



Embracing open access: HKBU Library's transformative journey

Christopher Chan

University Librarian

Hong Kong Baptist University

29 May 2024



Agenda

- Introduction
- A brief history of open access initiatives at Hong Kong Baptist University
- Deep dive into transformative (transitional) agreements
- Final thoughts



INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong Baptist University

- Founded in 1956 as Hong Kong Baptist College. Became a fully-funded public tertiary institution in 1983 and achieved university status in 1994.
- Vision: Be a leading liberal arts university in Asia for the world delivering academic excellence in a caring, creative, and global culture.
- With 7,300+ undergraduates and 4,300+ postgraduates, HKBU is committed to nurturing future generations of civically engaged community members.

YOUNG UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2024
BY TIMES HIGHER EDUCATION
2024年泰晤士高等教育年輕大學排名

World's No. **46**
全球排名



Progress recognised in
recent international
rankings exercises.

“

The mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in their communities

- R. David Lankes, Professor of Librarianship, University of Texas at Austin

<https://davidlankes.org/new-librarianship/new-librarianship-master-class-mooc/ilead-usa-and-new-librarianship-course-content/week-1-librarians/the-mission-of-librarians/>

INTRODUCTION

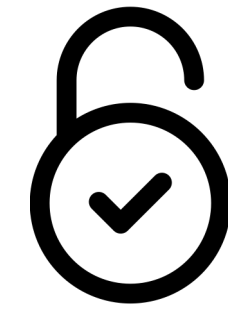
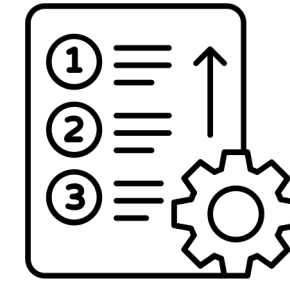
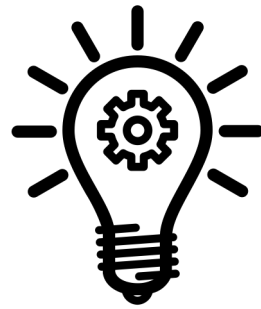
Why open access?

- Idealism - to achieve the goals laid out in the Berlin Declaration back in 2003.
- Tensions inherent in the “traditional” model of scholarly communication.
- Sustainability for academia, publishers, and libraries.



Image created with Midjourney

Timeline of open access efforts



2016

Institutional OA policy endorsed by the Senate

2019

OA support mentioned in Library's strategic plan

2021

First transformative agreement (TA) with Cambridge University Press

2022

Development of OA culture highlighted as a strategic priority for the Library

2024

TAs with 10 publishers, cumulative total of 200+ articles made OA so far

Challenges

- While generally supportive, researchers tend not to be highly engaged with the OA effort.
- Some reluctant to make manuscript versions of their papers publicly available for green OA.
- Difficult to fund gold OA given high pricing of article processing charges.
- Confusing for faculty and librarians to navigate the many and varied paths to OA.



Image created with Midjourney

Library Strategic Priorities 2022-25

Priority 2

Lead the development of an open access culture and raise the visibility of HKBU research output



Lead HKBU's response to the Research Grants Council's Open Access Plan through coordination with the RGC as well as HKBU's Office of Institutional Research and Planning and Research Office; plan the corresponding university-wide actions and keep academics informed about these actions.

- KPI: Open access compliance rate (i.e. percentage of faculty publications that are published open access based on [IRIMS](#) data).



Proactively negotiate agreements with publishers that allow HKBU researchers to publish their work open access with article processing charges either reduced or waived completely.

- KPI: No. of publications made open access under publisher agreements.

KPIs:

- OA compliance rate
- No. of publications made OA via TA agreements

What are transformative agreements?



“Transformative agreement” is an umbrella term describing those agreements negotiated between institutions (libraries, national and regional consortia) and publishers in which former subscription expenditures are repurposed to support open access publishing of the negotiating institutions’ authors...

- ESAC Initiative

<https://esac-initiative.org/about/transformative-agreements/>

How do they work?

Every agreement is unique, but usually share certain characteristics:

- Two parts to the agreement: subscription costs (read) and OA costs (publish). The amount paid for each part is made explicit.
- Normally, the agreement will allow read access to all the publisher's journals, including journals to which the library did not previously subscribe.
- Authors affiliated with the library's institution will be eligible to have their articles published OA in the publisher's journals at no extra charge.

Why make TAs a KPI?

- Version of record is made open access, which our researchers prefer when complying with OA mandates.
- Expenses are covered centrally by the library - no need to for researchers to seek funding for OA.
- Approval integrated into the manuscript acceptance workflow - no extra effort required on the part of the author.

