COPIM • Academic Libraries and Open Access Books in Europe: a Landscape Study

France

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Key findings

- **The academic library system is centralised around the Ministry of Education at its core**
- **The Couperin consortium represents French libraries on the national level**
- **The National Plan for Open Science, introduced in 2018, calls for open access to publicly funded publications for journal articles and books alike**
- **There are no OA book-specific funds in France; OA book publishing is mainly supported by grants**
- **No library-led OA book publishing initiatives were identified**
- **OpenEdition acts as an open access platform for journals and books in HSS**
- **Libraries rely on ABES for OA books coverage**

General library system for e-content and OA publications

The higher education system in France has three main contributors: public universities, research centres such as the CNRS, and Grandes Écoles.

The country has historically relied on a strongly centralised academic libraries system, with the Ministry of Education at its core. Although academic and research libraries still fall under its aegis, they are also gaining more autonomy. Academic libraries are organised around institutions. In the case of public universities, each of them has its own central system with smaller faculty libraries. In order to facilitate the exchange between universities, some of them come together to form mergers of three or four institutions.

Negotiations on access to electronic e-content in France are managed by the **Couperin consortium** (Unified Consortium of Higher Education and Research Organisations for Access to Digital Publications), founded in 1999. It unites academic and research institutions in France and negotiates deals with publishers on their behalf. Currently Couperin has 264 members: among them are universities, research institutes and national libraries (*Liste Des Membres - Membres*, n.d.).

ABES (Bibliographic Agency for Higher Education) is a body responsible for the development of cataloguing standards used across libraries in France, eBooks included.

Library community and open access

ADBU (the French Association of Academic Libraries and Documentation) is a well-established organisation uniting academic libraries across the country since the 1970s, when ADBU was officially formed. The organisation takes pride in working on strategical development of the academic library, which is seen as an institution with a strongly pronounced societal role: that of innovating and providing access to knowledge (Swiatek, 2020). Open Access is one of the questions that sits high on

the discussion list in the ADBU, which supports Plan S and organises numerous roundtables and conferences supporting developments in open science.

Open Science Committee, an organisation that came to life in 2018 under the auspice of the Ministry of Education, is a collection of working groups dealing with a spectrum of topics that have to do with open science. Librarians constitute a large part of the working groups, alongside researchers and publishing experts. Open Science Committee defines its mission as that of leading the way and indicating directions in which open science should evolve, as well as educating people about its benefits and animating the open science community. It serves as one of the main platforms where librarians engage in discussions on open access (*Ouvrir La Science - The Committee for Open Science*, n.d.).

OA book policies

In 2018, France published the National Plan for Open Science, in which it committed to generalising open access for publications using public funding, structuring research data and making it available OA, and being an active part in the OA international community. The Plan pertains to journals and books alike. While it outlines roadmaps for all three commitments, it does not give any specific dates by which the policy should be implemented (*National Plan for Open Science*, 2018). The same year saw the creation of the Jussieu Call for open science and bibliodiversity, a declaration crafted by French researchers and academic publishers. In the document they express the need for a more diverse publishing landscape, supporting the development of innovative scientific publishing models (*Jussieu Call*, n.d.).

Currently, there are 24 institutions with recorded OA policies in the ROAR map. Among them, nine specifically mention books:

- Agence National de la Recherche (HSS branch),
- Arts et Metiers ParisTech,
- CIRAD (Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement),
- CNRS,
- CentraleSupélec,
- INRIA (National Institute for Research in Computer Sciences & Control),
- Ifsttar: Institut français des sciences et technologies des transports, de l'aménagement et des réseaux,
- Institut Pasteur,
- Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer).

The most important public funder in France, the French National Research Agency (ANR), supports the National Plan recommendations mandating deposits of publications coming out of funded projects into

institutional or national open archives (HAL). ANR encourages publication in open access journals (*Open Science*, n.d.).

OA book funding

There are no OA book-specific funds for researchers available in France. OA publications are mainly covered by research grants. Several French libraries participate in the freemium programs available from the OpenEdition platform, therefore allocating their budgets to OA initiatives.

Library/scholar-led OA book publishing

Academic libraries in France do not act as publishers per se. There are several examples of libraries being involved in journal publishing (for example, at the universities of Nice, Bordeaux, Clermont and Lyon), but none involved in OA books publishing. Some libraries might be engaged in depositing theses in institutional repositories, yet they do not strictly take publishing initiatives themselves, leaving this job to a well-developed network of university presses.

OpenEdition provides university presses with an infrastructure for hosting open access books. The platform unites open access journals, books, blogs and academic announcements. Currently there are over 10,000 OA books accessible through OpenEdition.

Integration of OA books in library systems

ABES (Bibliographic Agency of Higher Education) plays a crucial role in the process of cataloguing OA books and integrating them with library discovery systems on a national level. Some universities, in order to make sure that OA books are included in their discovery systems additionally rely on the DOAB metadata.

Important contributors

- **COUPERIN** <https://www.couperin.org>
- **ADBU (Association française des directeurs et personnels de direction des bibliothèques universitaires et de la documentation)** <https://adbu.fr>
- **Bibliographic Agency of Higher Education (ABES)** <https://abes.fr/en/>
- **Open Science Committee** <https://www.ouvrirlascience.fr/open-science/>
- **Open Archives for Academic Publications HAL** <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/?lang=en>
- **OpenEdition** <https://www.openedition.org>

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