May 3, 2021

MEMO: SCOAP³ for Books Update

Executive Summary

The SCOAP³ Governing Council has accepted the SCOAP³ for Books Working Group's recommendation to proceed with the SCOAP³ for Books pilot by converting 102 books from 6 publishers to open access. This list includes 27 books from the original target list and another 75 additional books offered by the publishers and evaluated for their relevance and value for money by the Working Group.

Background

The SCOAP³ for Books program is an initiative that was launched at the Governing Council Meeting in May 2019, to expand the content made available Open Access (OA) through SCOAP³ to include relevant books in high-energy physics and related disciplines. The initiative was entrusted to a Working Group, which was charged with developing a procurement strategy for relevant books. Books included in the program will be converted to CC-BY or CC-BY-NC licenses, ensuring perpetual and barrier-free global availability, and will be made available through respective publisher websites as well as the SCOAP³ Repository. Included titles will also be included in the Directory of Open Access Books (DOAB), disseminated through major webscale discovery services (such as Google Scholar, ProQuest Serial Solutions, and others), and preserved in perpetuity through independent standard platforms (Portico or CLOCKSS).

According to its assigned Terms of Reference the SCOAP³ for Books Working Group first identified a list of 78 books (including monographs and textbooks) that were targets for conversion to OA as well as a business model for such conversion. The general principles of the books pilot, the title list, and the business model were approved by the Governing Council at its meeting in October 2019. In June 2020, CERN initiated a procurement process to identify an appropriate third-party vendor to manage the SCOAP³ for Books program, who would negotiate with the publishers of books on the target list and facilitate their conversion to OA. Simultaneously, the CERN team initiated a fundraising strategy with SCOAP³ members to make one-time opt-in commitments to the SCOAP³ for Books initiative. Through this process, total financial commitments of EUR 386K were confirmed from SCOAP³ participating institutions worldwide.

As reported at the Governing Council Meeting in October 2020, the procurement process for third-party vendors to deliver on the SCOAP³ for Books program failed to secure any compliant bids. In subsequent direct consultations with some of the book publishers, the SCOAP³ team learned that the majority of publishers preferred to work directly with SCOAP³/CERN, as opposed to working with a third-party vendor.

In November 2020, the CERN SCOAP³ team initiated direct negotiations with the publishers for the OA conversion of books on the target list of 78 titles.

Results

Of the 17 publishers on the target list, proposals were received from 6, namely Cambridge University Press, Elsevier, Oxford University Press, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis, and World Scientific. Collectively, these publishers represented the majority (58) of the titles on the original list; a number of the smaller publishers of the remaining 20 books on the list declined to participate (some did not respond to invitations to enter into negotiations).

From the 6 proposals received from publishers, pricing was provided for 29 titles on the original list of books. Notably, this result represents a significant improvement over the attempts from third-party vendors in the attempted procurement process, where no vendor was able to negotiate more than 20 of the identified books for conversion. Due to the distinct differences between the market dynamics of textbooks and scholarly monographs, the proposals from the publishers have largely excluded many of the textbooks that were on the original title list.

It is worth noting that four of the proposals from publishers (Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Springer Nature, and Taylor & Francis) included a number of additional titles in high-energy physics and related disciples to be considered for inclusion in the SCOAP[3] for Books program.

Evaluative Process

The SCOAP[3] for Books Working Group convened on April 30th 2021 to review the proposals received from publishers, and to develop an acquisition recommendation to be approved by the Governing Council. Using the total commitments raised in the fundraising campaign of EUR 368K as a provisional total budget for the initiative, each of the proposals was reviewed based on the proposed titles, pricing and the value offered to the SCOAP[3] for Books program.

Given the wide distribution of per title pricing received from publishers (ranging from around EUR 3,000 to over EUR 122,000), the Working Group decided to implement expenditure limits on the books on the list. Given the varying market dynamics for text and monographs, distinct limits were set on each category of book: with a maximum spend of EUR 30K applied to textbooks, and a maximum spend of EUR 15K applied to monographs, respectively. Applying these limits, two books from the list were disqualified from inclusion.

The total price for acquisition of the 27 books from the original list amounted to EUR 168K. With a provisional budget of EUR 368K in financial commitments from partners, this left a total of EUR 200K, which could potentially be used to acquire titles from the 4 publishers who proposed additional titles for potential inclusion in the program.

Each of the proposals for additional titles was considered based on the following criteria: the proposed titles (and their relevance to the discipline); the per-title costs (individual and average BPCs); and overall value (based on the typical quality of books by the respective publisher, and their associated price). The evaluation for each of the additional proposals is described below:
1. Cambridge University Press (CUP)
   The proposal from CUP was somewhat distinct from those of other publishers, as rather than offering per-title pricing, they proposed a bundle of 64 titles (including 5 from the original target list) for a total price of GBP 100K (c.a. EUR 117K). Based on the evaluative criteria mentioned below, the Working Group recommended proceeding with

acquiring the titles proposed by CUP, as their offer represented the best value for money of the offers.

2. Oxford University Press (OUP)

Evaluating the 5 additional titles proposed by OUP, one title was immediately excluded as its pricing exceeded the maximum spending limit for monographs. Of the remaining 4 titles on the list, one was excluded due to its lack of immediate relevance to the discipline. A final recommendation for acquisition of 3 additional titles is made from OUP.

3. Springer Nature

Evaluating the 5 additional titles proposed by Springer Nature, one was immediately excluded as it was primarily a biographical text and not of immediate relevance to the initiative. Based on the defined evaluative criteria, the remaining 4 books are recommended for acquisition.

4. Taylor & Francis

The proposal from Taylor & Francis included 90 additional titles, ranging from around EUR 4K to EUR 13K. Based on how much CERN would be willing to pay upfront to Taylor & Francis as a prepayment, the publisher would issue discounts on each title (ranging from 10-20%). Based on the structure of their offer, the per-title pricing, and the extensive list of additional titles, the Working Group determined that the best course of action would be to expend the committed funds on titles from the original list and the above additional titles, and use the remaining budget to purchase titles from the Taylor & Francis offer. Based on this structure, an initial list of 9 additional books from their offer was selected.

Summary

In total, the recommended list of titles for the pilot SCOAP[3] initiative includes 102 Books (list attached). The total cost of acquisition for all of these books is EUR 365,000 (USD $ 440,000), with an average BPC of EUR 3,583 (USD $ 4,320).

The SCOAP[3] for Books program will be financed by one-time voluntary contributions by SCOAP[3] partners.