

Small is big and slow is fast – Stockholm University press as a case study on library publishing

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Abstract

Stockholm University Press is a fully open access publisher hosted at Stockholm University Library, which was the first fully academic open access publisher in Sweden. The press was founded after a decision made by the Vice Chancellor of Stockholm University in December 2012. Today the press has 8 Journals and 26 published books, in 12 different book series, mainly in humanities and social sciences. This paper will focus on book publishing and how building up a research-driven university press was a slow and sometimes tortuous journey, which has resulted in a press with high quality publishing services. It will also show how a small university press can be an example of library publishing, and by thinking big be part of something bigger and give value to all involved.

Keywords: Library publishing; Case study; Stockholm University Press.

Introduction

In 2008 HLS Förlag (the University press at the former Stockholm Institute of Education) became Stockholm Universitets förlag (in English Stockholm University Press), as the Institute became part of Stockholm University. It was a small print - based commercial publisher, although part of the University structure, and published textbooks for university studies in education, by researchers in education from Universities in Sweden.

Stockholm University had a publisher, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis (AUS). These so called 'Acta book series', published doctoral dissertations, as well as edited volumes and research reports by researchers at the University, mainly internally reviewed on a University Department level.

In December 2012 the former President of Stockholm University, Kåre Bremer, decided that the Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis was to be closed down due to a changing publishing landscape. The back catalogue of Stockholm Universitets förlag was to be sold to the commercial publisher [Liber förlag](#) in 2013. However, the university still needed support for dissemination of academic output, and Stockholm University Library was assigned the task of starting a press with a non-profit and Open Access profile.

After a few years of work to establish a professional publishing organisation, the first journal came out in November 2014. The first book was published in January 2015.

Today the press has 8 Journals and 26 published books, organised in 12 academic book series. The scope of the current series is mainly within humanities and social sciences, but editorial groups within other disciplines are encouraged to submit proposals as well. The press policy allows for researchers from all countries and institutions to publish their work, as long as it fits the aims and scopes of the Press' journals or book series and that the content is peer-reviewed before publication (see more below).

Stockholm University Press was one of the first fully open access university presses in Sweden. Today there is also [Lund University Press](#), (two published books since 2018), and the [Kriterium](#) platform (12 books published since 2016), which is "a portal for the review and publication of high-quality academic books".

Open access at Stockholm University Library

Being small, the press and the whole Library need to think big and be part of something bigger – the open access movement and today's focus on Open science are examples of this. Open access and Open science are high priority for the Library, and have been for the last couple of years.

The vision for Stockholm University Library, according to the Operational plan, is to "Create the best conditions for scholarly communication" (Verksamhetsplan 2019, Stockholm University Library, 2019). The Operational plan also states:

In 2020, we have implemented the measures required for the entire library's operations to be based on open science. (my translation, Verksamhetsplan 2019, Stockholm University Library, 2019)

Figure 1 is a commonly-used image to show how the publishing service is an integral part of the support to researchers and students from the University Library. The image shows two main workflows within the Library: Information Supply and Publishing support. The aim is to have information supply and publishing services that support Open Access and Open Science in all its aspects.

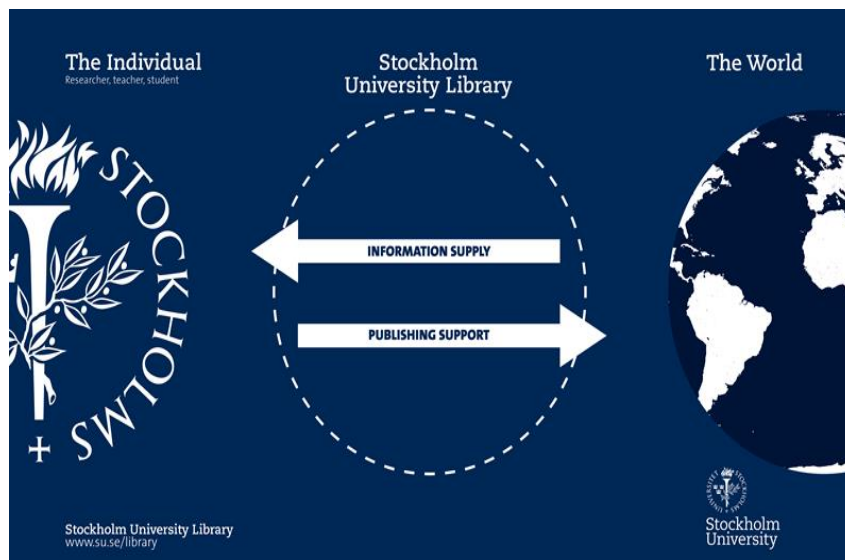


Figure 1: Stockholm University Library Organisation Chart. Illustration by Karl Edqvist. Copyright: Stockholm University Library, Licence: CC-BY

