

**American Council of Learned Societies**  
**White Paper**  
**Participation in the Humanities Open Book Project**

*Summary.*

The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) has participated in the Humanities Open Book (HOB) project in order to explore another possible means of bringing scholarly agency to e-publishing. We wanted to test the supposition that there may be many scholars who have retained or recovered rights to their works and that they might want to see those monographs circulate widely. Aided by the cooperation of three of ACLS's member scholarly associations, we selected 13 titles for inclusion in the Humanities Open Book collection. ACLS's Humanities E-Book program (HEB) applied its capacities to the processes confirming rights, contracting with authors, acquiring manuscripts for digitization, negotiating with vendors, quality control of file preparation, and placing new e-books on the open web. The titles contributed to the HOB collection are listed in Appendix A.

*The American Council of Learned Societies.*

ACLS seeks to advance humanistic studies in all fields of learning in the humanities and social sciences and to maintain and strengthen relations among the national societies devoted to such studies. Established in 1919 as a federation of 12 learned societies, ACLS has grown since its founding to represent. (See ACLS's website for a list of ACLS constituent societies: <http://www.acls.org/societies/>.) As the pre-eminent non-governmental representative of humanities scholarship in the United States, ACLS carries out its mission in a variety of programs across many fields of learning.

As supporting humanities research is one of ACLS's principal objects, we naturally have an interest in the communication, evaluation, and cumulative improvement of research results. Establishing the standard-setting journal has been one of the first signal efforts of our member societies, just as the creation of a university press marked the advent of the research university. The vitality and reach of our "system" of scholarly communication is of interest to all our constituents—individual scholars, learned societies, colleges and universities—and thus of great

importance to ACLS. The Humanities Open Book project of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities promises to be a step toward a robust and flexible regime of scholarly communication that will reach across society more broadly and thereby enhance the role of the humanities in public life.

*ACLS Humanities E-book initiative.*

ACLS Humanities E-Book (HEB) is an online collection of over 5,000 high quality titles in the humanities, accessible through institutional and individual subscriptions. These titles are offered by the American Council of Learned Societies in collaboration with 31 of ACLS's constituent learned societies, 125 contributing publishers, and the Michigan Publishing division at the University of Michigan Library. The Humanities E-Book collection is curated to include works of major importance that remain vital to both scholars and students, ranging from undergraduate courses to advanced degree programs. The collection includes over forty subject areas, nineteen Special Series curated in conjunction with publishing partners, XML and print-on-demand (POD) programs, and titles ranging from monographs to select primary sources.

As part of Humanities E-Book mission to provide access to premiere humanities titles to scholars and students that may otherwise not have the ability to access backlist or out-of-print titles, the collection features simultaneous multi-user access, multi-format reading experiences (page-image, text, and PDF), and a fully integrated, cross-searchable platform. To guarantee the scope and quality of this interdisciplinary collection, HEB collaborates with learned societies and university presses to assist scholars in the electronic publication of high quality works in the humanities, to explore the intellectual possibilities of new media, and to help assure the continued viability of scholarship in today's changing publishing environment. There are currently over 800 institutional subscribers to HEB, with a combined FTE of several million. As a member benefit, individual subscriptions to HEB are made available to members of any of ACLS's constituent societies, (the only individual subscriptions to HEB that are offered at present).

HEB was originally funded as the ACLS History E-Book Project in June 1999 by a \$3-million, five-year grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional funding from the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation. The collection launched in September 2002. Now in its

second phase, HEB achieved financial self-sustainability in the spring of 2005 and became ACLS Humanities E-Book in January 2007.

### *Preliminary Steps*

When the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities announced the Humanities Open Book project, ACLS recognized we shared the initiative's dual aim of developing new paradigms of scholarly communication and strengthening public understanding of humanities scholarship. We also recognized that we would be a different type of applicant to the competition for HOB support in that, unlike university presses and other publishing entities, ACLS HEB did not have a large set of backlist publications that could be selected for inclusion in HOB. The distinctive position of ACLS as a federation of national scholarly associations with a total of more than 300,000 members (a significant fraction of the humanities professoriate) can provide HOB with a respected, neutral and developed portal with which to attract individual authors holding publication rights to their books.

The Mellon Foundation awarded ACLS Grant 4150061 of \$16,500 in December 2015 to support the digitization of out-of-print humanities titles and the dissemination of those titles on an open access basis through HOB.

### *Challenges*

Our first challenge was find authors who had retained rights to their publications and might be interested in having their works included in HOB. Our member learned societies were critical partners in that effort.

Learned societies have been active social networks long before the term was in vogue. They are voluntary and solidary. Learned societies are voluntary organizations – no one has to join, you can be a prominent and successful historian- but the fact that they are a community of responsibility and interest – the dictionary definition of a solidary—attracts scholars to their cause.

