A Consortium Approach to OA Monographs in Sweden

Progress Report

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Background

The objective of the project is to assess the possibilities for creating a consortium-based approach for OA publishing of academic monographs in Sweden. Academic publishing in general is moving increasingly towards free accessibility and certainly for journal articles and conference contributions there are various options available. Academic books, however, have not progressed towards OA to the same extent, even if it would be desirable for the distribution, visibility and impact of the work. In part, this is the result of universities leaving publishing activities to commercial publishers which often are not primarily interested in academic books, nor really understand how to handle them; their main concern is to recover their costs. For the commercial publisher, an academic book is rarely a money-making venture, and so cost-recovery (in Sweden), even for a non-OA operation, is required from the author. For OA books, various business models can be explored.

When moving towards OA in academic publications one must also consider a strong perception that freely available material on the internet is by definition "low quality". For books this is a particularly important issue, because traditionally, books rarely go through an independent academic peer review process prior to publication. In this light, simply changing a publishing model from a print run to an electronic version on the internet will not be sufficient. It is crucial that quality-control procedures be built up simultaneously. Hence, the main objective of this project is to evaluate the possibilities of setting up a national peer-review system for academic books that leads to OA publishing and to make recommendations on how subsequent OA publishing can be best accomplished.

Project Team

The initial team comprised Katarina Bernhardsson LU, Håkan Carlsson GU, Jörgen Eriksson LU, David Lawrence (coordinator) LiU, Thomas Neidenmark SU, Maja Pelling GU, Aina Svensson UU. Over the last eight months, Håkan was replaced by Karin Henning GU and Thomas has been complemented with Camilla Hertil-Lindelöw SU.

Meetings

Project meetings	2012-02-21 2012-05-03 2012-09-13,14	Norrköping Gothenburg Lund
Participation in EU "Going for Gold" project preparation	2012-04-10 2012-09-06,07	Amsterdam Amsterdam
Workshop on Academic Monographs	2012-05-15	Södertörn (organized by Erland Jansson)
Workshop with publishers	2012-08-28	Stockholm

Results

The book publishing process (outlined in Fig. 1) has many stages and as a whole can be rather complicated. The objective of this project was not to necessarily look at setting up an entire publishing operation, but to look at which stages in the process could be addressed effectively by a national consortium and to make recommendations on other parts which are particularly connected to OA (*e.g.* business models). A desirable outcome is to have a system that works in conjunction with existing commercial publishers and with local publishing activities at Swedish universities. In this sense, it was decided that much of the "publishing" part of producing a book was not to be considered as part of a national consortium's activities; *i.e.* copy editing, formatting, graphic design, creating of an electronic version, printing, distribution and marketing are best handled by "publishers". Similarly, it is best if authors take responsibility for writing the manuscript, finding financial support for publishing and for taking initial contact with a publisher. A national consortium would be best for focusing on quality control and certification and for giving advice on OA publishing. It is peer-review that is unique to the academic world, which traditional publishers have the most problem with and which universities have expertise in. Additionally, quality control is perhaps the most significant issue to resolve to allow books in Sweden to be published Open Access. Hence the main focus of this project is to assess the possibilities of building a national approach to the quality control part of the book publishing process. Additionally, the project will make recommendations to other related issues such as business models.
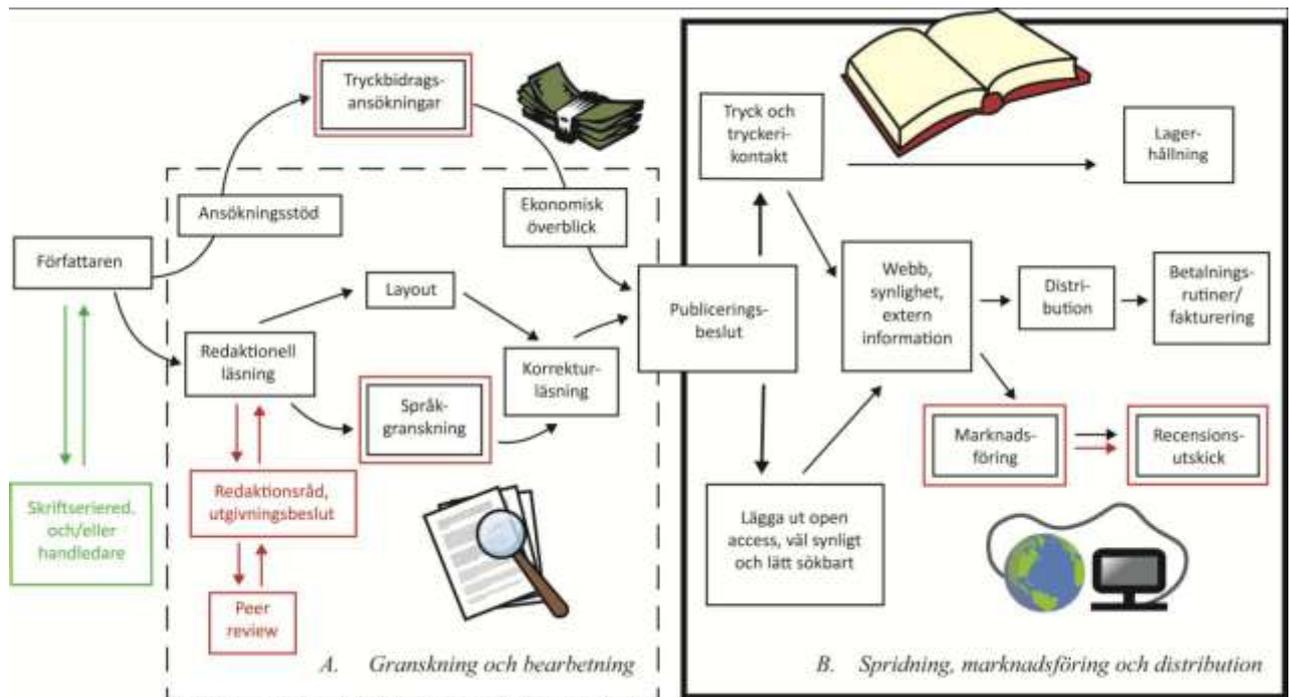
Fig. 1: A schematic diagram of the book publishing process (from Katarina Bernhardsson, Ny strategi för vetenskaplig bokpublicering vid Lunds universitet, 2011, Lund University, ISBN: 978-91-7473-224-5, http://www.lu.se/o.o.i.s?id=12588&postid=2278649)

