

Insights into the Economy of Open Scholarship:  
A look into Helsinki University Press with  
Leena Kaakinen, publishing director



# About Helsinki University Press (HUP)

Helsinki University Press is a startup open access (OA) university press. It is owned by the University of Helsinki (UH), and the management of the publisher's operations is shared between the **Helsinki University Library** ([helsinki.fi/kirjasto/en/home](https://helsinki.fi/kirjasto/en/home)) and **Gaudeamus** ([gaudeamus.fi/in-english](https://gaudeamus.fi/in-english)), a publishing house for non-fiction literature in Finnish. HUP plans to publish its first books in 2019. In its startup phase, HUP is funded by the University of Helsinki and it is not charging any processing fees. HUP is currently conducting talks with other universities and funders to investigate a consortium model that will allow it to cover the publishing costs centrally, rather than charging processing fees to individual authors. Currently, HUP has three staff members and an academic advisory board.

[hup.fi](https://hup.fi)

# HUP: Business model

## Key activities

- ▶ Open access press
- ▶ No author fees
- ▶ Focus on books (monographs and edited volumes)
- ▶ Investigating journal publishing



## Organisation type

- ▶ University press startup
- ▶ Funded by UH, prospecting new sources of income
- ▶ Staff: Two full-time equivalent (FTE)



## Key partners

- ▶ University of Helsinki
- ▶ Helsinki University Library
- ▶ Gaudeamus Publishing
- ▶ Ubiquity Press
- ▶ Universities in Finland (ongoing)
- ▶ Other university presses, mainly in UK and Sweden



## Revenue streams

- ▶ Funded by University of Helsinki
- ▶ (Potentially) article processing charges (APCs) for non UH authors
- ▶ (Potentially) sales of print books
- ▶ (Potentially) library consortium model



## IP/Copyright

- ▶ Outputs: open access default: CC BY 4.0
- ▶ More restrictive open licences possible



## Customers/users

- ▶ UH researchers
- ▶ Researchers at other institutions in Finland



# Interview with Leena Kaakinen

UH has long dreamt of a press that would publish in English for an international audience and it wanted to promote open access publishing. With Helsinki University Press (HUP) it is aiming to combine both, using the publishing expertise of Gaudeamus, the university's press for Finnish publications, and the experience of Helsinki University Library.

“We believe the press will benefit from these different types of expertise,” says **Leena Kaakinen**, publishing director at the new press. “Our publishing staff is very experienced in academic publishing. We have strong experience in author-facing services such as copy-editing and organising peer review, while at the same time we have the benefit of working with the library and being able to use their scientific knowledge as well.”

“We've also consulted with external experts such as **UCL Press** ([ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press](http://ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press)) in London (UK), **Stockholm University Press** ([stockholm.universitypress.se](http://stockholm.universitypress.se)) in Sweden, and **Ubiquity Press** ([ubiquitypress.com](http://ubiquitypress.com)) also based in London. We believe that, by setting up this press, we are answering the need for more good quality open access publishing channels. In addition, because we are well connected internationally we are in a good position to establish ourselves. We also have an excellent academic advisory board. They are very motivated and a very good resource for the press.”

A crucial process during the establishment of the press has been intensive consulting sessions with researchers from all disciplines. Before designing policies and workflows, HUP discussed researchers' expectations, hopes, and potential issues. Publishing cultures, needs and attitudes towards open access vary considerably between different fields of research and also between researchers at different stages of their careers.

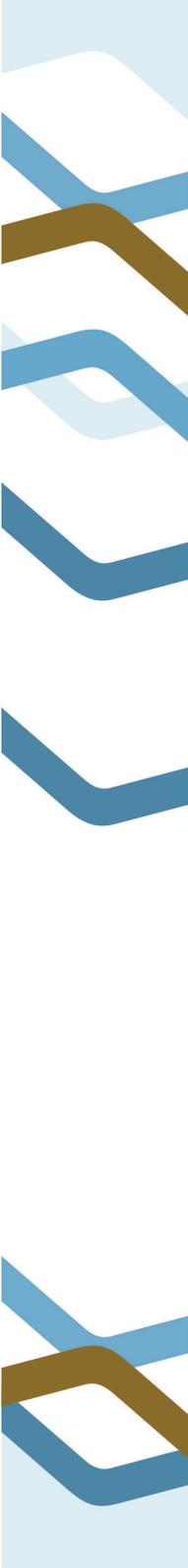
“ For some researchers it is hard to see the benefits of open access publishing in their everyday work, while for others this is clear. ”