Faculty feedback



Dr. Benjamin Moorhouse, Assistant Professor

https://youtu.be/fbYzD_2WB3U?si=SLXeEj4t95ZJk1UA&t=1802

- Easier access to our research, especially for frontline practitioners without access to academic library subscriptions.
- With advent of AI tools, OA research may become more discoverable as they can be freely used to train AI models.
- “Incredibly easy” for faculty. Saves time and no need to prepay OA fees.

“Thank you to the Library for allowing more people to read our research”

Pain points

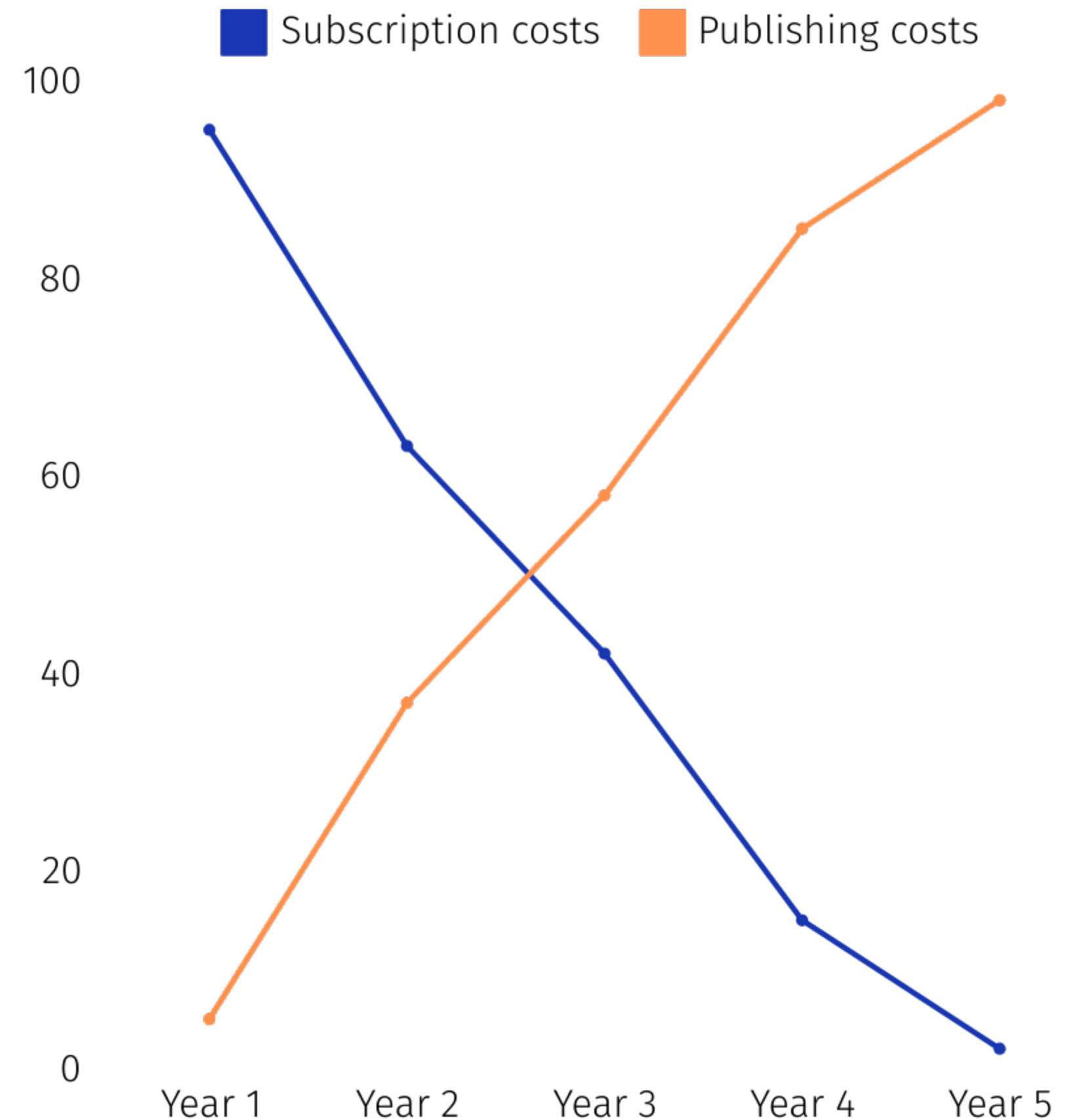
- Administering an increasing number of agreements requires more resources.
- “Token system” adopted by most publishers is problematic:
 - Requires guessing how many articles our academics will publish.
 - Guess too high, and the library will overpay for the agreement.
 - Guess too low, the library needs to pay extra.
 - Should no additional funding be available, some authors will miss out on OA publication for the arbitrary reason that their article was accepted late in the annual cycle.