Publishing support and open access at the Library

Stockholm University Library offers the following [publishing support](#):

1. [Dissertation support](#) (Doctoral thesis): print + pdf in Stockholm University repository [DiVA](#), two ISBNs supplied by the Library;
2. [Stockholm University Press](#): Peer reviewed (independent external review) journals and books, Open Access, DOI, CC BY, 4 ISBNs, ISSN, print on demand, pdf in Stockholm University repository DiVA
3. Research Data at Stockholm University: Published in i.e. [Figshare repository](#) for Stockholm University: DOI, pdf, data-formats in Stockholm University repository DiVA, ISBN supplied by the Library, if publication
4. Other publications, such as Research reports, monographs and edited volumes (mainly internal review): printed edition or POD + pdf in Stockholm University repository DiVA (two ISBNs recommended and supplied by the Library)
5. Open access and open science support: i.e. [Centrally funded and discounted article processing charges](#), where APC costs for researchers at Stockholm University and support on guidelines on [Open Access at Stockholm University](#), i.e. on how to publish strategic open access, whatever the publications is, or research data, interactive media, images

Dissertations: Stockholm University publishes more than 230 dissertations each year. The Library supports PhD students with the process of publishing their dissertations as print books and in electronic form via the university repository DiVA. The Library team for dissertation support consists of seven persons working part time with dissertation support. They can help PhD students with, for example, managing

the word-template, creating print-ready pdf-files, checking metadata, to create the cover from a template, and to send the final files to the printer etc.

Stockholm University Press: The press is run by three staff members. Their tasks include giving support to editorial boards of journals and books and the publishing committee. They also administer the peer review process of books via systems provided by Ubiquity Press (a book management system called RUA), as well as managing the process for layout and production. The team helps advisory boards of journals with strategic support and editorial planning, and sometimes also with finding funding to cover the production costs. The entire team also provides general support for researchers interested in publishing with advice about copyright, archiving and digital formats for dissemination of academic output.

Research data: Data generated by researchers from Stockholm University can be hosted in many places, depending on the nature of the information, but the university recommends that datasets are shared via an open and permanent link (preferably DOI) according to the [research data policy](#). The university also provides a repository for open data hosted by [Figshare](#), which is fully indexed for search engines and provides machine-readable metadata. This allows researchers to upload data in most common formats such as CSV, XLSX, PDF, TXT, DAT, but also presentations and research reports that are not suitable for academic journals or other common publishing routes. The Library coordinates a team of staff from different parts of the university organisation for research support, providing advice about sharing, uploading and hosting data and to create research data management plans.

Publishing Research reports, monographs and edited volumes (mainly internal review): The Library provides support for authors who choose to publish other types of output as well, i.e. content that is neither a PhD dissertation nor peer-reviewed material. Authors can get assistance to, for example, assign ISBNs, how to contact a book production provider and to manage metadata for cataloguing.

Open Access and Open Science support: As Stockholm University has had an Open Access policy since 2007, there is also a need for general support and training for researchers who wants to make their findings more available online. A general support function for authors is therefore available. The library can provide advice on open licensing and technical aspects of publishing. There is also a service available for authors publishing Open Access. The Library negotiates agreements with publishers to manage costs for open access publishing fees and discounts.

Stockholm University Press

Stockholm University Press started as a full Open Access publisher with an international scope and a clear aim to provide an alternative to established scholarly publishers. The press quickly became part of an international movement where

university libraries and academic interest groups started to engage in activities to address the oligopoly of the major publishers in terms of formats and pricing.

Recent developments have shown that the press can be part of something bigger, and make a difference in the bigger market, but still remain a local support for academics.

Why start a university press at the university Library?

Stockholm University made the transition hosting a print-based publishing service to become a fully OA publisher in 2014.