“In some fields the discussion is already happening, mainly via open access channels, whereas in others the traditional model of publishing is still very strong. For some researchers it is hard to see the benefits of open access publishing in their everyday work, while for others this is clear, and they have concrete examples of how open access has been beneficial for them,” says Kaakinen. “One very important finding of these consultation sessions is that many researchers find the current reward system confusing. On the one hand they are encouraged or even compelled to publish open access, but on the other hand the reward system forces them to publish in high impact, often non-open access publishing channels if they don’t want to ruin their career... or at least, that is their perception.”

“To attract authors, proving HUP’s potential impact will be a challenge. The current funding cycle still encourages researchers to publish in high impact journals, which are usually long-standing closed access or hybrid journals. This slows down open access in general but has a particularly big influence on us as a startup press. We don’t have a proven impact yet.”

“Initially, we will therefore aim for researchers who are already in favour of open access. Finding these early movers and providing good services for them is really crucial in this startup phase. I hope our experience with Gaudeamus will help here. To convince the others, we’ll have to focus on dissemination and visibility – we really need to provide added value there.”

“We provide digital dissemination through all open access channels relevant to the field including indexing and active marketing to improve visibility. We use social media and other channels, and with each book we seek the relevant communication channels for that particular field and communicate through them.”



For its infrastructure, that is the platform on which the press will run, HUP is relying on its membership of the **Ubiquity Partner Network** ([ubiquitypress.com/site/partners](http://ubiquitypress.com/site/partners)), run by the London-based open access publisher Ubiquity Press. “We are such a small actor; for us to build our own platform would be by far the most expensive option. That’s why we are members of the Ubiquity Partner Network,” says Kaakinen. “It is useful for us to be part of a larger network and to buy the ready made platform services from them. It is a commercial company but they are very transparent about it and the contractual guarantees they give in order to avoid data or vendor lock-in are sufficient for us. Of course, that was crucial – there are other options around for this so we want to make sure that we have enough flexibility.”

“ We are such a small actor...it is useful for us to be part of a larger network and to buy ready made platform services from [Ubiquity Press]. ”

For the moment, HUP is mainly text-based with the option of augmenting publication with audio-visual aspects. Discussions are ongoing with Helsinki University Library to collaborate on establishing a shared data platform that will allow storage, archiving and dissemination of research data underlying HUP publications.

The central licensing policy for HUP will be **Creative Commons** ([creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org)) Attribution 4.0 (CC BY 4.0), but the publisher will allow some flexibility if requested by the author: “We will allow more restrictive licences such as CC BY-NC 4.0 (Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial) and CC BY-ND (Creative Commons Attribution No Derivatives) if the author really wants it. Researcher attitudes towards licensing vary. Many researchers don’t know very much about open access publishing yet, let alone open licensing. We really have to train them about what open licences mean. Some researchers worry that a third party could make commercial use of their work and want to use a non-commercial licence, for example. Also, some have expressed other worries about CC BY,

because they fear their work will be taken out of context and cited in a misleading way, and therefore they would prefer to use the ‘no derivatives’ clause.”

“ We really have to train researchers about what open licences mean. ”

As with every startup, designing a sustainable financial model has been a challenge. In its first phase, HUP will be supported entirely by the university. Publication will remain free of charge for UH researchers and, for the moment, publishing fees for external authors will be covered by the university funding as well. HUP is currently investigating funding models to achieve sustainability without having to ask for publishing fees. One of the options is to establish a consortium model with other institutions, to attract the main funders in Finland.

“ We don’t want publishing fees to be a burden for authors, which will be the case if there are no clear paths for them to apply for institutional funding. ”

“We feel that charging fees to authors is a problematic way to cover the costs for open access publishing. We don’t want publishing fees to be a burden for authors, which will be the case if there are no clear paths for them to apply for institutional funding. This became very clear during our consultation rounds with the researchers. If there are any publishing fees they should be paid by the institution or the funder,” says Kaakinen.

