Charleston Library Conference

The TOME Initiative: Year One

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A Stopwatch Session talk presented by Sarah McKee at the Charleston Conference, November 8, 2018.

TOME is an acronym for Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem. This five-year initiative (2017–2021) was launched in spring 2017 by the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and the Association of University Presses (AUPresses) with the goal of exploring a new funding model for publishing monographs as open access. These three stakeholders formed TOME, initially known as OAMPI (Open Access Monograph Publishing Initiative), to help bring humanistic research into the open access sphere and to disseminate it more widely. Monographs are the foundation of humanistic scholarship, and those funded by TOME are published to the highest standards, including robust peer review.

To date 14 institutions are participating in TOME as funders; each has committed to subsidizing the open access publication of 15 monographs over the five years of the initiative. Funding takes the form of a $15,000 subsidy that goes directly to publishers who have already accepted the books for publication. Sources for funding typically include contributions from libraries', provosts', and deans' budgets—the mix varies at each institution. TOME began with members of the AAU but has since broadened beyond that community. In addition, 62 members of AUPresses have expressed interest in collaborating with these institutions to publish open access monographs by their faculty.

In the first year of the initiative, three books were published as open access with TOME funding. Dozens more are forthcoming or under negotiation. All three TOME books offer print versions for sale alongside the open access digital edition. The monograph that lays claim to being the first TOME book is by Danna Agmon, assistant professor of history at Virginia Tech, which funded the open access version of *A Colonial Affair: Commerce, Conversion, and Scandal in French India*, published in September 2017 by Cornell University Press. The details for how TOME books are distributed emerge project by project through negotiations between funders and publishers. In this case, *Colonial Affair* appears on

Cornell University Press's open access platform, Cornell Open, but is also distributed on Project MUSE's MUSE Open and JSTOR's Open Content platforms.

The second TOME book, *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation*, was written by Calvin Warren, assistant professor in Emory University's department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and published by Duke University Press in April 2018. The book is available in the Internet Archive, OAPEN, the OpenEmory repository, and MUSE Open. The third monograph, published in July 2018 by the University of Michigan Press, is *Gaming the Stage: Playable Media and the Rise of English Commercial Theatre* by Gina Bloom, professor of English at the University of California, Davis. The book is available at the University of Michigan Press's website, as well as on MUSE Open and JSTOR.

One concern expressed early on by the TOME participants was the need to track the usage of books across multiple platforms. Such data will be essential to demonstrating the success (or failure) of this experimental model to authors, funders, and publishers. To provide this information, and to help raise the visibility of TOME books, a "referetory" site launched in July 2018. TOME partnered with Figshare to build the referetory (tome.figshare.com), and the site incorporates two other Digital Science (the parent company of Figshare) products—Altmetric, to track each book's visibility in traditional and social media, and Dimensions, to track citations.

TOME is actively seeking new participants, both funders and publishers. As mentioned above, participation is not limited to AAU institutions, and the 15-book commitment is more an aspirational guideline than a hard and fast requirement. To join, please contact the representative from the appropriate stakeholder for your institution—the information for all three may be found on the main TOME website (openmonographs.org).

To hear testimonials from two TOME authors, Danna Agmon and Calvin Warren, please watch the AAU-produced video available at vimeo.com/295597781. A partial transcript of their remarks appears below.

Calvin Warren, Emory University

Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation (Duke University Press, 2018)

My book addresses very urgent concerns of black existence such as justice, antiblack violence, black suffering. And the more that my work became popular, people began to question more information, and guidance, to help them understand these issues and to address these challenges. And when I talked to people, I wanted to give them additional information, but it became difficult because people didn't have access to it. They couldn't access articles, they didn't have money for books, many young people and seniors just could not afford the text. So, I realized that what needed to be done was to democratize information access, and I was so grateful that TOME invited me to participate in their initiative because TOME is doing exactly just that. TOME is addressing a very important issue in our society of making sure that everyone has access to valuable information. And it's because of TOME, I believe, my information has been accessed nationally and globally by people outside the academy, and people who would normally not have an opportunity to read my work.

Danna Agmon, Virginia Tech

A Colonial Affair: Commerce, Conversion, and Scandal in French India (Cornell University Press, 2018)

I think there are, in addition to the benefits that I mentioned before, real intellectual implications to open access publication. So, my own book is about the history of French India, which is very much, you know, somewhat of a marginalized topic, and historians of both France and South Asia don't generally think about French India as a central topic of interest. But the issues that my book is about—namely different kinds of empires, and the relationship between the state, the economy, and religion—these are issues that have broad resonance. And the question is how do you get the work out beyond the siloes of the field, especially if you work in a topic that hasn't been the subject of a lot of scholarly attention? And I think open access is a way to try to draw in different kinds of audiences to this conversation.