rely on lecturers in order to signpost relevant reading material, and for librarians to make sure that this content is easily available and discoverable via internal systems. In order to reach all parts of this cycle, our dissemination strategy reflected this knowledge – in order for the textbooks to be successful in their aims, we needed to reach all three groups, and work with trusted infrastructure.

In addition to UCL Press’s in-house open access platforms UCL Discovery and ucldigitalpress.co.uk, we also worked with a number of other vendors to maximize the reach of our open access offerings. Many of the platforms that we worked with help to enable discovery via provision of a suite of discovery tools for library catalogues; including MARC records. These platforms included JSTOR and OAPEN. We have also benefited from the assistance of UCL’s library services, who have added the
textbooks to the reading lists system, created MARC records, and disseminated these more widely to the library community and made the books discoverable in UCL's library discovery system.

Other platforms were chosen for their wide reach, and included Internet Archive, WorldReader and Google Books (from Jan 2018). The app versions of the books were made available via the two biggest app stores: Apple’s App Store and Google Play. The apps were created as an experimental format, and downloads of these were low in comparison to other open access formats – why this was may be worthy of additional research at a later point.

We also worked within the traditional publishing trade ecosystem by producing a for-sale epub version, which was distributed to booksellers, wholesalers and library suppliers via NBN International’s Fusion system. An Amazon Kindle version was also available via Amazon, with POD print (both paperback and hardback) available to booksellers, library suppliers and wholesalers. Metadata was provided to many of our partners via an ONIX feed, which was enriched with additional keywords and information to aid discovery. Our marketing efforts also aimed to reach each of the key audiences using a number of different methods including social media, email, advertising, online campaigns and author activities.

As a small, institutional publisher with the goal of meeting the needs of those affiliated to the institution, and limited resources in comparison to the commercial textbook publishers who have large global teams that include campus marketing teams, many of our marketing activities have been UK-based, with a primary focus on serving the needs of UCL students. However, the open access nature of the textbooks, and the platforms we have worked with in order to distribute the content, allow those who have not been actively marketed to organically discover the publications. The textbooks were well supported by the editors’ and contributors’ departments, and have been adopted for course usage. For the *Textbook of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, we produced a credit-card sized flyer to help stimulate usage, and similar materials are in production for *Key Concepts in Public Archaeology* for the next intake of students for the linked module. Authors have also emailed links to the books to their contacts, attended conferences with materials, featured their books on their department communications channels and websites, and carried out a number of other activities to support the books. We have been delighted to receive feedback from the editors of *Textbook of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, about the wider reputational benefit to the department and the authors themselves.

Compared to monographs, textbooks have a longer period in which to gain traction – their usage varies within the academic year, and it is essential to reach lecturers at the right time. With this in mind, we are currently working to identify routes to academics that we have not yet reached, by undertaking market research to reach a much wider targeted course adoption as well as ways to make the books more discoverable via indexing services and dedicated textbook platforms e.g. the Open Textbook Network.

5. Internal Distribution and Promotion of eTIPS eTextbooks by Laurence Patterson, Edinburgh Napier University

The eTIPS project, sponsored by Jisc, is a collaboration between The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), and Edinburgh Napier University (ENU). eTIPS saw two eTextbooks authored, formatted, and completed by academics and others. A fundamental objective of the project was to take steps not only to distribute the eTextbooks across the online Amazon Kindle network, but also
to embed, as far as was possible, within the learning and teaching of both academic institutions involved.

The objective was successful to some degree, through the life of the project. The Further and Higher Education sector has certainly turned the corner when it comes to understanding the significance of digital learning materials. ENU’s library, along with many others, has a ‘digital first’ acquisition policy, and students and academics are offered instruction in finding electronic materials in their first few weeks. Digital discovery is now the principle way that the sector offers information to its users. The two eTIPS eTextbooks published offer universal interest for undergraduates and postgraduates, discussing student preparedness for research and project work. Through word-of-mouth introductions, at UHI, a number of module and programme leaders pledged, at an early stage, to introduce to their teaching the first eText, created by eTIPS in 2016. Despite the project evaluation team’s efforts to reach out, it was clear that feedback was very limited – academics had said that whilst they had mentioned the eBooks in passing to their class, they had no way of knowing if the students had downloaded and were reading them.

