

Open Investment Strategy Committee: Investment Evaluation Criteria

This document is intended to help guide anyone wishing to bring an ‘open’ product (which generally includes collections and content, technical infrastructure, or advocacy efforts that support and embody principles of open scholarship¹), to the Open Investments Strategy Committee (OISC) for investment consideration.

The questions below act as a guide and are not comprehensive; not all questions can be answered for all possible investments, especially given how quickly the world of open scholarship is evolving. However, these criteria can be considered a helpful guide and do broadly capture the values and intentions that underpin open investment decisions at the University of Guelph.

The document is divided into categories which represent the OISC’s key areas of assessment when evaluating a new investment proposal. Under each section, we have provided key criteria (presented as a series of questions), and, where applicable, the indicators that can help demonstrate how these criteria might be met.

Note that this evaluation does not apply to transformative agreements. The OISC provides analysis, evaluation, and input on transformative agreements using other venues, and the funding for these investments falls outside of the Open Investments fund.

If you have any questions or concerns, please e-mail open@uoguelph.ca.



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Preliminary

Getting started

- Your name and e-mail address
- Where did this funding request originate from (if not from you)?
- The name of the investment and/or vendor
- A brief description of this investment. How does the product/service enhance open scholarship?
- Is there a deadline for this decision?

Pricing

- What is the cost?
- Is it a one-time cost or a subscription cost?

¹ As the [Association of Research Libraries](#) notes, “Open scholarship, which encompasses open access, open data, open educational resources, and all other forms of openness in the scholarly and research environment, is changing how knowledge is created and shared.”

- Is it a single year or multi-year term?
- Is there flexibility with the pricing, such as banded pricing or tiers of investment?

What is the geographic scope of this resource?

- Local, national, international?
- Global South?

Does the proposed investment cover one or more of the following areas of open scholarship?

- Collections/content
- Infrastructure
- Advocacy
- Other (please comment)

Governance and sustainability

What are we trying to support?

- Organizations or business models that seek to shift scholarly communications away from commercial or “closed access” models of for-profit publishing and scholarly infrastructure.
- Models of investment that are economically sustainable while also ensuring the widest possible access to scholarly and curriculum materials.
- Viable long-term actors that have the potential for creating lasting positive impact on the scholarly communications ecosystem.

How can this be assessed?

- Is the organization a non-profit?
 - In the US: Look for mention of 501(c)(3) filing on the About Us page.
 - In Canada: Look for mention of non-profit status on the About Us page.
 - In Ontario: Search for the organization’s name on the [Ontario Business Registry](#), and look for mention of non-profit status.
- Is there adequate representation of a variety of stakeholders represented within the organization?
 - Is there mention of an advisory board or steering committee?
 - Is this group comprised of scholars, librarians, or other members of the research community?
- Is the business model viable and sustainable?
 - Does the mission statement, about page, or annual report indicate past funding success and future funding sources?
 - Is there evidence from the broader OA field indicating this organization’s credibility or reputation? Is there a successful track record?

Indigenization, equity, diversity, and inclusion (IEDI)

What are we trying to support?

- Organizations that espouse principles of IEDI through their values, their operations, and/or their outputs

- Investments that mobilize open scholarship from equity-deserving scholars located in all parts of the world, including those from the Global South.²
- Investments that mobilize U of G’s decolonization and reconciliation goals, as outlined in the university’s [Indigenous initiatives strategy](#).

How can this be assessed?

- Does the organization provide access to an IEDI or diversity statement on their website?
- Is the organization situated in the Global South?
- Was the content or infrastructure produced by scholars or workers in the Global South?
- Where Indigenous knowledges (IK) are being handled, is the resource/investment guided by the [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](#) , and/or the First Nations Information Governance Centre’s principles of ownership, control, access, and possession ([OCAP Principles](#))?

Privacy

What are we trying to support?

- Freedom from surveillance online, including the unnecessary collection and harvesting of our users’ data.

How can this be assessed?

- A link to the organization’s privacy statement
- An authentication model that supports the library’s existing proxy login infrastructure
- An authentication model that does not require users to create a personal account or divulge any personal information

Accessibility (A11Y)

What are we trying to support?