“ Authors are always puzzled as to how and where they should apply for fees. But, as it concerns all open access publishing venues in Finland, we need to collaborate in order to find a solution. ”

“Maybe this can even be arranged via us, the publisher, where we take care of the application process. I think this is a universal issue – authors are always puzzled as to how and where they should apply for fees. But, as it concerns all open access publishing venues in Finland, we need to collaborate to find a solution.”

HUP would like to obtain a proportion of its income from the sales of its publications as e-books or in print form, but as all outputs will be free to download it’s not clear what the revenue from that will be.

Kaakinen: “Depending on how well we manage to secure revenue from other funders and institutions we’ll investigate how to cover the fees for non-HU publishers. We’re having these negotiations right now and it’s not easy to project what will happen.”

As monograph publishing requires one-off funding instead of the continuous support that an open access journal demands, HUP will focus on books in its startup phase.

Looking further ahead, the press is currently investigating how to add journals to its portfolio: “I hope that in 2019 we can start with between four and eight books as a way to officially launch the press. Eventually, we’re aiming to having 20-40 books per year in our portfolio. Although in this startup phase we’re focusing on books, we will have a portfolio of journals. These are society journals, and working with them will be a way to partially cover our costs,” says Kaakinen. “But the talks are still going on about that and we’ll have to investigate whether we can take more journals on board.”

“The main issue is that they need long-term funding, and the existing funding landscape will probably change here in Finland because of the shift towards open access.” Finland’s biggest funder, Academy of Finland, is supporting the open access publishing initiative **Plan S** ([coalition-s.org](https://coalition-s.org)), and there are questions as to whether this will influence HUP’s funding model.

Kaakinen: “We really need to communicate why open access is so important, and we need to tailor it to researchers. One size does not fit all because there are different needs in different fields of research. Funders and policymakers have a big role to play; the current funding and evaluation systems are confusing and do not necessarily steer researchers towards more open scholarship. Open access mandates and policies need to be accompanied by concrete measures in order for them to be effective. There will always be costs incurred with open access publishing, so this will need to be addressed. There is no clear action plan yet [in December 2018, after the date of this interview, Academy of Finland actually started a **consultation session (aka.fi/en/about-us/media/press-releases/2018/open-consultation-to-gather-input-on-plan-s-implementation/)** about Plan S implementation in Finland, Gwen Franck] – so there’s a lot of uncertainty about how the funding streams will be redirected and what will happen during the transition. It’s difficult to predict what the consequences of these policy changes will be, for us as a startup open access publisher.”

“ Open access mandates and policies need to be accompanied by concrete measures in order for them to be effective. ”

### References and relevant links

- ▶ HUP website: [hup.fi](http://hup.fi)
- ▶ Gaudeamus: [gaudeamus.fi/in-english](http://gaudeamus.fi/in-english)
- ▶ Helsinki University Library: [helsinki.fi/kirjasto/en/home](http://helsinki.fi/kirjasto/en/home)
- ▶ UCL Press: [ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press](http://ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press)
- ▶ Stockholm University Press: [stockholmuniversitypress.se](http://stockholmuniversitypress.se)
- ▶ Ubiquity Press: [ubiquitypress.com](http://ubiquitypress.com)
- ▶ Ubiquity Partner Network: [ubiquitypress.com/site/partners](http://ubiquitypress.com/site/partners)
- ▶ Creative Commons licence suite: [creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org)
- ▶ Plan S: [coalition-s.org](http://coalition-s.org)
- ▶ Announcement of Plan S consultation session by Academy of Finland: [aka.fi/en/about-us/media/press-releases/2018/open-consultation-to-gather-input-on-plan-s-implementation](http://aka.fi/en/about-us/media/press-releases/2018/open-consultation-to-gather-input-on-plan-s-implementation)

# About Leena Kaakinen

## Publishing director



Leena Kaakinen is the publishing director at Gaudeamus and is also the publishing director for Helsinki University Press.

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