Before the implementation of the new university press, the Library had already been working with Open Access policies and repositories. The Library Director, Wilhelm Widmark, has always encouraged this development and is currently the vice-chair of the BIBSAM consortium where agreements are being made with most large publishers on a national scale to allow a transition from a subscription-based model to an Open Access deal.

The scale of the move to Open Access is not only national, but also international, which means that it becomes essential to have support from the university management. Stockholm University signed The Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (2003), in 2007.

The decision to start Stockholm University Press was, as already mentioned in the introduction, made by the former University Vice-Chancellor, Kåre Bremer, but the current University President, Astrid Söderbergh Widding, has carried on the baton. She is not only the chair of the BIBSAM consortium who negotiates deals with publishers, but she is also an active ambassador for Open Access and Open Science (see her keynote speech at the Liber conference in Dublin, [YouTube 2019](#); or one of her blog posts, [Widding 2018](#)).

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Aug 2016
Give Open Access and Open Science the Attention they Deserve
Astrid Söderbergh Widding, Vice-Chancellor of Stockholm University

Welcome to Stockholm University Press

Stockholm University Press is an open access publisher of peer-reviewed academic journals and books. We aim to make journals and books affordable, and to enable the widest possible dissemination so that researchers around the world can find and access the information they need without barriers. In partnership with our authors and series editors, we publish in the humanities, social sciences and the natural sciences. Our main focal points are rigorous peer review, open access and global dissemination.

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Blog post by Christina Lenz, Managing Editor at Stockholm University Press How do university presses adapt to changes and

Figure 2: Astrid Söderbergh Widding on Stockholm University Press website.
<https://www.stockholmuniversitypress.se/> (Accessed: 21 August 2019).

With a history of supporting the move towards a more open landscape for scholarly communication, the reasons for starting up an open access university press were several. It became important for the university to secure long-term availability of its research output, not only for democratic reasons, but also to keep costs down. The most important reason, however, is to give an alternative to researchers to make their research accessible via an open access publisher.

The Library was given the task to set up an organisation to manage the new press and to create guidelines for peer-review, not only for books but also for journals. It has been a long and tortuous path at times to find the best options for a structured and reliable service that suits all involved stakeholders (see more below). The aim is to always encourage editors and authors to maintain the highest quality for their output, to be reliable sources for further research.

Today we can see that the press has a big advantage of being part of the library organisation (see also Sondervan *et.al.*, 2018), in giving relevant and sustainable publishing support for our researchers, not to mention on the infrastructure side of things for both the Library and the press. For example, there is the catalogue team at the Library, Reference Management Programs and teams working with publishing support from many different aspects. It is thus definitely beneficial to be part of a bigger organisation at the heart of the University, with all its expertise in all its publishing support (see above).

Stockholm University Press today

The Stockholm University Press team consists of three staff members working with the press: one Book Managing Editor, full time, who also works with communications and marketing of the press; one Journal and Book Managing Editor (approx. 70 percent); and a librarian (approx. 50 percent), who is the Chair of the Publishing Committee. All the staff members are involved in the strategic work to improve systems and services and to assist authors and editors with all aspects of the publishing process. All team members are also involved with administering the peer-review processes for books.

The team helps authors and editors throughout the whole process from submitted proposal to the published book. The authors are also supported by a communications officer who specialises in graphic design, and is responsible for creating all the artwork for journals and book covers.

Here are some short facts about the press:

- Stockholm University Press welcomes any researchers in the world, as long as it fits the aims and scopes of the Press' journals or book series.
- The aim is for publicly-financed research to be available for free to increase dissemination and usage.
- Journals and books are published with a CC BY licence so the copyright always stays with the author.
- All publications are provided with a permanent identifier (DOI), which for anthologies are included on chapter level as well, to make the content easy to track and archive.
- All books are published in multiple electronic formats, such as EPUB, MOBI, PDF and a Read book format, also book chapters (Edited volumes) can be downloaded as PDF-files (see Figure 3).
- Books are printed on demand, and can be ordered via the Press' website to international and Swedish retailers (see Figure 3), where copies are sold at cost price.
- Authors can choose from three different layout templates for their book.
- All book covers are designed by the press graphic designer at no extra cost.
- All electronic files are enabled for annotation with [Hypothesis](#).
- Books and journals are registered in [DOAB](#) (books) and [DOAJ](#) (articles) to maximise dissemination via structured and machine-readable metadata.
- The publisher/library provides infrastructure and publishing support for free.
- The press' main news channel is the [Stockholm University Press blog](#), which aims to promote new books and journals as well as to provide a forum for discussions about open access publishing, peer review, and open science, from the Library's and press' point of view.