TRANSFORMATIVE AGREEMENTS

Truly transformative?

End goal is for a complete transition to open access publishing.

Therefore, the subscription component should trend towards zero.



Reminder: Defining TAs



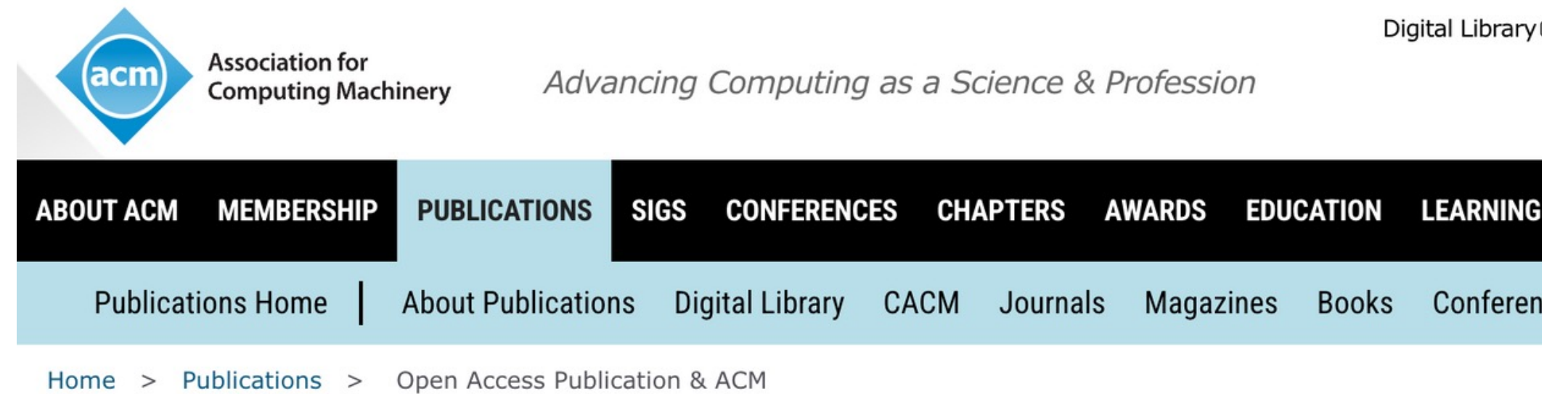
“Transformative agreement” is an umbrella term describing those agreements negotiated between institutions (libraries, national and regional consortia) and publishers in which ***former subscription expenditures are repurposed to support open access publishing*** of the negotiating institutions’ authors...

- ESAC Initiative

<https://esac-initiative.org/about/transformative-agreements/>

TRANSFORMATIVE AGREEMENTS

Some publishers have indeed made a firm commitment 🙌



Open Access Publication & ACM

ACM Reiterates Its Intention to Transition to 100% Open Access Publication by 2026

On June 9, 2023 ACM's highest governing body, the ACM Council, was presented with, discussed, and showed wide-spread support for a plan to transition all ACM Publications to a sustainable Open Access model no later than the end of the 2025 calendar year. This timeline was originally agreed back in June 2020 when ACM's Council voted unanimously to adopt a five-year time line for this transition to occur in a financially sustainable way. The plan includes a multi-phased approach which relies heavily on the support of universities, government research institutes, and companies in the technology sector to participate in the [ACM Open](#) program.

<https://www.acm.org/publications/openaccess#acmopen>

TRANSFORMATIVE AGREEMENTS

However, most publishers do not have such commitments.

Even worse, some propose “transformative” agreements where the subscription component actually increases 😱



Will transformative agreements work?

- HKBU Library's experience has been generally positive.
- Supportive of our mission to support knowledge creation in the HKBU community.
- However, still far from clear that TAs are on track to meet the goal of having every research work published OA.

Global perspectives

Findings from recent Jisc report:

- Closed content still dominates: 61% of content in TA titles was not OA.
- At current rates, it will take major publishers 70 years to flip their TA titles to OA.
- Author behaviour has changed little, with most still choosing to disseminate their research via traditional publishers.

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/reports/a-review-of-transitional-agreements-in-the-uk>

Jisc

A review of transitional agreements in the UK

March 2024





Looking ahead

There is a long way to go, with huge complexity and many stakeholders. But we should keep the end goal in sight: open access to all of the world's scholarly research.

TAs may have a role to play, but intense dialogue between researchers, publishers, institutions, funders, and libraries is needed.



Thank you!