How Open Business Models can drive Open Science

Gwen Franck

About me
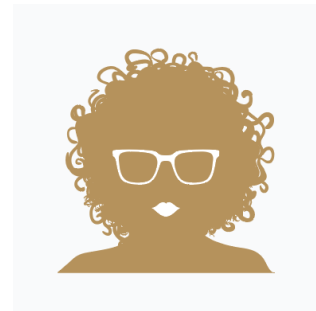
— — —

@g_fra

https://gwenfranck.com
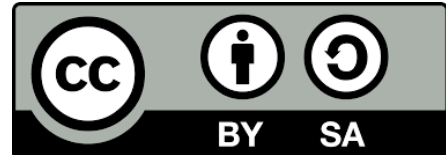
I work as an independent consultant

- OpenAIRE: FP7 Post-Grant funding scheme support for non-APC business models | workshop on non-apc based publishing models
- Knowledge Exchange: insights into open scholarship

This presentation: http://tiny.cc/Pubmet19_GwenFranck

Business? But we are in it for the public good!

— — —

"In the end, whether you call it revenue streams or something else, it's still an essential part of running your organisation even if you are a charity."
[Martin Paul Eve](#) , Open Library of Humanities

"Non-profits often have a reputation for being bloated, slow, unsustainable, and dependent on grant money. You become like the people you hang out most with, so that's why we like to hang out with nimble startups in incubators! We try to incorporate the startup mindset in our own business."
[Heather Piwowar](#), Impactstory

Different elements of a business model

— — —

Key activities: what do you do?

Value proposition(s): Why do your customers choose you?

**"Customers': who are they and what is your relationship with them**

Key partners: who do you collaborate with? Whose services do you procure to run your organisation?

Revenue streams: what are your income sources?

Channels: how do you reach your customers?

Resources: what assets do you need to run your organisation? ARe they available inhouse or externally?

Intellectual Property: does it generate revenue? Which licenses do you use? What choices do you make when procuring external services?
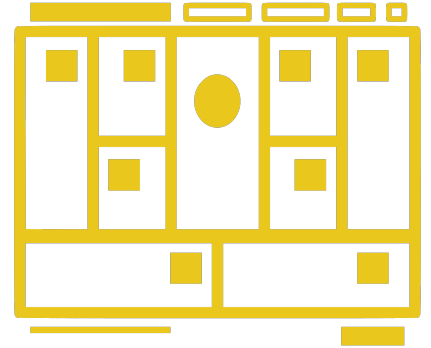
A business model links all these elements together

— — —
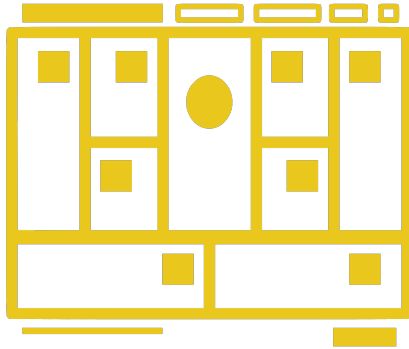
Who and what do you need (resources) to bring your value proposition to your customers and contributors. What does it cost (money and time)?

An **OPEN** Business model incorporates free software, open source, open content and open tools and standards in their IP policy. The approach places value on transparency, stakeholder inclusion, and accountability.

What is wrong with the traditional, closed model?

———

Scientific publishing is broken - a few companies make a lot of money (because they **restrict access via IP**) based on a product (publication, data, infrastructure, …) that is made mainly using **public funding**. Customers (authors, readers,...), contributors (editorial boards and reviewers) and partners (libraries, universities, ...-) **do not have a choice** but to participate in this system - otherwise they do not have access to the product.

This harms the move towards a more open approach to science.

What can be done differently?