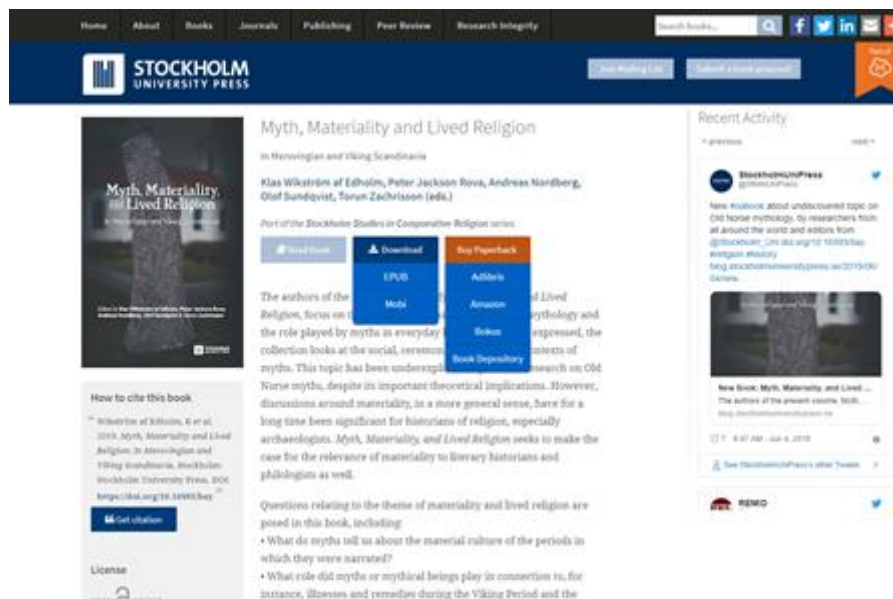


Figure 3: Example of a Stockholm University Press book page.

<https://www.stockholmuniuersitypress.se/site/books/10.16993/bay/> (Accessed: 21 August 2019).

Give value to all involved

Communication is everything when it comes to scholarly publishing. Most importantly, we need to give value to all involved. “What’s in it for me?” For the authors, the reviewers, the editorial boards, etc. this way of thinking is essential, as well as being part of something bigger.

As the press is not run with a commercial profile, or has expansive goals that can hamper the academic quality, there are other things to focus on. One of the most important tasks is to ensure that all involved stakeholders see value in the output. To do so we need to monitor authors’ and editors’ needs for an effective and rewarding publishing experience. Some of the expectations or values we have been asked to address are:

- Authors and editors need to know why they should publish with Stockholm University Press and what we can offer. The press can offer dissemination of their work, for reasonable publication costs, offering infrastructure and publishing services, such as professional marketing, and most importantly a reliable peer review process in collaboration with dedicated book editors, editorial boards and the publishing committee. They need to know the results of downloads, sales and how their work is being used.
- Reviewers need to be convinced that they can make a difference for the outcome of a publication, that their work is appreciated and recognised, by both the press, the author, the Editorial Board and the research community.

Therefore, Stockholm University Press gives recognition to all reviewers in the book, either anonymous or with their names written in the book.

- The Editorial Boards of books and journals need to have professional guidelines and support whenever requested, to do their job on reviewing book proposals and manuscripts and giving recommendations on publications.
- The Editorial Committee need to have guidelines and be sure that the press can support them with high quality documentation for all decisions to be made, and know that their expertise and input is valued by authors and editorial boards.
- Ubiquity Press and the press need to keep up good communications and to develop the book management system and production routines continually, to secure the quality of all processes and publications.
- Readers have to rely on high quality electronic files, easily accessible at the press website and be able to use annotation via hypothesis.
- The Library and other libraries need proper metadata to be added into repositories, databases, etc. as well as printed volumes for library legal book deposit.
- The University needs to know that we give value to the whole university, the researchers making Stockholm University one of the most prestigious and well renowned Universities in the world.
- All others, stakeholders, etc. need to know that they can rely on the press' work, that all publications are of high quality in research, electronic formats, accessibility, and printed books to an affordable price and that all publishing costs are transparent.
- Trying to give value to all persons involved in the press, is a good way of being part of something bigger, to be able to contribute to the value to many persons and the University's research output.

