



**Interview with Rosalind Pyne  
Director, Open Access Books, Springer Nature**

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KENNEALLY: Open access is much more than just a publishing business model. When a work of scholarly research is made freely available to readers across the globe, the impact is dramatic.

Welcome to Copyright Clearance Center's podcast series. I'm Christopher Kenneally for Beyond the Book. In 2012, Springer Nature became one of the first open access book publishers, and its portfolio of OA titles has since seen more than 30 million chapter downloads by readers from over 150 countries. Springer's notable open access book list includes works from Gerard 't Hooft, winner of the 1999 Nobel Prize in Physics, and Sir Timothy Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web.

Earlier this year, Springer Nature asked scholarly authors to share their views on the quality and impact of OA books. A white paper on the future of open access books details the survey findings. Co-author Ros Pyne, director, open access books at Springer Nature, joins me now from London. Welcome to Beyond the Book, Ros.

PYNE: Hi, Chris. Thanks so much for having me.

KENNEALLY: We are very interested in reviewing with you the findings of this survey, a very substantial one. It was based on 2,500 completed responses. Some 400 OA book authors participated among those 2,500 respondees. Tell us a bit more about who you approached and how you were able to get such a great response.

PYNE: Certainly. So we were really keen to hear the views of book authors in particular on open access, and we wanted to make sure that we were getting out to the widest possible range of authors. So we didn't just want to hear from Springer Nature authors. We wanted to hear from anybody around the world who might have published a scholarly book. So we enlisted the support of many others in the community. That includes other publishers as well as community organizations like OAPEN. They helped get the word out to their authors and their communities, and that's what helped create such a great response. It really was a community effort.



KENNEALLY: And it is specifically about OA books. Many of our listeners will be familiar with open access and may think of it first as regards journals, journal publishing. But OA books are a substantial piece – or a growing piece, I perhaps should say – of the open access environment.

PYNE: Absolutely. I personally believe that all scholarly research deserves to be open access or deserves to have the option to be open access. That includes scholarly books. And I think it's particularly important, because otherwise some segments like the humanities and social sciences might be shut out from this great new innovation in publishing. So open access books have been increasing in recent times. Certainly, most major publishers will now have some form of open access book option. And there's starting to be more interest from authors, but it's still a relatively small proportion of most publishers' portfolios, so we wanted to understand how we could increase engagement, what authors' concerns might be, and in general how we can progress open access for books. That's what we're trying to do through the survey.

KENNEALLY: Right. It's an important moment, then, to be doing this – to get that snapshot of the attitudes of authors out there, OA authors and non-OA authors. So do the big reveal for us, then, Ros Pyne. Tell us about some of the key findings. What did you learn?

PYNE: Perhaps our most exciting finding – and I was a little bit surprised by this, to be honest – was that the majority of all book authors support the idea that all future scholarly books should be open access. Perhaps I shouldn't be surprised. But because OA has relatively low take-up levels at the moment, I was perhaps expecting a little bit more skepticism. But we had more than half of all authors, both those who had published open access before and those who had not published OA before, say yes, we want this for the future.

We did find that attitudes varied. Pro-open access attitudes were stronger in Europe and Asia compared to, for example, North America. We also found that junior researchers, so those with under 10 years' experience, tended to be more pro-open access, and that senior researchers, so those with more than 25 years of experience, were more skeptical or more cautious.

We also found some really interesting findings about what was stopping people from publishing open access. Some of it was just lack of awareness. People said I didn't know this was an option for me publishing a book. I know about open access. I think it's great. But I didn't know I could publish a book OA.



I think people were also concerned about how it would be perceived. So even if they themselves think publishing a book open access is a great thing, they're concerned about the perceptions of the quality of open access books. They might know that it's peer-reviewed, but does everybody else know that? How will their tenure committee review that? What will people think if they're looking for a new position or looking for a promotion? Will publishing OA affect that? So I think people are – they like the idea. They just don't necessarily know if they can do it at this point. And the other big barrier, of course, is funding.

KENNEALLY: Those findings sort of point to one of the conclusions, one of the suggestions you make in your report, which is there's a need to educate scholarly authors about open access publishing for their books.

PYNE: Yeah, absolutely. It's something that our editors are doing day in, day out. I think one of the most powerful ways of changing minds or of communicating about new ideas is to have that one-on-one conversation. And while our editors are out there talking to academics about their latest research and how we can best help communicate that to the world, they can talk about open access and start to reset some of those perceptions.

But I think there's really a role for everyone here – institutions, libraries can be getting involved in saying we support open access, and this isn't going to affect your tenure application, for example. We're going to treat them in exactly the same way. We really need it from across the board.