We asked three societies to participate in this initial experiment. The partnering societies were the American Folklore Society, the Society for the History of Technology, and the African Studies Association. Several factors motivated the selection of these partners. All had strong leadership and membership that includes scholars working outside the academy. Because

Folklore is about the phenomenon of public meaning, this society is in the forefront of efforts at public engagement. Members of the Society for History of Technology are especially interested in how new technologies provide new social possibilities. The African Studies Association was attracted to the project as a means of using open access to make valuable scholarship in that field available on the African continent.

After approval by their board or council, each society circulated an invitation to its membership to nominate to HEB titles of intellectual importance to the field, pedagogical utility, and potential public interest. Out deadlines for nominations was just this spring and we received nearly 50 nominations for the 13 HOB slots we hoped to fill.

A version of the announcement included at Appendix B. A total of 32 titles were nominated by society members, in some cases by members who were the authors themselves. ACLS then compiled dossiers of academic journal reviews of the candidate titles. The cumulative evaluation of journal reviews was one major element in the selection of titles for HOB. Another was the potential for public as well as scholarly interest, as judged by ACLS staff after considering the scope of the subjects covered and the specialized disciplinary knowledge required of readers.

#### *Work completed*

ACLS Humanities E-Book has identified a set of 13 titles for inclusion in HOB, titles for which authors, their estates, or our member societies hold copyright. A list of those titles is included at Appendix A. ACLS HEB has confirmed those rights and negotiated agreements with rights-holders for the republication of their works in electronic editions made publicly available on the HEB site and elsewhere, on an aggregated HOB site on an open access basis subject to one of two Creative Commons licenses, Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike (BY-NC-SA) or Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (BY-NC-ND), determined in consultation with the authors. While these licenses are more restrictive than other Creative Commons licenses, we are concerned that allowing reuse for commercial purposes may seem to cloud the crystalline message of Humanities Open Book that scholarship is a public good. In negotiating with rights-holders we would advise that both licenses protect the integrity and recognition of their works, but that license BY-NC-SA will promote the wider circulation and use of their material, but that license CC BY-NC-ND is an option if they are finally uncomfortable allowing derivative works. ACLS has given authors the choice of which license they preferred.

### *Conversion of titles to EPUB*

ACLS HEB engaged the firm Aptara to convert the selected titles based on their past performance. Aptara carried out the print-to-digital conversion of many of HEB's XML editions in the past, as well as converting select titles (100+) from the HEB collection into EPUB and Mobi formats as part of HEB's Handheld Editions program.

After first working with HEB's partners at Michigan Publishing and our standard scanning vendor, Trigonix, to obtain page scans and OCR-derived text for the selected books, we submitted files for the first batch of seven HOB titles slated for conversion (two of which had already been released to the HEB platform in page-image format in fall 2016) to Aptara, with instructions to convert these to EPUB 3.0.1 and incorporate interactive links for footnotes and other elements; we also included information on the Creative Commons license statement to be added to the copyright page for each book, as well as a newly assigned ISBN number for this edition and other language identifying it as part of the HOB program.

### *Challenges*

Two titles had to be proofread by a reader versed in the non-English languages and associated special characters featured in the books (Falasha and Arabic), while some special characters needed to be rekeyed to ensure accuracy. HEB requested all books be proofread against the scanned pages supplied.

### *Dissemination*

All HOB titles will be integrated with the online HEB collection accessible at [www.humanitiesebook.org](http://www.humanitiesebook.org) **and** are listed on a separate dedicated page (<http://www.humanitiesebook.org/the-collection/xml-titles/>). In both cases, the title's record page will include a "download as EPUB 3.0.1" link and clearly mark the title as part of the HOB initiative. Titles will thus be discoverable in the context of HEB's existing offerings, through the existing search and browse pages, and also as a separate collection. We are working with the Hathi Trust for the additional deposit of these titles in to their collection so as to ensure the long-term durability and preservation of the works.

### *Usage Analysis*

As mentioned before, Humanities E-Book is unique in the HOB program in that HEB's publishing model is different than that of university presses and other academic publishers, primarily the subscription element. Therefore, the usage analysis will be broken down by subscriber and non-subscriber users, as well as the usage of the EPUB versions of the titles compared to the other formats HEB offers (page scan, OCR-text, and PDF). Michigan Publishing at the University of Michigan Library is HEB's primary source for tracking usage of titles in the collection.

HEB, once again with the aid of Michigan Publishing, has recently added a new Altmetric tool to better inform librarians and scholars on the outside usage of a selected title. The Altmetric Attention Score provides insights into citation impact, social media mentions, and tracks the selected title through the Open Syllabus Project started by Columbia University. This new tool has provided useful for HEB's current title list, but it will be interesting to utilize its capabilities to see course adoption of the HOB titles and conversations about the titles occurring outside of the academe.

### *Marketing & Discovery*

Humanities E-Book marketing goals for its participation in the Humanities Open Book program are 1) to reach scholars and students in the three fields HEB created open access titles in; 2) promote and raise awareness to current HEB subscribers; 3) receive feedback from librarians and faculty on their awareness of the HOB titles and their user experience. E-blasts, social media, and HEB's monthly newsletter, *Oh, the Humanities!*, will serve as the primary marketing tools. HEB is also moving to a new WordPress powered site, which will allow for native posts and pages focused on the HOB program to stand out more than in the current version of the website.