Why might this be? In a University, the cycle of an Academic Programme, from an Academic Team’s point of view, may be up to five years, with Programme Validation affecting everything that came before. At the end of the cycle, the Programme Leader must normally prove the capability and viability of the Programme, should look to rewrite content, and bring up-to-date core and recommended reading. After Validation, it may be difficult and troublesome for an Academic Team to bring in new core reading for anything more than formative assessment – a suggested reason as to why eTIPS’ eTextbooks haven’t been more widely adopted for learning and teaching. But in 2015, and then again in 2016, Edinburgh Napier’s Masters in Blended and Online Education used the eTIPS publishing model, and the resulting first eTextbook itself, as a case study, asking its students to critically evaluate methodology and output. The comprehensive and constructive feedback returned was offered to the eTIPS team, whose subsequent work on the second eTIPS eTextbook was informed by this.

Over the 2016/2017 teaching cycle, and after both of eTIPS’ eTextbooks had been published, new efforts were made by the project team to bring light to the creative process, for academics, and to the eBooks themselves, for students and Programme Leaders. eTIPS’ authors gave talks to colleagues both in UHI and ENU, with time devoted at internal Staff Conferences, in academic publications, and in corridor conversation. Academics were interested in the idea of writing something that could talk directly to their students, and wholly to the course content, and which could be used across a number of cohorts. The team felt momentum build over the year, and surveys returned this time would suggest moderate, but still informal use of the titles.

For years, students had been used to accessing electronic materials – perhaps a journal article or chapter of a book, normally for a limited time, from a central resource, mediated by their University’s library, without direct cost to them. The eTIPS model turned this around and bypassed the library, permitting the student to download to a Kindle (or computer) their own copy of the entire text, for a small amount of money, from Amazon.

In 2016/2017, the eTIPS team took the decision to produce the eTextbooks as print-on-demand paperbacks, making them available to purchase from across the Amazon network, as well as to borrow from their academic library, and UHI and ENU now had these in stock. The move appeared successful, with more loans than expected taking place, and a commitment from at least three Programme Leaders at UHI to bring one of the books – either in print or as a Kindle title – onto their
core reading list. As we approach the final six months of the project, eTIPS evaluators are ready to speak with students, to discover the degree to which 'in-house' publishing may benefit learning and teaching engagement across an academic institution.


6. External Distribution and Promotion of eTIPS eTextbooks by Laurence Patterson, Edinburgh Napier University

The largest distribution network in the world is, of course Amazon, used by millions of book readers each year, but also by millions of writers, as a means of self-publishing through their Kindle Distribution Publishing (KDP) service. For eTIPS, a joint project between Edinburgh Napier University and the University of the Highlands and Islands, the outputs were two eTextbooks that discussed students’ preparation for research. The eBooks were distributed primarily through the KDP service.

Some significant advantages come with using KDP – the files they require to be uploaded aren’t difficult to create and format – the artwork you use for the cover needn’t be too complex (indeed, they have a good selection of templates if Photoshop isn’t your thing!) When everything is loaded, and sales are coming in, you’re going to be able to access a good statistics package, telling you where and when people have paid for your publications. And you’re going to have immediate distribution, of course, to a global marketplace – Amazon’s network extends to Australia, to Japan, to India. Royalties are then paid to your bank account at the end of each month, based on the activity of the month before. The biggest problem is that, given the ease of the process, everyone is doing it, so your publication is going to struggle to be seen, unless you take advantage of some promotion opportunities offered by Amazon and by the wider community.

Readers will choose to purchase a Kindle eBook that they’ve heard of, which they think sounds interesting, that they believe is offered at good value. Price is a good motivator then, and publishers should exploit opportunities to play around with dropping and lifting those titles. Amazon KDP offers a couple of key promotional tools but, arguably, little in the way of instruction on their use. Titles can be offered to Unlimited customers for FREE download for a limited time – up to five days in any ninety-day period. Royalties are then paid not through sales, but by pages read. In contrast, publishers can use KDP’s Countdown Deal promotion to set a Kindle price to fall (or rise) over a select number of days, motivating a purchase at an early (or a late) stage. Both tools aim to draw readers’ attention to a Kindle title which, of course, might otherwise have been lost in the huge selection of available eBooks. The readers, themselves, need to make the effort to see the eBook record.

