ABSTRACT
Funding open access publications is often a difficult problem, especially when authors may not have sufficient funds to support a project. Yet it may be possible to convert the funds libraries currently spend on subscriptions and purchases into support for open access publications. Three organizations are modifying models used by consumer-focused crowdfunding websites to fit different publishing scenarios. Unglue.it pools funds from individuals and libraries to provide open access licenses to books that have already been published. Knowledge Unlatched receives pledges from libraries to provide access to front- and back-list scholarly books as well as some journals. Reveal Digital launches freely accessible digital collections with support from libraries that wish to contribute to a specific collection or an ongoing fund. These efforts show possible models for turning library collection funds into a distributed support network for open access publication.

KEYWORDS
book publishing; crowdfunding; digital collections; open access; scholarly publishing

A question of funding
One of the biggest problems facing architects of an open access (OA) system for scholarly communications is how to fund such a system. Addressing a single type of publication (journal articles, for example) in a single discipline would be complicated enough. Funding multiple material types across disciplines with very different publication practices is another matter. A number of models are already in place for OA journals, including publication fees, submission fees, institutional subsidies, endowments, advertising, and more.1 A single publication or program may also make use of several different models, combining publication fees with institutional memberships and an endowment, for example.

In many of these models, the funding comes from entities that contribute to the production of research. Authors may supply article processing charges (APCs) with assistance from an employer or a funder, and membership models typically target institutions that support many active researchers.2 This provides a stark contrast to the traditional system of publication in which individual readers and libraries (which support communities of readers and researchers) fund publications by purchasing or subscribing to specific content. The library’s role in a closed access system is fairly clear. Libraries use collections funds to secure access to material relevant to their institutions and do their best to ensure that their communities can easily access the materials they need. The role that libraries play with respect to OA publications is much less clear, both in terms of funding and stewardship.

This is not to say that there is a lack of interest from libraries regarding OA publishing. Certainly, libraries have been supporting OA publication in a variety of ways. One common approach is to offer funds to authors affiliated with their institutions to offset the APCs often required to publish in OA journals.3 Many libraries act as scholarly publishers hosting their own OA journal or book programs.4 However, these approaches may be seen as providing a service primarily to authors, rather than the more
traditional role of providing funds to make a work available to a community of readers.

There is the possibility that libraries could take the existing funds dedicated to securing access to publications for their communities and use those to fund open access to relevant content instead. In this scenario, libraries would still be ensuring access for their own patrons, with the additional benefit of opening the content to others and simplifying access and authentication. Libraries have shown interest in such a model. The SCOAP³ project demonstrates that libraries can work with publishers to make high-demand scholarly publications available to all researchers and that they are willing to fund this model.⁵ It also reveals that, at least in some domains, it is feasible to flip a journal to an OA model with funding from libraries rather than payments from authors. This column will describe a similar approach, in which libraries distributed throughout the world can pool funds to release OA publications.

The rise of crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is a method of funding a project by pooling small investments from a large number of individuals. It can be seen as similar to a preorder or subscription model in that the crowdfunding process can raise funds and serve as an indicator of interest in a particular product or venture. Between 2008 and 2010, three websites launched that have continued to serve as popular platforms for crowdfunding campaigns: IndieGoGo,⁶ Kickstarter,⁷ and GoFundMe.⁸ These share the same basic model. A fundraiser creates a page on the platform that describes the proposed project and sets a fundraising goal. In many cases, reward levels are set, so that individuals pledging a certain amount are promised some form of benefit. Potential funders create profiles with the site and enter a pledge amount. When the project wraps up, then the platform processes payments according to the pledges selected by funders and delivers the money to the creator who proposed the project.

These crowdfunding sites support a wide variety of projects, from watches and bicycles to magazines and music. They also frequently support the production of a commercial product, though there are some exceptions to that.⁹ These crowdfunding services are targeted primarily at private individuals wishing to back a project. However, some new services have emerged that are focused solely on crowdfunding for OA publications. These platforms demonstrate how readers and libraries can fund OA publications across a range of formats. In each case, these platforms have expanded to alternative models including pay-what-you-like options and ongoing memberships.

Unglue.it

The first crowdfunding site for OA publications was Unglue.it. Launched in 2012 as part of Eric Hellman’s Gluejar, Inc., Unglue.it is now a program of the Free Ebook Foundation.¹⁰ At the time of its launch, Unglue.it focused on a straightforward pledge model. The organization works with the rights holders of books that have already been published to set a funding goal to make the book OA under a Creative Commons license. Once a funding goal is set, the platform collects pledges for the title, and if the campaign meets the goal, then the pledgers are charged and the funds go to the rights holder. The site has now added further models for OA licensing. In Buy-to-Unglue campaigns, rights holders set a date for making a title openly available, and ebook purchases move that date up by a set amount. In Thanks-for-Ungluing campaigns, a book is made available through a Creative Commons license, and readers can contribute to the rights holders if they want to.¹¹

While the site is available for any individual who wishes to contribute, they also offer services that may make the platform attractive to libraries wishing to fund OA publication. Unglue.it offers MArCh Readable Cataloging (MARC) records for titles that are made available through the service and hosts epub files with Internet Archive.¹² The Buy-to-Unglue model includes an option that permits library lending of purchased copies. Clear licensing practices and the absence of digital rights management (DRM) make it easy for libraries to repackage the content on their own platforms if desired. Finally, Unglue.it lets users