Discoverability is crucial in the current digital landscape for academic publishers, and HEB will be producing MARC records for each HOB title, which are not only provided to librarians of subscribing institutions, but to our discovery service partners including EBSCO Discovery, Ex Libris, and WorldCat (OCLC).

### *Lessons Learned Thus Far*

The most positive outcome of the project thus far has been the enthusiasm with which society leadership and individual authors have embraced the prospect of open access publication. It is

perhaps unsurprising, however, that many of the titles nominated by society members were monographs aimed at a very particular scholarly readership and not at a wider public audience. We hope that by analyzing the usage of published titles we will be better able to understand the demand for scholarly works such as these. It has proven somewhat expensive to obtain scannable hard copies of several titles.

**American Council of Learned Societies  
Report to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation on Grant 41500661 made in support of  
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**Appendix A**

**List of Titles included in ACLS Humanities E-Book HOB Initiative**

Barrett, Paul. *The Automobile and Urban Transit: The Formation of Public Policy in Chicago, 1900-1930*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983.

Beck, Brenda E. F. *The Three Twins: The Telling of a South Indian Folk Epic*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.

Bendix, Regina F. *Progress and Nostalgia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Brett-Smith, Sarah. *The Making of Bamana Sculpture: Creativity and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Gillespie, Angus K. *Folklorist of the Coal Fields: George Korson's Life and Work*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980.

Glassman, Jonathon. *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness on the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888*. Portsmouth: Heinemann Publishing, 1995.

Hodgson, Dorothy L., and Sheryl A. McCurdy, eds. *"Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa*. Portsmouth: Heinemann Publishing, 2001.

Lloyd, Timothy C., and Patrick Mullen. *Lake Erie Fishermen: Work, Identity, and Tradition*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

Platt, Harold L. *The Electric City: Energy and the Growth of the Chicago Area, 1880-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Seely, Bruce Edsall. *Building the American Highway System: Engineers As Policy Makers*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987.

Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. *Music, Ritual, and Falasha History*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1986.

Slyomovics, Susan. *The Merchant of Art: An Egyptian Hilali Oral Epic Poet in Performance*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

von Hippel, Eric. *Democratizing Innovation*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.



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**Appendix B: HEB-HOB Learned Society Notice**

**E-Publishing Opportunity for African Studies**

The Humanities Open Book project is an opportunity for scholarly authors in the fields of African studies to reach new audiences through the electronic publication of previously published works no longer in print. The project, sponsored by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, will offer a set of open access titles. The ACLS Humanities E-Book collection and the African Studies Association have joined with this effort and invite scholarly authors in the field of African studies who have retained or regained the publication rights to their titles to propose their inclusion in this new national collection.

The new project focuses on out-of-print works as “a huge, mostly untapped resource of remarkable scholarship going back decades that is largely unused by today’s scholars, teachers, students, and members of the public, many of whom turn first to the Internet when looking for information. . . . The Humanities Open Book pilot grant program aims to “unlock” these books by republishing them as high-quality electronic books that anyone in the world can download and read on computers, tablets, or mobile phones at no charge.” ACLS and the African Studies Association are now alerting ASA members to the opportunity to have their out-of-print works republished as part of this signal national initiative to widen the circulation of humanities scholarship. You can learn more about the Humanities Open Book initiative at <http://www.neh.gov/news/press-release/2015-12-17> .

ACLS Humanities E-Book (HEB) is one of ten publishers and aggregators selected to build the Humanities Open Book list. HEB is an online collection of approximately 4,700 books of high quality in the humanities, accessible through institutional and individual subscription. These titles are offered by the ACLS in collaboration with thirty-one learned societies, over 120 contributing publishers, and the Michigan Publishing division at the University of Michigan Library. HEB is the only publishing program maintained by ACLS on a continuing basis in-house. This project is distinctive in being a digital collection selected by scholars, not publishers.

While most of the HEB collection is available through subscribing college and university libraries, the titles selected for Humanities Open Book will be made available on an open access basis. Authors who have retained or regained rights to their publications will sign a non-exclusive agreement with ACLS that will include the provisions of one of two Creative Commons licenses: “Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike (BY-NC-SA) and “Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (BY-NC-ND)”. Both licenses protect the integrity and recognition of their works.

ACLS will carry out the conversion of print titles to Epub formatting, place the new works in both the HEB and HOB collections, and publicize their availability.

Authors interested in this opportunity should consult <http://www.humanitiesebook.org/news-blog/HOB.html>, where can be found a list of FAQs and a questionnaire regarding the candidate title. Nominations should be sent to [HEBHOB@hebook.org](mailto:HEBHOB@hebook.org) by June 1. ACLS will consult with an ASA committee and a panel of ACLS reviewers in the selection of titles for inclusion. The criteria for their selection will include intellectual excellence, importance to the field of African Studies, pedagogical utility, and the potential to attract readers from outside the academy.