- Intellectual property
- Get rid of black boxess
- Organisational structure: relationships with contributors and partners

Intellectual Property

In a closed model:

- Main source of revenue (not to be confused with author fees as revenue)
- No open licenses - all rights reserved
- Product is treated as depletable and exclusive, subject to scarcity - your 'customers' do not have a choice but to buy your product
- Digital or physical: no difference
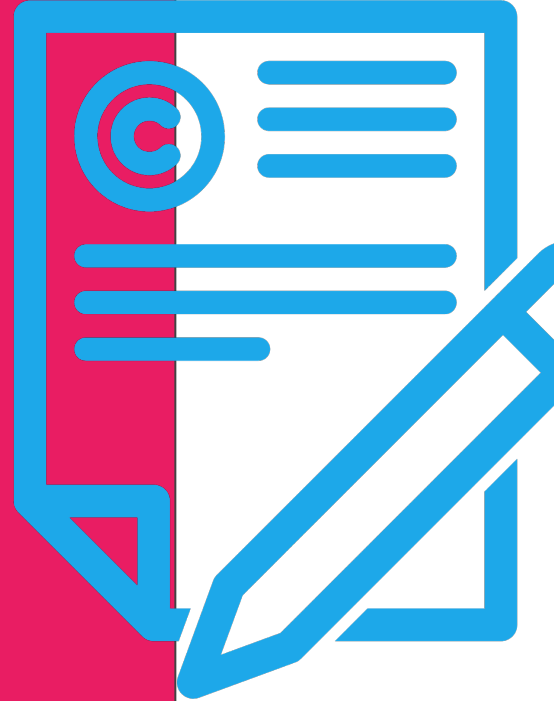
In a closed model:

- Procedures (such as peer review or APC pricing) are unpredictable and not transparent
- Editorial processes take long and are unclear
- Contracts and licensing are (deliberately) obtuse, diffcult to read and difficult to amend

Top Down

In a closed model:

- Workflows are top-down
- Main part of value creation happens 'at the bottom' (often for free), but creators do not share in profits (monetary or other)
- Your key partners and customers do not have a choice (vendor lock-in)
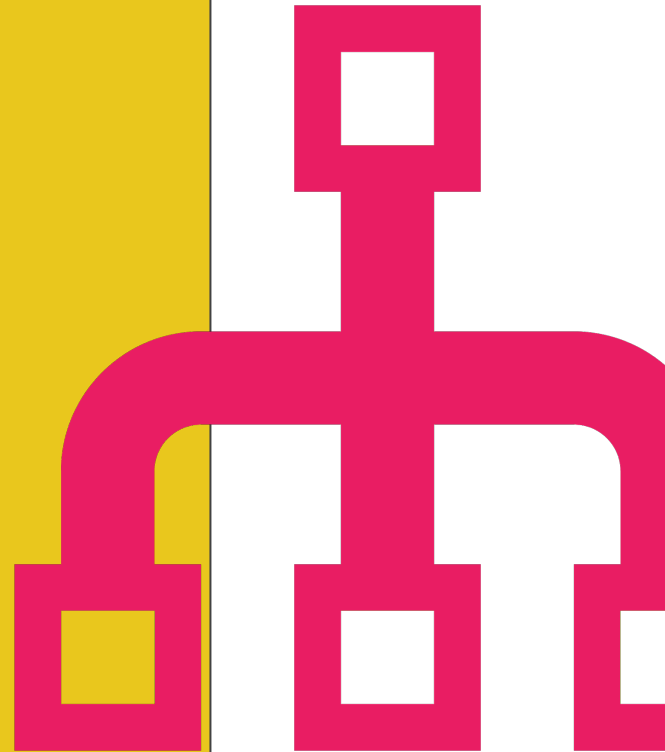
How to change this?