The approach of the project is to communicate with those that are involved with the various parts of the publishing process, in part to learn how each part works and how it could interact with a national-level quality control process and in part to inform of a potential development in the book publishing process. In parallel with this information gathering, and based also on the expertise within the project members, we will build up a concrete description of a national consortium which could be used in further communication with key players to get feedback.

Workshop with Publishers

The various interested parties that need to be contacted are publishers, funding agencies, researchers and universities. To date a workshop has been held with publishers and a meeting with funding agencies via the network of Swedish financing agencies with OA publishing requirements is planned for November 14th. It is felt that contact with researchers will be most fruitful after a more concrete picture of a consortium and its activities has been developed (Spring 2013).

The workshop with publishers was organized by Katarina and Thomas and held on August 28th at Stockholm University. 17 publishers were contacted (Makadam, Gidlunds, Nordic Academic Press, Historiska Media, Sekel, Hström, Symposion, Carlssons, Ellerströms, Artos & Norma, Atlantis, Ramus, Nya Doxa, Arcus, Roos & Tegnér, Studentlitteratur, Åström Editions), of which Nordic Academic Press, Makadam förlag and Atlantis förlag participated along with Vetenskapsrådet and Riksbankens jubileumsfond. A number of other publishers was

interested but could not participate on the given date. Others were only going to be interested once a policy decision had been made (*i.e.* to go OA). Presentations were given by Katarina and Thomas (overview of the project and its objectives), Jakob Christensson from Atlantis (a publisher's perspective on OA for books) and Lisbeth Söderqvist (VR) and Britta Lövgren (RJ) (funding agency perspectives on OA books). The resulting discussion was very positive and the dominating response from the publishers present was that collaboration in the academic book world would be highly desired; smaller publishers do not have the expertise or the networks to implement a peer-review process. There was even a positive reaction to making an electronic version of a manuscript freely available on the internet (of course there is even more incentive for the latter if universities or funding agencies have funds to contribute to making a book OA). Additionally, the fact that at least anecdotal evidence at this point shows that a free, electronic, version of a book can lead to increased sales of a printed version, means that some publishers are willing to look at the possibilities of OA.

