Following a year of research and community engagement funded by a planning grant from the Mellon Foundation’s Public Knowledge Program, Project MUSE is preparing a Subscribe to Open (S2O) offer across multiple journal titles and participating publishers that will begin with the 2025 calendar year subscription term.

With more than 700 current journals in the humanities and social sciences on its platform, from close to 200 non-profit publishers, Project MUSE is uniquely positioned to develop and deploy a Subscribe to Open offer at scale for a significant portion of its journals. Through the support of MUSE’s community of thousands of libraries worldwide, the S2O offer will open a wealth of vital scholarship in disciplines not well served by other open access (OA) models.

S2O is a more equitable alternative to “author-pays” or Read-and-Publish OA models, including what is known as “gold” OA. S2O expands both author and reader access without payment from either. The MUSE S2O model will build upon the foundation of our existing collections model that has been a stable product in university libraries for over 25 years. Eliminating financial barriers to OA for authors and readers is a major step forward and a foundational imperative to achieving an equitable, just, and inclusive world for humanities content.

To keep up with the latest developments regarding Subscribe to Open at Project MUSE, visit our S2O web page.

about.muse.jhu.edu/muse/s2o/

Highlights of the MUSE S2O program include:

- As an aggregator with over 25 years of market prominence, MUSE has the in-house technology, sales experience, and library and publisher relationships necessary to lead an S2O initiative at scale.

- MUSE’s S2O offer will build upon the existing MUSE Premium and other popular collection products that are familiar and trusted in the market. This makes the transition from conventional subscriptions to conditionally open OA subscriptions seamless for libraries, while providing revenue stability for publishers.

- By subscribing, libraries ensure their continued access to backlist (archive) content and current scholarship. If the offer's annual sustainability threshold is reached, the current year's content becomes open to the world.

- A stable and guaranteed royalty structure ensures low-risk participation for publishers. Predictable royalties ensure publishers do not need to sacrifice revenue in supporting the move to openness.
Next Steps on Project MUSE’s Path to S2O

✓ **Educate MUSE journal publishers about transitioning to OA via S2O (2023)**
Project MUSE works with a wide variety of publishers and journals, with diverse business models, and some may be better primed for a shift to open access than others. We have been engaged in conversations with the publishers to help them understand the risks and benefits of a Subscribe to Open model. Any journal in the MUSE Journal Collections may join the S2O offer, but for simplicity and clarity we are focusing first on titles that are available online exclusively on the MUSE platform or on MUSE and the publisher’s own platform. A publisher may participate in the S2O offer with as many or as few of their titles as they wish.

✓ **Engage the library community in discussions to shape MUSE’s S2O program (2023)**
Concurrent with our publisher conversations, we are also seeking input and feedback from libraries about their needs and preferences for a Subscribe to Open offer built around our MUSE Journal Collections. Ideally, libraries will simply continue to renew their current collection subscriptions annually, and beginning in 2025, those subscriptions will support a portion of the titles in the collection in making all their current-year content open access. S2O does not require new investment from libraries – just their continued support for a trusted, vital scholarly resource. We want to hear from libraries with any questions about the model, as well as about any incentives to participation which may help the offer to succeed.

✓ **Secure commitments from journals to participate in the Subscribe to Open offer (late 2023)**
We will ask publishers to formalize their journals’ participation in the Subscribe to Open offer before the end of the current calendar year. Because this is a new model and the way in which MUSE pays royalties to participating journals must be adapted to collections which may include both gated and open access content, this will require signing new business agreements with our participating publishers.

✓ **Present the S2O offer to Project MUSE’s journal collection subscribers (early 2024)**
Early in 2024, MUSE will announce the details of our Subscribe to Open offer, including the participating titles and publishers, the sustainability threshold for the offer to succeed, and a deadline by which subscription commitments are needed to determine the success of the offer. Renewal pricing for our MUSE Journal Collections will also be announced earlier in the year than usual, so that subscribing libraries and consortia will have ample time to consider their participation and make renewal commitments. We will work with our customers towards a goal of reaching the necessary target so that the journals participating in the offer may begin opening all newly published content at the start of 2025.

✓ **Determine the success of the Project MUSE journals Subscribe to Open offer (2025)**
If enough libraries commit to renewing their current Project MUSE journal collection subscriptions to achieve the S2O sustainability threshold, the offer will succeed and new content from the participating journals will be published OA during the 2025 calendar year term. If the offer does not succeed, subscribing libraries will continue to have gated access to their journal collection content, just as in the past. We anticipate enthusiastic support for this equitable and inclusive model for transitioning essential non-profit humanities and social science scholarship to open access.