KENNEALLY: And those authors who have chosen to publish open access books – did they tell you about their own aims? Why would they prefer or decide to go with the open access model?

PYNE: Yeah, absolutely. I think for a lot of people, and perhaps this seems obvious, it's about increasing research. We asked people what their motivations were for publishing books in general. It's about reaching a wider audience, reaching an interdisciplinary audience, being able to reach students. And they know that open access is likely to increase the reach and the readership of their book. So that's a big part of it.

I think the second motivation is an ethical reason, a sense that research should be freely available to all, so that those people who are most interested in that topic area are definitely able to access it.

KENNEALLY: And with regard to that reach, Ros Pyne, Springer Nature published a white paper a couple of years ago that looked at what you refer to as the OA effect.



If I understand correctly, you were looking at Springer Nature's own open access book portfolio and the performance of those books over a period of time. Again, the results there were pretty dramatic as far as downloads, citations, and so forth. Can you tell us briefly about that?

PYNE: Yeah, absolutely. So a lot of the people who started doing OA books first were pure OA book publishers, so they really had nothing to compare it to, whereas we were in a somewhat unusual position in that we were what you might call a traditional publisher. We had a large number of books published under a non-open access model. And then we had also started doing OA fairly early. So we had the option to compare – how do our OA books do compared to our non-open access books?

And we did find some really interesting, and as you say, dramatic effects. We found that our open access books were downloaded seven times more on average than our non-open access books, and we found a similar effect across all subject areas. We were only able to look at a four-year time period at this point, but we still found that there were 50% more citations for OA books than for non-OA books, and I would be really interested to see how that changes over time.

And then in terms of online mentions, which includes social media but also news outlets and inclusion in policy papers, we found that OA books were being mentioned 10 times more than non-open access books. So really dramatic effects in terms of readership and reach.

KENNEALLY: Very, very persuasive numbers. But as you mentioned earlier, there are some misconceptions and concerns among scholarly authors when they consider publishing in an open access model. Tell us a bit more about the concerns. You mentioned concerns regarding reputation and quality. They're also concerned about the financing.

PYNE: Yes, absolutely. So I think people feel like, I'd like to publish open access, and we know also that their preferred approach to open access is to go OA with a publisher, so to have the final typeset version open access, rather than a manuscript version. That usually comes with a fee attached, because the publisher needs to recoup the costs that they would otherwise have been able to recoup via selling the book. So this question is where do I source this funding, especially given that many books are written by authors in the humanities and social sciences who traditionally have less access to big grants than those in STM.



KENNEALLY: And there are a variety of sources for financial support, and I know that Springer Nature has done a great deal to try to connect authors with those avenues of support.

PYNE: Yeah, so we have a free open access funding and policy service. So if any author emails us, we will check against our records, see whether their institution or their funder makes funding available. We can reach out on behalf of the author, if they want us to, to investigate if we don't already have it in our records, or we can put them in touch with the right person at their institution or funder if we have that information. We also make a lot of information available on our website about funding availability.

KENNEALLY: Right. This white paper that you co-authored, Ros Pyne, is titled The Future of Open Access Books. So tell us a bit more about some of the activities that Springer Nature is planning or is undertaking right now to try to drive more acceptance and growth in the OA book market.

PYNE: We've been running author-facing OA book events in different places around the world to help introduce OA books and help give authors a place where they can learn more about OA books, ask questions. So we did one in London last year, and we ran some in New York and Boston just a couple of months ago. Those are always really lively and educational events. We learn a lot as well. It's really interesting to find out sort of where authors are coming from and what they see as the particular sort of interests or challenges for them on OA books.

And we have a lot of information going out on social media as well, so we're trying to find sort of different routes – so one to one, but also kind of pushing that information out and trying to place a big emphasis on the importance of peer review, the fact that all of our OA books are peer-reviewed. So just trying to, as I said, combat some of those misconceptions.

KENNEALLY: And this survey is a snapshot in time, but those kinds of activities allow you to continue to acquire information and to have that important feedback from authors.

PYNE: Yeah, absolutely. And I can see that it would also be very, very interesting to go back in a couple of years. We know that there's a lot going on in the OA books policy space – so various big funders, big national funders in the UK, in the Netherlands thinking about developing open access books. We know Plan S is interested in open access books at some point in the next couple of years. So how will attitudes start to change? We know that amongst journal authors, attitudes



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shifted dramatically over the last five years, and I think we'll start to see some of that amongst book authors, as well.

**KENNEALLY:** We have been speaking today about the future of open access books with a co-author of a white paper of the same name. Ros Pyne is director of open access books at Springer Nature. Ros, thanks so much for joining me today on Beyond the Book.

**PYNE:** Thank you so much. It's been a complete pleasure.

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