Participation in the EU project "Going for Gold" development

Through contact with Eelco Ferwerda, OAPEN, we have been invited to participate in the development of a project for submission to a EU funding program. The project, tentatively entitled "Going for Gold", led by Paul Ayris, University College London, would aim to set up a European-wide infrastructure to allow university presses to publish academic books OA without having to develop local solutions for the publishing process, particularly the formatting, electronic version creation, printing, distribution and marketing phases. The existing infrastructure of Amsterdam University Press and OAPEN are likely to provide the core for the proposed European infrastructure. Acquisition and quality control would be the responsibility of local university presses. Some 17 partners have expressed interest in participating in the project (OAPEN, AUP, Leiden UP, UCL, Freiburg, Open Book Publishers, Barcelona, Edinburgh, Ubiquity Press, UCL, Helsinki, LIBER, Utrecht, University of Nijmegen, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, University of Manchester). From Sweden we have participated in two planning meetings: David attended one 2012-04-10 and David and Jörgen attended a second 2012-09-06,07.

The thinking for the EU project is over three years to put a network of infrastructure in place (based on mainly existing components) and publish a number of books (30 is a tentative number at present, which seems a little low given the number of partners involved and the size of the project). To make this work, local participating universities are being asked to identify 3-5 series, based on local research strengths, that they would host and publish relevant books in. Series would be non-overlapping and all books in a given subject area, independent of source would end up in a given specialist series. Each series would be responsible for organizing peer-review of submitted manuscripts. The initial thinking with setting up these series was that it would facilitate quick set up of networks of reviewers and hence allow books to be published relatively quickly in the project (the series being based around leading research groups, which presumably would have extensive international networks of people to draw upon for reviewing). Discussion within the EU project has tended to get a little focused on the series *per se* and that is a little problematic in our opinion. We are

rather skeptical to the idea of setting up (mainly) new series and getting them up and running so that they publish more than the odd book in a short period of time. From a Swedish perspective we also have concerns about local branding issues (e.g. the acta series are important at various Swedish universities). Furthermore it is unclear how a non-Swedish organized series will be able to handle manuscripts written in Swedish (according to SwePub, some 60% of Swedish books published in 2011 were written in Swedish). Our perspective on the EU project is that it would be best if it focused on the quality certification aspect of monographs together with publishing infrastructure. In fact, the "identify series" approach is not compatible with our consortium thinking. Within the EU project organization, they are aware of the "Swedish" approach and are very interested in it and are willing to try and be flexible enough to incorporate different approaches to the OA book solution. In this light, we are continuing to be involved in the development of the EU project, in a sense on Swedish terms.

An extra "bonus" from being involved in the EU project is that it has allowed discussion with other European players in the OA book movement (particularly OAPEN and AUP) and to gain from their experiences.

Proposed Consortium Details

The following is a working paper and a very early-stage attempt at a more detailed picture for a consortium approach to quality certification of OA book manuscripts. Feedback will be solicited from interested partners and the ideas will develop with time.

Overview of organization and normal operation

The overall objective is to set up a system in Sweden to allow open access publication of academic books. A large factor in "going OA" is a perceived lack of quality for freely available publications which, combined with the fact that there is relatively little peer-review in the current academic book publishing world, means that a significant focus of a new system needs to be on quality certification. It is quite likely that no single university in Sweden could put in place a quality control system that is seen internationally as being of the highest standard (most likely a university would be evaluating its own output, resulting in an impression of bias). The solution proposed here is to build a system based on a consortium of Sweden's research intensive universities.

While books are produced in all subject areas, at least to begin with there would be a focus on the humanities and social sciences, where the book is a common publication form and where issues of open access and perceived quality will be most significant.

The consortium's objective is to provide a service that assesses the academic quality of submitted manuscripts of academic books produced by researchers at Swedish universities and also to provide advice on wider issues related to OA book publishing. Quality is to be assessed by independent peer reviewers. Those manuscripts which meet an academic standard will be given a certification, indicating the quality control process they have been through. Subsequent publication of the manuscript will mainly be by third parties (e.g. University acta series, commercial publishers (the latter with an OA version)…)

At this point two organization and workflow models are under evaluation. Our leaning is towards the simpler and more streamlined Model B, however feedback will be solicited from third parties (researchers, research funders…) on both alternatives.