- An open scholarship ecosystem that is inclusive and provides equal access to everyone, especially people with disabilities
- Organizations that develop products with the consideration of disabled users in their designs.

How can this be assessed?

- Does the organization have an [a11y](#) statement?
- Does the investment adhere to user accessibility standards (such as WCAG, AODA, and/or ADA)?
- Is there any documentation of audits or assessments that have been used to evaluate a digital product’s compliance with accessibility standards and guidelines?

Technical considerations

What are we trying to support?

- Investments that meet the technical requirements needed to effectively maintain principles of open scholarship
- Investments that effectively integrate or complement the library’s existing technical infrastructure to ensure that upkeep of our systems is sustainable

² For clarity on what we mean by the “Global South” see Mahler’s [What/Where is the Global South?](#)

- Investments that support open scholarship infrastructure through the use of persistent identifiers, open standards, and open-source software, as applicable.

How can this be assessed?

- Where applicable, does this investment adhere to preservation standards such as [LOCKSS](#) or the [FAIR Guiding Principles](#)?
- Where applicable, is there evidence that this investment can be incorporated into [Linked Open Data](#) initiatives? (e.g., Metadata standards, or persistent identifiers)
- Does this investment need to integrate with the library's existing technical infrastructure? If so, does it? (This includes open infrastructures, but also proprietary tools such as Omni, Alma, LibGuides, or ARES)
- Where applicable, what sort of staff time and expertise is required to setup and maintain this investment?

Pricing and licensing

What are we trying to support?

- Investments that offer transparent and equitable pricing models and, where costs may increase, they are predictable and justifiable.
- Investments that are affordable and economically sustainable within the library's broader acquisitions budget.
- Models of investment that are economically sustainable while also ensuring the widest possible access to scholarly and curriculum materials.
- Organizations that have a stated commitments to open licensing.

How can this be assessed?

- Are there any details on what the funds will be put towards (such as staffing, a developer roadmap, advocacy, or public awareness campaigns, etc.)?
- Do we have available funds to meet the costs of this investment? (Committee members can help to answer this question)
- Where applicable, does the product have a clearly stated open license?
 - This might include mention of CC-BY or CC-BY-NC-ND. For more information on CC licensing, see [How open is it?](#)

U of G considerations

What are we trying to support?

- Investments that help to mobilize the mission or strategic goals of key campus stakeholders, especially those that seek to create a more open and equitable information ecosystem for everyone.
- Investments that benefit the U of G community
- A healthy balance of investments, including a combination of investment types (content, infrastructure, and advocacy); a variety of open scholarship types (open access research, open data, and open educational resources); and a mix of content that supports a variety of disciplines.

How can this be assessed?

Has the investment been identified as crucial to meeting the strategic goals of a campus unit, either directly or indirectly?

- Was it requested by a key stakeholder or campus partner?
- Was it specifically referenced in a strategic document from a key stakeholder or campus partner?

Does the proposed investment compliment or enhance U of G's existing OA investments? (The full list of OA investments is [here](#))

- Does it fill a need or gap within our OA infrastructure or collections content?
- Does it need to integrate with our existing infrastructure (OA or otherwise)? If so, does it?
- Are there peer/competitor products that offer similar coverage that we should also consider?

Does the proposed investment benefit the U of G community?

- Does it provide improved access to content or functionality that supports U of G's unique curriculum or research needs?
- Does it help to mobilize the scholarly, educational, or creative outputs of the U of G community?

Committee's final decision

- Is this investment approved?
- Total cost:
- OTO or On-Going:
- Forwarded details to Acquisitions?

Resources

Much of the contents of the Open Investment Evaluation Criteria were informed by similar work from our peers at other academic libraries. In particular, we referenced and drew inspiration from the following institutions' open investments resources:

1. Western Libraries: <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/scholarship/oasupport.html>
2. UC Berkeley Library: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BRZLjPtrBUJyDnxjM_suFglogxTj-rve
3. MIT Libraries: <https://libraries.mit.edu/scholarly/mit-open-access/>
4. University of Ottawa Library: <https://scholarlycommunication.uottawa.ca/uottawa-initiatives/financial-support>

Written by members of the University of Guelph's Open Investment Strategy Committee.