

## UKSG webinar Q&A

### 'Digital Scholarship and the Future of the Book'

Questions that came during the presentation:

***“Q: What are the usage figures like compared to ‘normal’ eBooks?”***

There are two factors here -- the open access availability and the digital scholarship components. Comparing open to comparable closed access monographs, UMP has observed figures very similar [to those reported by Springer Nature](#). Our open access books have more citations, more downloads, and more online mentions (tracked by Altmetric.com). On the digital scholarship front, A Mid-Republican House from Gabii has received substantially more attention than comparable archaeological reports. Some of this is because of the importance of the site, but drilling down [from the Altmetric report on this title](#) reveals that there is an “innovation” effect here, i.e., interest in the form of the publication not just its content.

***“Q: How do you ensure the preservation of those third-party links (eg Youtube)?”***

The potential of broken links is clearly great, so we intermediate the link from the book and the original source through having a resource page that links out to the external object (e.g., like [this link to Spotify](#) in Music on the Move). This can be cited and the link updated if the original source moves. If we cannot locate a new source for the content, then we create a “tombstone” with as much information about what you would have found there. This approach is articulated in the [Fulcrum preservation policy](#). In the US, further work on this issue is being explored by Portico and CLOCKSS under the auspices of the Mellon Foundation project [“Preservation of New Forms of Scholarship”](#) led by New York University Libraries ([see a presentation here](#)).

***“Q: Is the platform accessible for public around the world?”***

There are two answers to this question -- one for content and one for platform. After the temporary free-access period ends, the majority of the books on the platform will be available only to patrons of libraries who purchase the collections ([UMP EBC](#), [ACLS HEB](#), [BAR Digital](#)) except for books specifically marked as open access (including the three works highlighted in the presentation).

The technology behind the platform itself is open source and all available under an Apache 2.0 license for reuse on this Github repository

(<https://github.com/mlibrary/heliotrope>). In reality, parts may be reusable but the commitments to durability and discoverability that are the focuses of Fulcrum rely on the host of the platform also having relationships with third party services, which is why it is offered as exclusively a hosted service run by University of Michigan Library.

***“Q: Any plans to include (more) links to open access versions of resources listed in the Bibliography?”***

This is a good idea, but no immediate plans. Currently, a reader would need to use a service like [the Open Access Button](#) to see if a work listed was available in an open access format.

***“Q: Is it possible to download the list of keywords?”***

No, this is not currently possible. What can be downloaded are openly licensed [MARC records \(e.g., for UMP EBC\)](#).

***“Q: Can you address the issue of how publishers can cover the direct and indirect (staff time) costs of enhanced and fully interactive digital scholarship?”***

This is a great question about a big issue. There are no easy answers since projects differ and publishers differ. What we have observed is that the biggest costs come in building the first version of whatever functionality is needed, be it presentation of an interactive map or playing of a 3D model. Our philosophy therefore is to develop “first of a kind rather than one of a kind” tools so that we leverage grant money responsibly. Fulcrum is designed to “routinize” what were previously bespoke projects and our goal is to be able to build what would have been a fairly ambitious custom project for a \$2,500 single title fee. (See this [partner-with-us page](#)).

***“Q: Where do the data behind interactive e-books live--within Fulcrum? Hosted elsewhere?”***

Fulcrum takes a layered approach, with the “cooked” data that supports a particular illustration or model imbedded in the Fulcrum reader to be found in the Fulcrum repository. The “raw” data, however, remains the responsibility of the author to maintain -- that may be handled in an institutional repository or in a disciplinary repository. For example, the Gabii project deposits its raw data in Open Context, a disciplinary data archive for archaeology. In the [Developing Writers in Higher Education](#) publication on Fulcrum, the book links down to datasets managed in the University of Michigan institutional repository, Deep Blue (see this example,

<https://doi.org/10.7302/Z2W957D4>). In this case the volume editor is based at Michigan, but we would also consider hosting a dataset for a non U-M scholar in Deep Blue.

***“Q: How do you start mapping out a digital only project?”***

We don't have an especially systematic approach because we've found that each project has different issues. Although, as patterns start to emerge, we are getting more systematic. The first step is definitely having a conversation as early as possible with the author or author team. We've found this project led by Duke University that provides [A Framework for Library Support of Expansive Digital Publishing](#) helpful, especially the section on “planning for expansive digital publications.”