For both Models A and B, a steering committee, which meets several times per year, will be required to provide overall insight and guidance to those responsible for daily operation. Ideally the steering committee should comprise membership from a broad spectrum of interested parties: universities, funding agencies, OA advocates, commercial publishers, researchers.

Model A further comprises a managing committee of five people (20% of a position each), each from a different Swedish university, an administrator (20% of a fte) and a technician (10% of a fte). Note that time estimates are for "normal" operation; a start-up phase will likely require a higher commitment. The managing committee coordinates daily activity and liaises with a number of editorial committees which organize manuscript peer review, a corrections cycle with authors and make a final recommendation on certification. An overview of this structure is given in Fig. A.

To get an indication of the roles of the various participants, a typical workflow is described (refer also to Fig. B). As a general note, for the present, our thinking is that structure and work activities should be kept as simple as possible. In this light, we feel that, at least to begin with, manuscripts should be submitted to the consortium via a publisher or university series. Manuscripts coming directly from authors would require additional handling (e.g. language checking, assurance that a certified manuscript is not significantly modified prior to publication...).
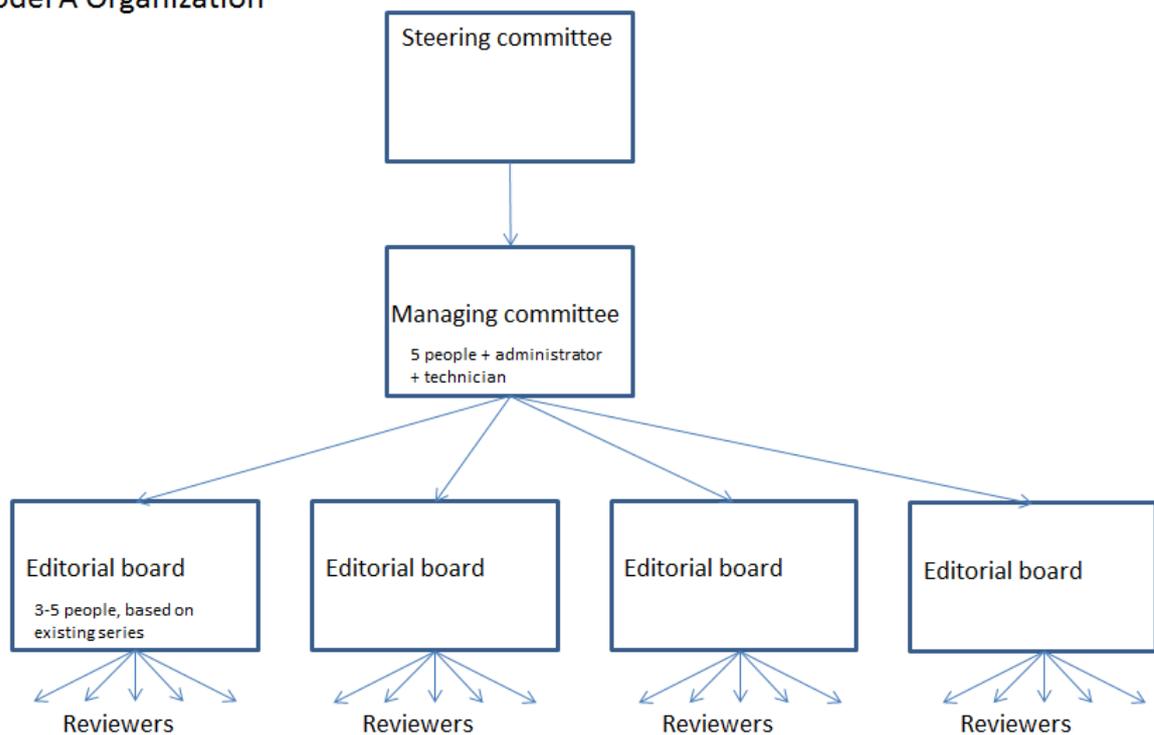
Model A Organization