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⁵SCOAP³ is a project that has flipped subscription journals to an OA model through continuing payments from participating libraries. For details, see https://scoap3.org/what-is-scoap3/.⁶See https://www.indiegogo.com/about/our-story for an account of their beginnings.⁷Kickstarter boasts the largest number of backers, at over 14 million. Their history is at https://www.kickstarter.com/about?ref = global-footer.⁸While IndieGoGo and Kickstarter emphasize creative projects, GoFundMe markets itself as a personal fundraising service. See https://www.gofundme.com/about-us.⁹Kickstarter has been used to fund the production of some OA books, including an edited volume on video games and archaeology (https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/value/the-interactive-past-a-book-on-video-games-and-arc/description) and a multiplatform edition of Thomas More’s Utopia (https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1713881779/the-open-utopia-a-new-kind-of-old-book/description).¹⁰See https://ebookfoundation.org/ for some brief information.¹¹All these funding models are described at https://unglue.it/faq/campaigns/supporting/.¹²Library services mentioned at https://unglue.it/libraries/.
suggest titles for future campaigns, allowing libraries and individual users to have input into the process. Unglue.it is a flexible platform for libraries to contribute to OA publication of specific book titles.

**Knowledge Unlatched**

While Unglue.it is an excellent option for libraries and rights holders seeking a high degree of flexibility, Knowledge Unlatched offers a more streamlined process. The basics are similar, in that Knowledge Unlatched works with rights holders to offer titles for pledging. If the pledging campaign is successful, then books are made freely available, and Knowledge Unlatched provides distribution and metadata for discovery. There are, however, some important differences. While Unglue.it has flipped a wide range of popular and academic titles with contributions from individuals and institutions, Knowledge Unlatched is more focused on using library funding to provide open access to books from scholarly publishers. Knowledge Unlatched offers their titles for pledging in large batches, making it simple for libraries to support OA publication of a large number of titles in one pass.

More recently, this program has extended beyond flipping existing books to OA. A set of journals was included in the 2017 round of pledging. This provides an interesting model for journals in disciplines that may not be well suited to APCs but which seek to open their content to all readers. Another new venture currently open for pledging is an opportunity to support OA titles from a particular publisher through 2020. Language Science Press is working with Knowledge Unlatched to support the upcoming publication of front-list titles through this crowdfunded OA model.

These newer options from Knowledge Unlatched show that they are moving beyond one-time funding for a discrete set of existing titles and are now exploring continuing funding options. While this opens up new possibilities, it also introduces some complications, as these publishers are now relying on a voluntary funding scheme to cover substantial ongoing costs. To be viable in the long term, this requires libraries to maintain financial commitments indefinitely, even when access does not require this commitment.

**Reveal Digital**

Rather than focusing on scholarly journals and books, Reveal Digital has applied the crowdfunding model to digital collections. Digital collections are often produced by libraries in order to increase the accessibility and usefulness of a set of physical materials. Yet the cost for creation and ongoing maintenance of a large digital collection can be daunting and often requires funding from grant agencies or commercial database providers. Reveal Digital provides a way for libraries that hold these collections to reach out to a network of committed funding libraries to produce digital collections that are open to all.

Reveal Digital has completed funding for one project and is in the pledging stage for another. The fully funded project focuses on independent press publications from the 1960s through the 1980s, while the project currently in the funding stage is a collection of Ku Klux Klan newspapers. Similarly to Knowledge Unlatched, Reveal Digital has established a new model that includes ongoing funding commitments from libraries.

These benefits suggest some way that libraries can be more directly rewarded for contributions to campaigns that result in OA collections.

**Conclusion**

The three platforms discussed here show some possible ways to transition from paid access publication models to OA models while relying on library funding sources. However, it is important to note that these platforms are all fairly new and have undergone rapid change. The long-term viability of this approach remains to be seen. In this crowdfunding model, libraries are asked to commit funds to projects that result in a benefit at the global rather than the local level. That is, libraries can access the products of these campaigns whether they contribute or not. There is precedent for projects that require dedicated individuals and groups to fund a public good, including public

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13The mechanics of the process are covered at [http://support.knowledgeunlatched.org/ku-select-faq](http://support.knowledgeunlatched.org/ku-select-faq).
14Past sets of titles are listed at [http://www.knowledgeunlatched.org/past-collections/](http://www.knowledgeunlatched.org/past-collections/).
15Titles listed at [http://www.knowledgeunlatched.org/ku-past-collections-journals/](http://www.knowledgeunlatched.org/ku-past-collections-journals/).
16The publisher discusses this partnership at [http://userblogs.fu-berlin.de/langsci-press/2017/04/18/future-of-language-science-press/](http://userblogs.fu-berlin.de/langsci-press/2017/04/18/future-of-language-science-press/).
17For details, see [http://revealdigital.com/how-it-works/](http://revealdigital.com/how-it-works/).
18The Independent Voices project is described in more detail at [http://revealdigital.com/independent-voices/](http://revealdigital.com/independent-voices/).
19Funding and collection information is available at [http://revealdigital.com/kkk-newspapers/](http://revealdigital.com/kkk-newspapers/).
20This Diversity and Dissent Digitization fund is described in more detail at [http://revealdigital.com/diversity/](http://revealdigital.com/diversity/).
broadcast services that rely on contributions but remain available to all. Whether libraries can justify continuing commitments to such OA projects at a large scale remains an open question for now.

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