But premium services like BookBub and BargainBooksy offer publisher-paid promotion for eBooks, highlighting a price-drop across their mailing-list members. This strategy can work in the short term – since it might take fewer than 500 Kindle copies sold for a title to become the number one bestseller mark. These days, across Amazon, a mailing list with 250,000 members is likely to return good sales. At a cost of up to £800 for a single mailing-list promotion, publishers really do need to consider the pros and cons of approaching premium services, but lots of less-effective, much cheaper services exist – eReader News Today, Fussy Librarian and BookGorilla are examples. At times, Amazon itself will advertise price drops on Kindle titles – ‘50 Kindle eBooks at 99p’, ‘Christmas eBooks To Warm Your Heart’, and ‘100 Best Kindle eBooks of 2017’ are three recent examples of fiction promotions run by them. Publishers might be picked and contacted at random for these, but may request that their eBooks are included in future promotions by contacting Amazon directly. A popular title (i.e. one with lots of reviews!) is more likely to be picked up.
In general, then, publishers should embrace the need to spend money to promote their Kindle titles, and to plan how, and when, to do so. Consider who a likely audience is for your work, what approach your competitors are taking, and your available budget. The most important thing is to seek appropriate opportunities to bring potential readers to your Amazon book page, by price promotion over an extended period, careful selection of keyword and category. What they then see on the page will determine how attractive the eBook is to them – the book title, reviews, similar titles, the cover itself – and these can be tackled, updating, amended by you. The second most important rule is to keep going with this strategy!


7. Dissemination, distribution and discovery of the e-textbooks created as part of the ROMe project by Steve Stapleton, University of Notthingham

Using Smashwords as one publication model for the Applied Ethics e-textbook ensured that the e-textbook was pushed out through a number of distributors and eBook stores. These are:

- Barnes & Noble
- Kobo
- Amazon
- Apple
- Inktara
- Baker & Taylor Blio
- T3tr
- Library Direct
- Baker-Taylor Axis360
- Overdrive
- Flipkart
- Oyster
- Scribd
- Gardners Extended Retail
- Yuzu
- Tolino
- Odilo
- Gardners Library

Following this method ensures that the content is made widely available and appears where people are looking for e-book content. We also published the e-textbook to the Apple Store, using the iBook author software. This version of the book was more design led, with numerous images provided in support of the text. By having multiple formats available through Smashwords and by also using the Apple iBook store, we were able to make the content available in many locations. This is one of the key strengths of following established e-textbook publication routes.

Another advantage to following this established route and using services that are designed to help support self-creation and publication of e-books, is the fact that the services provide a basic metadata profile for you to complete, which helps with discoverability of the resources. For example, the metadata that must be included when using the Smashwords service is:

**Upload to Smashwords**

Uploading the Applied Ethics e-textbook to Smashwords was done through its website interface and the metadata profile used for the Applied Ethics title on the Smashwords was:
Dissemination of the Corporate Social Responsibility e-textbook did not follow an established e-textbook route as the book was created using Xerte Online Toolkits. This meant that all dissemination of the e-textbook was done by the project team.

The public facing parts of the e-book were made available on Nottingham’s e-book web pages alongside the other titles that had been previously published by the University as part of other projects. This is located at: http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/open/ebooksandibooks.aspx
The Nottingham registered student versions of the e-book were made available in Moodle, the institutional VLE. And these versions require authentication to access them so they cannot be shared more widely.

The academic lead for the project has disseminated the e-book to his contacts and networks and this has been successful in driving over 6000 views of the public facing etextbooks.

We have more work to do in terms of disseminating both the Applied Ethics and Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability in Practice e-textbooks, with the focus being to work with the academic leads to identify likely institutions and networks where the resources might be embedded. There is also work to do to include the e-books in our own library collections to ensure they are available to a wider selection of our own students.