Fig. A: Overview of one possible organizational structure for the consortium

The workflow for Model A is begun by the author contacting a publisher or university series and submitting a manuscript. The publisher then assesses the manuscript for suitability for their operation and organizes language checking and (at least preliminary) copy editing. The publisher subsequently contacts the consortium and passes the MS to the Managing Committee. There will need to be an agreement at this point that any certified manuscript must be published, at least in part, open access. The managing committee does a further gross suitability check (e.g. that it is an academic book and appears suitable to undergo peer review...) and then passes the MS to a relevant editorial committee, who arrange for two independent reviewers (Swedish or international) to evaluate the manuscript and provide feedback. Upon receipt of the reviewers' reports, the editorial

committee assesses the level of changes required for the MS and, as appropriate, requests corrections and modifications. If the latter are significant, it can be anticipated that the MS is sent to the reviewers a second time. The corrected MS, reviewers' reports with author's rebuttal and a brief summarizing recommendation are then sent by the editorial committee to the managing committee. The managing committee takes the final decision on certification, notifies the author and passes the certified MS to the publisher, where the publishing process is finalized. The metadata and an electronic version of certified books are added to the consortium's web-portal.

In Model A, the workload for the editorial committees is relatively large and it is possible that this could make it difficult to recruit enough committee members to make the system work. Thinking is that remuneration will be received by all those involved in the certification process and so it can be that Model A is a rather expensive alternative as well. Overall the certification process must be cost-neutral and as such authors will be expected to pay for the costs related to their manuscript (economics will be explored in more detail elsewhere, but current thinking is that authors will pay a non-refundable fee after the managing committee has judged that the MS is suitable to be sent for peer-review. There will be no refund if the MS is not certified, but the author will get the comments from the reviewers and editorial committee).
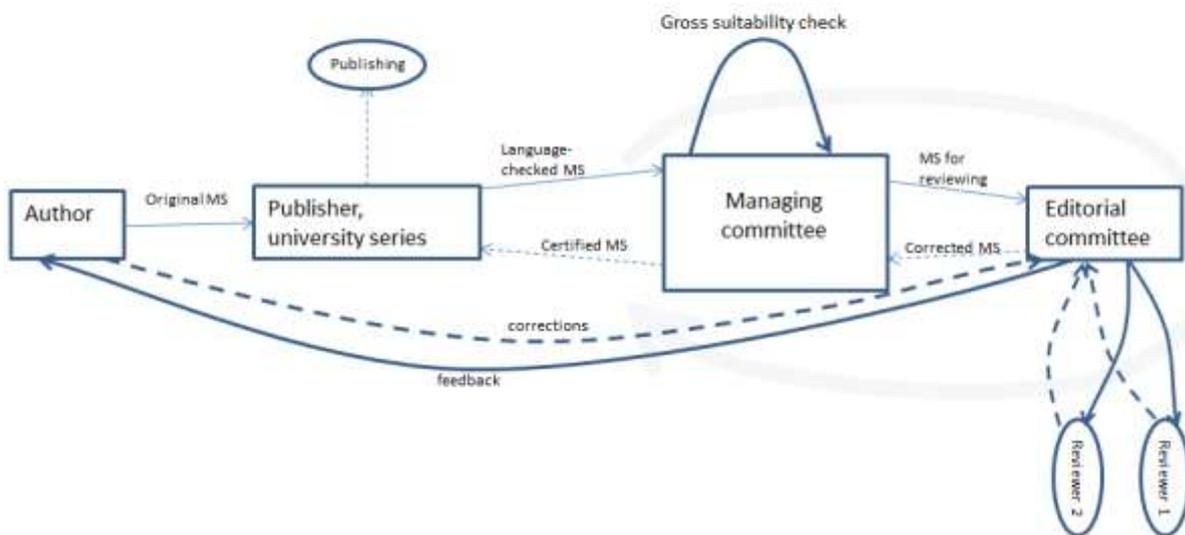
Model A Work Flow

Fig. B: Typical workflow for Model A organization

Model B attempts to streamline the process and the number of people involved, by giving a larger role to the managing committee (it practically becomes a managing editorial committee and will require an increased commitment by members (say 30-40% fte each)). Editorial committees are not used in daily operation, but an advisory board will be set up, comprising senior academics and university series editors, which could provide suggestions for a database of reviewers' names for a wide range of subject areas. It is likely that few direct meetings of this group will be necessary, but rather members of the managing editorial committee will take contact with individuals on the advisory committee as needed. See Fig. C for an overview.