Stockholm University Press workflow for books

Systems and processes need to be carefully designed to ensure the quality of the publishing services. Review processes are naturally slow. However, the speed aspect will get a boost and become more manageable when handled in a sustainable and electronic peer review system. Everyone, all people in the processes, need to use the Book Management System, an online system which is also an archive. The quality assurance process is managed in collaboration between the press team, the Editorial Boards and the Publishing Committee (see more below).

The production process of turning book manuscripts into formats suitable for electronic and print publishing is managed by Ubiquity Press. The collaboration with Ubiquity Press is controlled by a framework agreement, which was procured according to an open call, as is mandatory for Swedish government authorities such as Stockholm University.

Figure 4 shows an overview of the current book management process from proposal to final electronic book (and print-on-demand option).

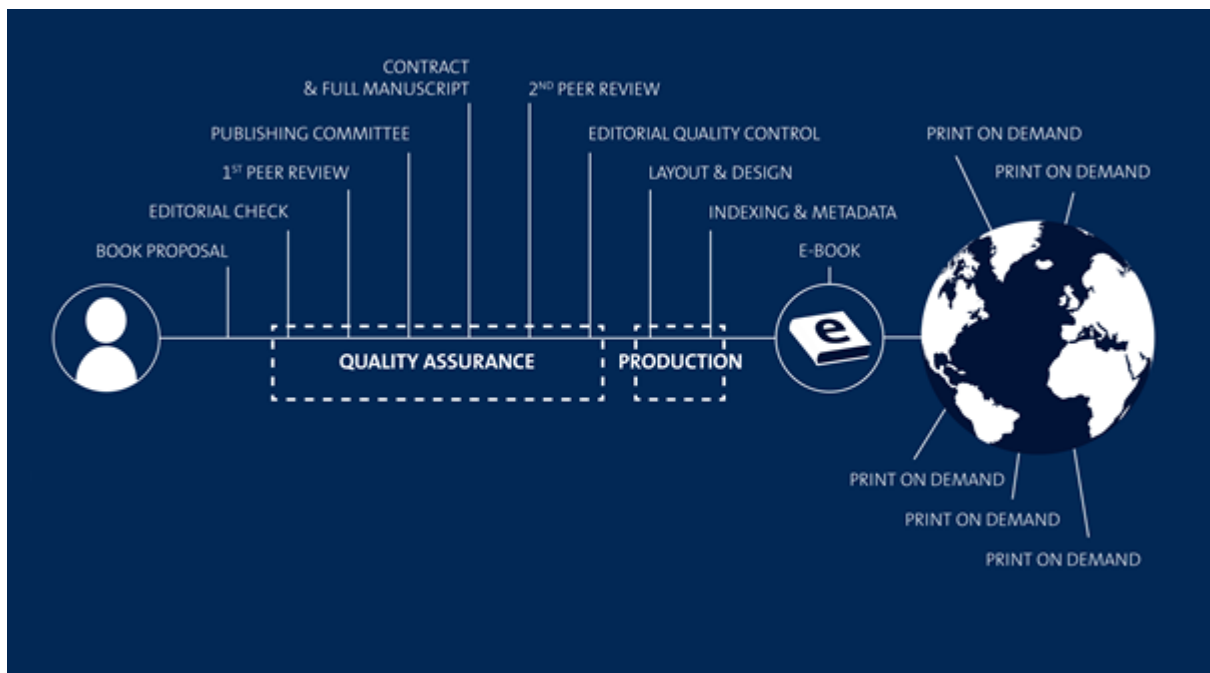


Figure 4: Stockholm University Press workflow for books. Illustration by Karl Edqvist. Copyright: Stockholm University Library. License: CC BY

What do we mean by 'Quality Assurance'?

It is normal for new players on the market to be treated with scepticism by stakeholders. Publishers of Open Access content are not excluded from such opinions. So, in order to create trust in the Stockholm University Press brand and service offer, it became important to hire publishing professionals to join the press team from the very start. Both Managing Editors working for the press are former employees of larger, commercial publishers. Their previous experience has been instrumental in forming the service offer for authors and editors.

Very early in starting up the press it was decided that the press should be 'researcher driven'. But, what does that mean?