Intellectual Property

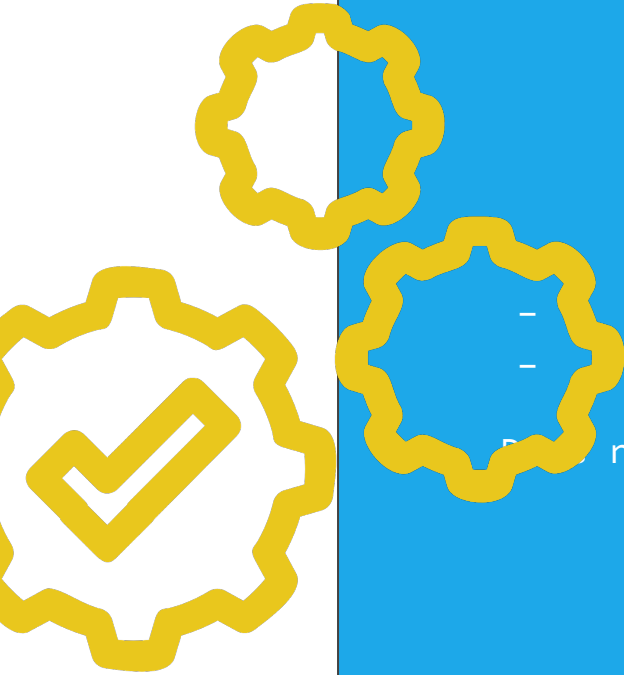Switching to open licenses for your 'products'(publication, data, code, …)

Costless access for all end users
- Set reuse rights
- Allows other to build on your product

Does not (necessarily) mean that you sign away all your rights

Does not mean that there is no value creation

Examples

[OpenEdition](#): freemium services

[Figshare](#): nudges users in free version towards open licensing by only allowing CC BY and CC0

[Impact story](#): open for end user, sells infrastructure design and maintenance

[Open Book Publishers](#): dedicated projects in partnership with universities and research organizations

Transparency

Get rid of the black box

- Be transparent about contracts, about APC revenue and what you do with it, about who gets paid for what
- Be transparent about editorial processes
- Educate your contributors and customers about processes and IP

Examples

———

[Open Library of Humanities](): complete transparency about financial needs to run the publishing house

[Language Science Press](): transparency about costs, offers toolkits and templates

[Ubiquity Press](): transparency about APC, no bundles

Connect with your contritbutors and the wider community

They create and use your product

- Communicate your value proposition clearly and be ready to amend it (not just relying on monopoly position)
- Recognise free labour
- If you ask for financial contributions (membership, APCs, …), be clear about the why, what and how

Examples

Hrčak: close connection with needs on a national basis

SciPost: researcher-led

QEIOS: transparency and community engagement in editorial processes

Risks: time (and budget) consuming

———

- **Education** of yourself and peers about IP!
- **Maintenance** OS software infrastructure and connect with community
- Maintaining an open relationship with your contributors (**transparency and accountability**)
- Finding **other revenue streams** than subscriptions is time-consuming
- '**The lone cowboy**' : keeps costs down but can be a burden

Risks: Sustainability

———

- **A good idea** is not enough to build a business on
- **Policy support** - not evident for new and emerging initiatives
- **Budget:** alternative revenue streams (= other than subscriptions) can be unpredictable and volatile, and time consuming to pursue
  - APCs
  - Services and freemium
  - Grants and projects
  - Institutional support

Risks: free riders

———

- Openly licensed materials can be reused by others **without your permission** (within conditions of the license)- which is of course the whole point of using open licenses
- **Investment of a few** to make product open benefits the whole community, how to convince investors to contribute financially?

Risks: quality control

———

- Transparency is usually beneficial for quality control because you get the **community** on board and they can act as a checking body. On the other hand, you do not have a lot of (legal) leverage against abuse
- **Perception** that digital publications and 'new' types of business models are of lesser editorial quality: users, policy makers and funders, research evaluation, ...

'Open' and 'closed' are not absolute

You can open up parts of your business and keep other closed!