Model B Organization

Fig. C: Overview of a reduced organizational structure for the consortium

Fig. D summarizes the workflow for Model B. The beginning of the process is as for Model A: an author submits a MS to a publisher, which performs some checking etc. and forwards the MS to the managing editorial committee. The managing editorial committee performs a gross check for suitability for a peer review process and then, using a database of potential reviewers built up in consultation with the advisory group, contacts reviewers. The manuscript is then sent by the managing editorial committee to two reviewers and gets back comments. These comments would then be used as the basis for a minor/major corrections cycle or rejection for certification. The managing editorial committee would contact the author, evaluate the author's changes/rebuttal and make the final decision regarding certification. The managing editorial committee would then send the MS back to the publisher for final publication.

Apart from being more streamlined, Model B also has the advantage that it is likely to end with a more uniform application of standards in the certification process. There is a danger in Model A, that different editorial committees will require different levels of modifications to a MS; maintaining an overview of the quality process would be more involved.
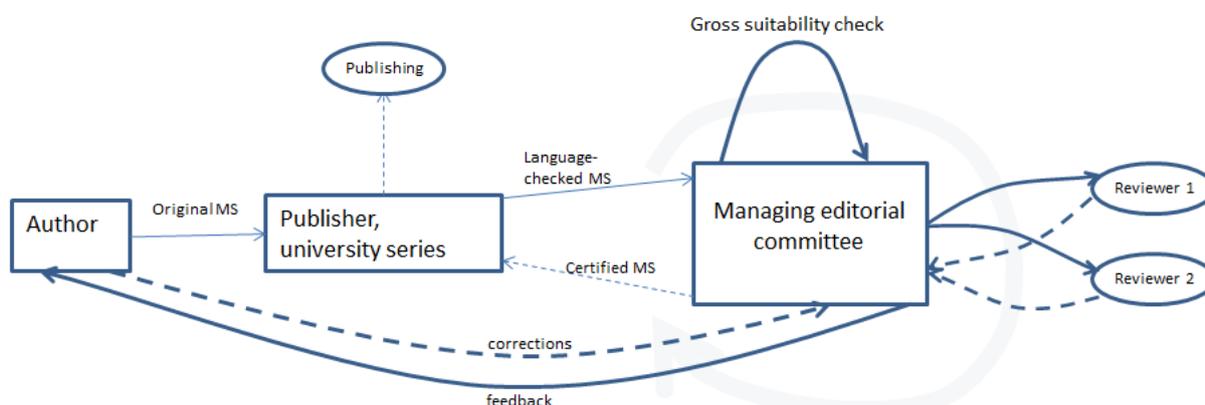
Fig. D: Typical workflow for Model B organization

Start-up Phase
(it is somewhat early in the development process to fill in full details here; the following is a list of issues to be explored in more detail)
- Steering group appoints members for the Managing Editorial Committee
- Steering group sets up overall policies, procedures and objectives
- Managing Editorial Committee (MEC) fills in the details for procedures (workflow, peer-review…)
- MEC identifies targeted subject fields to be the focus for initial operation (these would likely be limited to 2 or 3 to begin with)
- MEC sets up the advisory committee and begins the process of building up a peer-reviewers database
- MEC responsible for contact/marketing against universities, funding agencies, publishers, researchers…

Overview of Roles:

	Start up	Continuing operation
Steering group	• Approval (generation?) of policies and operating priniciples, guidelines • Appointment of managing committee	• Overview of scope and success of operation
Managing Committee (Model A)	• Setup of Editorial boards • "marketing" of consortium existence and concept to universities and researchers • Acquisition of "high profile" manuscripts • Liaise with financing agencies, SUHF, OA.se, publishers • Liaise with publication assessment organizations	• Liaise with steering committee on overall issues • Overview of operation of editorial boards • Quality monitoring • Receipt of manuscripts, initial judgment as to suitability and appropriate editorial board • Contact with authors at various stages in process • Receipt of peer-reviewed manuscript

		from Editorial board and recommendation report • Final decision about certification • Contact with publisher • Deposit in consortium portal
Editorial Boards (Model A)	• Setup network of reviewers • Acquisition of "high profile" manuscripts	Acquisition of manuscripts • Receipt of manuscript from managing committee • Organize peer review and language control (?) • Liaise with author in the corrections cycle • Submit recommendation to managing committee
Managing Editorial Committee (Model B)	• Setup of Editorial boards • "marketing" of consortium existence and concept to universities and researchers • Acquisition of "high profile" manuscripts • Liaise with financing agencies, SUHF, OA.se, publishers • Liaise with publication assessment organizations • Setup database of reviewers	• Liaise with steering committee on overall issues • Quality monitoring • Receipt of manuscripts, initial judgment as to suitability and appropriate reviewers • Contact with authors at various stages in process • Final decision about certification • Contact with publisher • Deposit in consortium portal

Economics

At this point economics have only been considered in a very overall sense. This will be the focus of a more detailed evaluation.

