Thoth Publishers Workshop 2023

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On November 16, 2023, the Thoth team organised a workshop to learn more from the ever-growing number of publishers already using Thoth.

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**Thoth Scoping Survey**

We shared a survey with those publishers to scope their preferences and current practices regarding where they currently send their open access book metadata & content. We also asked them to indicate their interest in learning more about a potential service that would facilitate such submissions for them.

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![Fig. 1: Thoth Open Metadata: Publishers’ Preferences survey](https://tiny.cc/thoth-publishers-survey)

Building on our prior research on the OA books supply chain (cf. Stone et al., 2021) that has subsequently been distilled into the substantive [Thoth Wiki](https://tiny.cc/thoth-publishers-survey) to inform our ongoing development work, we included lists of Ebook Distributors & Aggregators (i.e. platforms that focus on content plus metadata) and Metadata Aggregators (i.e. platforms that focus only on metadata) that we would in principle be able to submit data to. We also asked about publishers’ preferences with regards to registering DOIs, archiving their books, legal deposit requirements in their respective national contexts, and preferences regarding the submission of books to research-field-specific bibliographies and/or databases.

This was done to inform the selection of platforms to include in our paid-for dissemination service, Thoth Plus (cf. Gatti et al., 2022), as we wanted to ensure the services offered would be useful and supportive to the publishers we are working with in their actual day-to-day needs.

**Presentation of Outcomes**

During the workshop, we then discussed the outcomes of that survey with the publishers that have engaged with us so far. We are deeply grateful to colleagues from University of Westminster Press, LSE Press, Open Book Publishers, punctum books, SciELO Books, Loughborough University Library, Open Book Collective,

As part of the workshop, Hannah presented a summary of initial findings, which also included a list of top platforms identified, including

- **Content & metadata dissemination**: Google Books, EBSCOHost, OpenEdition, OAPEN, Clarivate Web of Science Book Citation Index, RNIB Bookshare, JSTOR, and Library Genesis;
- and **Metadata aggregators**: DOAB, ProQuest Ebook Central, EBSCO Knowledgebase, Jisc Knowledgebase, OCLC Knowledgebase.

The presentation slide deck is included below.

Visit the web version of this article to view interactive content.

Fig. 2: Summary of the Thoth Publishers' Preferences survey. Data as of 11/2023.

**Discussing Publishers’ Needs**

We then invited presses to provide feedback on the results presented. Some of the publishers noted that they had not been aware of the sheer number and variety of platforms existing out there, so found the survey very useful as it helped them to think more strategically about the different venues that they might want their press to engage with going forward.

What also became apparent to a number of publishers was the challenge of reaching out to these platforms. The amount of information available about each one can quickly become overwhelming, with each of those platforms having their own — often just slightly different — requirements for metadata and content submission.

Publishers very much appreciated the work that Thoth has taken on to make the entry-points into that ecosystem more transparent (e.g. via the Thoth Wiki), which will ease the burden of each individual publisher having to find out about these details by themselves, and to provide publishers with the means to disseminate and archive their books more easily via the Thoth platform and services.

It was also noted that the data from this scoping exercise is meant to form a starting point for Thoth’s work, as the responses submitted reflect the situatedness of the publishers involved in the survey, most of which have a UK or US background.

**This is why we would also like to take this opportunity to open up the survey and invite more publishers to add your views and preferences via [https://tiny.cc/thoth-publishers-survey](https://tiny.cc/thoth-publishers-survey)**
Thoth Plus Model: Initial Feedback

We then introduced the newly-developed **Thoth Plus** service packages, which have been tailored around the preferences indicated by publishers.

To learn more about the specifics of the Thoth Plus packages, please refer to our accompanying blog post.

A first round of feedback on those proposed services from the attending publishers was very positive, indicating demand from small presses who usually struggle to find time to engage with the topic more fully. For many of the presses involved, a per-title fee approach as put forward by Thoth would be very attractive, as it allows publishers to remain flexible by having the option of subscribing to the metadata and archiving services on an on-demand and per-book basis.

Many publishers likewise noted they would be interested in slight modifications of the basic packages to exchange one targeted platform for another, because they might have existing agreements with other providers that are already covering the submission to a given platform, which is something Thoth will be very happy to accommodate. As detailed in the specifics of the Thoth Plus service offer, we are also always open to discussing bespoke packages, as an alternative to the “mainstream” groups of platforms identified in the survey.

One particular issue that was flagged by a number of publishers was the potential benefits of complementing or integrating Thoth’s services with those offered by other providers, which is something Thoth would certainly be interested in investigating further. We are deeply invested in forging collaboration with like-minded initiatives such as OAPEN, PKP, Crossref, and COKI to explore integration options between our infrastructures — more details on the progress made with these collaborations are available via our accompanying blog post.

**Outlook**

We are also working closely with publishers to ingest data sets from the title management systems they are currently using in their publishing workflows, and are exploring integration options between Thoth and these systems, so as to avoid duplication of data entries.

We are tremendously grateful to the publishers who joined us for this workshop, and will be seeking to organise similar workshops in the near future.

If you are a publisher and would like to get in touch with us regarding the use of Thoth Free, or our Thoth Plus metadata, dissemination and archiving services, please don’t hesitate to send us a quick email via info@thoth.pub.
References

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