You can start closed and open up (or vice versa)!
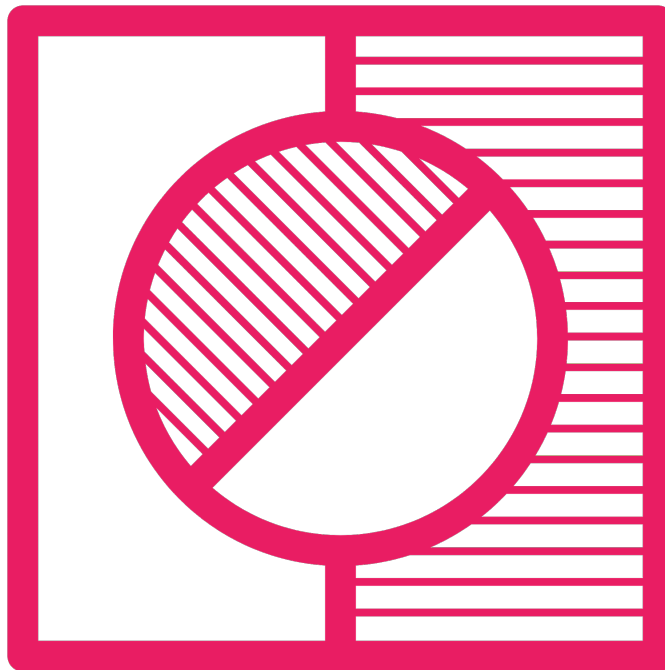
This is not a rant...

— — —

Against APC-based open access publishing, or even against business models that intend to make money.

Publishing should not be a charity activity - this is an actual job, with actual effort being put in. Moreover, volunteer labour can be an excluding mechanism, because not everyone can afford it!

But the basic product, which is funded by public money, should be, and forever remain, free to the public to access, reuse and build upon.

And the biggest surplus generated should serve to move the dissemination of scientific research as possible - whether by offering new services, or hire staff, or investigate in research innovation - not to shareholders. Businesses based on a closed model typically do not do this.

... but we need to decide what kind of world we want to live in

———

We all support startups and innovation, but for publishing research we keep following old workflows and the dominant business model - based on the sale of a product that is funded with public money. The community is forced to go along with it.
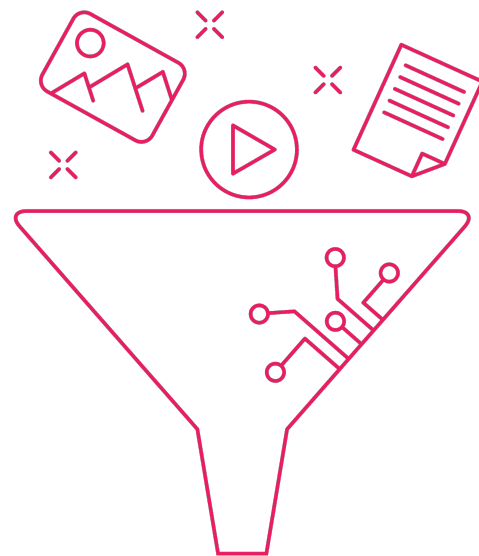
Are we supporting not only open access but also equitable participation in research communication?
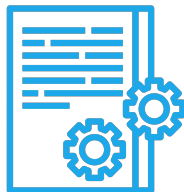
We need a variety of open business models in open access publishing

It is crucial to drive Open Science forward

OR, reversely,
The dominance of a few closed models harms the evolution towards Open Science

... and the world needs to know about them

———

A lot of researchers don't know what is happening in the back end — and this might influence their willingness to act/change — or simply even to look beyond the dominant narrative.

Don't put your business model in a box — be open about how you do your 'business'.
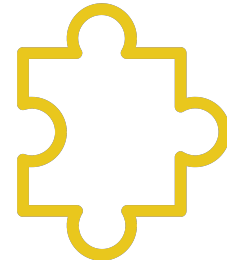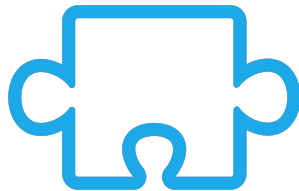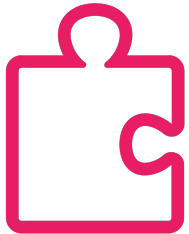
credits and contact

———

Made with cc

Business model generation

Open Business Models on Wikipedia

Logo's: The noun project

Questions, remarks, did I miss something? Let me know!