***“Q: If you publish in open access, people think that it's not a good research. what do you say about it? Why is it that closed access collections tend to be considered more factual and authentic than open access collections?”***

For University of Michigan Press open access books, we try and emphasize that our decision to publish the work is insulated from any consideration of the business model used to publish it. [You can find a description here](#). A connected strategy is that we have not divided OA books off into a separate OA imprint (a different approach to University of California Press, for example, with [its LuminosOA imprint](#)). We use the UMP imprint for all our books and OA books are just distinguished by a note on the book record.

From a business model perspective, all three OA books featured were supported by different programs:

- For [People's Wars in China, Malaya, and Vietnam](#), UMP received \$7,000 plus some included production services from the Sustainable History Monograph Program at UNC Press.
- For [Music on the Move](#), UMP received \$15,000 from The Ohio State University Libraries under the auspices of the TOME (Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem) program.
- For [A Mid-Republican House from Gabii](#), the project received funding for their 3D development as part of sponsorship of research but the work of UMP received \$20,000 from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as part of the original Fulcrum development grant.

***“Q: How do you control for advancing technologies, i.e. ability to view data w/in one format and make sure the same data is viewable w/in newer systems?”***

Fulcrum as a platform is very standards-based, for example making sure its image viewers are [IIIF compatible](#), and where we have control over producing content (for example, with new books published by UMP) we adhere to standards such as EPUB3 in their production. The challenge comes, as the question implies, with content provided by an author (or, for hosted services, a publisher). Ensuring that this work is well-formatted and in a format that we can migrate forward requires us being involved early in the project enough to indicate preferred preservation formats. Fulcrum’s [preservation guidelines](#) indicate preferred file formats. For UMP titles, our author guidelines also include [more guidance for digital artifacts](#).

***“Q: Where does the onus lie to ‘create’ the enhanced digital aspect? The author? But some author(s) may not have the skill/ability to ‘create’ the enhanced digital aspects? Some might not know how to “bring it to life”?”***

Yes, it does lie with the author and we don’t, as a Press, provide a lot of help with creating the original artifact. As a Library, however, Michigan does provide help, but mainly of a consultancy type. In general, we are seeing the sophistication of libraries and digital scholarship centers on campuses growing to be able to support authors who are lucky enough to be affiliated with an institution growing. But there is still a real gap for loosely affiliated or independent scholars.

***“Q: Regarding the maps in the music book--are those imported from some other platform or does Fulcrum have some built-in mapping functionality?”***

Fulcrum relies on [an open source map viewer, Leaflet](#). Fulcrum’s responsibility is to make sure that the viewer represents the map correctly, but it is the author’s responsibility (and/or that of her institution) to create the original artifact. The maps in Music on the Move book were designed by the author’s collaborator specifically for the book; the source code for those maps is freely available at <https://github.com/efosler/musiconthemove>. The map tiles used in producing the maps are freely available at the same site. Authors may also find it useful to use tools such as ArcGIS to develop maps; [Figure 3.2](#), for example, was adapted from an ArcGIS map (which is cited in the credits on the map).

***“Q: Is this form of ebook easy to incorporate into an LMS?”***

The ebooks themselves are presented as standard EPUB3s, but ways of connecting these works into LMS systems remains something we outsource rather than doing ourselves. So, for example, we use VitalSource for closed access books and Open Textbook Network for open access books.

***“Q: Has there been any interest in the field of Art History in using this model of publishing ebooks?”***

We haven't seen a lot of interest because of all the third party rights issues. This is a platform that started development at the same time as Fulcrum with Mellon Foundation funding that is focused on the specific needs of art history publications. It is run by Yale University Press (<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/art-architecture-eportal>).

***“Q: How much of the OA content on medicine available with UMP?”***

None, sadly. We are very much a humanities and social science publisher.

***“Q: Would have liked a bit more information about other publishers doing the same thing (only briefly mentioned at the end) - how widespread is this model? How expensive? Not clear whether interactive ebooks are generally OA, or whether this is the exception. As mentioned, this webinar was very fulcrum heavy so it would be interesting to explore what other digital products/services are available for scholar.”***

[This open access article](#) that places Fulcrum in the context of similar projects is rather US-focused but may be helpful.

***“Q: Most scholars I know still prefer print and there are aspects of cultural prestige still attached to print. I would like to know if this is changing or there are active efforts to change this.”***

We're finding its very dependent on discipline. In classical history, for example, print remains supremely dominant. In performing arts, however, we're seeing a strong preference for electronic. [This report](#), jointly sponsored by Oxford UP and Cambridge UP, gives an interesting snapshot of disciplinary and other factors. There [is a supplement](#) written during the COVID-19 pandemic that drills down on ebooks.