Based on Model B:

Activity/Cost	Fixed Cost per year
Personnel, Managing Editorial Board, 5 people at 30%, with salary 35 000 SEK/mth	1 000 000
Personnel, administrator (30%) and technician (10%)	225 000
Travel	50 000
Overhead	375 000
Total Fixed Costs	**1 650 000**
	Variable Costs per book
Reviewers (5 000 each)	10 000

Various possibilities exist:
- The entire cost can be covered by an author fee. This is only realistic for large volumes (50+ books per year) of books processed
- Authors only pay the variable cost (i.e. 10 000 SEK as per above)

- - The author fee partially offsets the fixed costs (e.g. authors pay 20 000 SEK)
  - Further exploration of OA book business models is required

Further issues:
- - Do authors pay the consortium directly or via the publisher (the latter probably doesn't work when university series are involved)?

Diverse Issues

At the time of development of this project a number of issues was identified as being important for consideration. Some of these have been "solved", others discarded and some require further work.

Probably the most important issue for the entire consortium concept, as yet unresolved, is who (as in organization) should be ultimately responsible for it. Various organizations have been tentatively proposed (e.g. The Royal Library, SUHF, VR…) but none appears perfect. Input will be solicited from various groups (e.g. research funders, OA.se steering group…)

Not so less important, is a name for the concept/consortium. A few names that have come up include "Consortium for Swedish Excellence", "Consortium for Excellence in Swedish Academic Books", "Swedish Academic Books Excellence Certification" (SABEC, SABCert, SweCert, ActaCert…). This is to be given further thought.

Local branding is important for some acta series/universities. With the current thinking for the consortium, this would not be a problem, since manuscripts could be submitted to and returned from the consortium by/to an acta series, which then retains its branding (and the manuscript gets an additional certification).

Prestige is a very important consideration for universities and researchers in where work is published. The basic objective of this project is to create a quality certification process that is seen as prestigious and given time it is likely to be that way. The challenge is to create "prestige" as quickly as possible to make a possible consortium successful. Some preliminary ideas which require further development include:

- - Actively solicit manuscripts from "top" names
- - Support from VR/RJ
- - Advisory group/editorial board composition
- - Start in a small number of defined areas
- - "home base" is important
- - Transparent peer-review process

In Sweden authors are protected by a strong copyright law and as such it is not seen that there is any particular problem with OA publishing in its basic form (i.e. making a version freely accessible for reading). Ideally, a manuscript would also be licensed under a creative commons licensing arrangement, but that is up to agreement between author(s) and publisher.

Coming activity

It is hoped that we can get feedback and insight into the ideas proposed by this project at a meeting of the network of research funders with open access requirements (next meeting 2012-11-14; Aina, Katarina and David to attend). While it would be nice to meet "all" interested funders, publishing support for books in Sweden comes from a plethora of small societies, clubs and publishers and it would be virtually impossible to meet even the majority. Our strategy at present is to get feedback from the larger ones.

Feedback from researchers (including series editors) is important but so is informing them about developing ideas. Getting researchers to come to a workshop is judged to be difficult and so we are proposing to contact "local" researchers one-on-one in an interview-like format at each of the universities participating in this project. Planning is on-going (common questions etc.) and researchers are to be approached in March-April 2013.

It is hoped that feedback can also be got from the steering group for OA.se. David has newly been appointed to the steering group and hope is that an agenda point can be added to an up-coming meeting.

There are (many) details to work out in the working paper above. Amongst others, the biggest details that are under investigation are economics, the peer-review process, which subject areas to focus on at start up…

Ways of aligning these models of quality control to possible business models for OA publication will be investigated. Different models, all based on the assumption that today's scholarly monograph publishing model is broken beyond repair, are emerging internationally. We will investigate some of these and assess their suitability as part of our final report.