For Stockholm University Press it means that all final publishing decisions are made by researchers. All books published by Stockholm University Press are also peer reviewed before publication by both an Editorial Board of experts in each subject area and by external experts according to the academic tradition following the ethical guidelines stipulated by the Committee of Publication Ethics ([COPE](#)).

Book proposals are reviewed by an Editorial Board upon first submission. The members of the board need to be active academics within a relevant field for the scope

of the book. The first screening and comments from the Editorial Board are then sent to the Publishing Committee to make the final decision about whether or not the proposal is suitable for publishing with SUP. The authors are invited to sign a publishing agreement once both the Editorial Board and Publishing Committee are in agreement.

All book manuscripts undergo external peer review. The review process is monitored by the Editorial Board, who also makes recommendations of revisions to the author when necessary. Lastly, the Publishing Committee makes the final decision to publish a book. Their task is to review the entire process based on the comments from the external reviewers and by the Editorial Board. (See the full information on the [Peer Review Policies](#) on the Stockholm University Press website.)

The [Publishing Committee](#) consists of researchers from the four faculties at Stockholm University (humanities, social sciences, law and natural sciences). The members of the committee are elected by the faculty governing boards and approved by the President of the University. The Publishing Committee also makes decisions about signing on new journals to the press and new Editorial Boards for book series.

Another quality assurance is for the press to revise its processes from time to time. It takes a lot of time to manage the collaboration with the people involved, and this is the task for the press staff. Developing good practices and routines for OA scholarly publishing, also means good quality checks of manuscript files, in all aspects, to check if they have followed our copy-editing guidelines, and handover all files to the typesetters at Ubiquity Press.

Quality assurance must also include being transparent about the result, downloads and sales, etc. (see i.e. blog post by Wennström, Sofie, [2018b](#))

Conclusion

Stockholm University Press is open to different solutions and the Library Publishing support does not run a “one size fits all”. It has definitely been an opportunity to start small, trying to think big. By starting small, and without any grand ideas about direct profit or return of investment, the team still has opportunities to think big, and going slowly. This will result in faster processes, and high quality of publications, which will give value to all people involved.

Building a new press takes time, dedication and persistence, and there is still a long way ahead for the press to prosper into a well-renowned and trusted publishing partner. As shown above, Stockholm University Press has a big advantage of being part of the library organisation, giving relevant and sustainable publishing support for the researchers, not to mention on the infrastructure side of things for both the Library and the press, but above all else, the benefits of working closely with researchers. It brings the necessary expertise and knowledge to the press structure.

A small library-based university press needs to collaborate with other library publishers and academic publishers to be successful. One of the success factors is that the press team works closely with [Ubiquity Press](#), and other [Ubiquity Press Partners](#), to develop further the administrative platforms, such as the Book Management System and [OJS](#), with quality assured routines for peer-review and assessment. This means that the team can free up time to work strategically with planning support and collaborating with researchers.

The exchange of ideas and best practices is also important for the success of a new press. The Stockholm University Press team has, therefore, been active in international partnerships, i.e. the Liber Open Access working group, the Ubiquity Press Partners network, the Board of Association of European University Presses ([AEUP](#)), and the [OPERAS](#) partner network.

Stockholm University Press is also a member of organisations supporting development of quality publishing services such as [ALPSP](#), COPE, and [OASPA](#). All these collaborations serve as inspiration and encouragement for the ongoing development of the press, and give opportunities to exchange ideas and experiences with other stakeholders in scholarly communications (see i.e. blog post by Wennström, [2018a](#)).

Some of the networking activities resulted in publications (i.e. Wennström, Schubert; Stone *et al.*, 2019a; 2019b), and blog posts in the SUP Blog, (see i.e. themes such as “Why European University presses need to cooperate more” (Lenz, [2018](#)), “Misconceptions and how to make invisible work visible” (Lenz, [2019a](#)), and “Together we can make a difference glocally” (Lenz, [2019b](#)). Other activities include arranging conferences and workshops under the auspices of AEUP and LIBER.

Stockholm University Press still has lessons to learn, to explore new methods and strategies. Together with other library publishers and university presses, we will promote scholarly communications for the benefit of our host universities and researchers, and with the right collaborations we might even challenge the traditional and commercial publishers who are still the main players.

We believe that being part of something bigger can show how a small university press can think big, and going slowly will result in faster processes in the end.

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