

# Free as in Free Beer? LaTeX as a Means to Distribute the Cost of OA Publishing in the Humanities.

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## Short Paper Abstract

The Digital Humanities has been a forerunner in the push towards Open Access (OA) publishing in the Humanities. Coined by the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI), the concept of OA expresses an aim to “make possible [...] the world-wide electronic distribution of [...] peer reviewed journal literature” and its “completely free and unrestricted” availability for “all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds” (Chan et al. 2002). Moving away from traditional publication formats makes our research more widely available to academic and non-academic audiences alike – a laudable goal that can only help advance our research.

Since OA is partly rooted in Open Source (OS) software development and the Free Software Movement (FSM) founded by Richard Stallman in the 1980s, however, the phrase ‘completely free’ here requires some closer study. When FSM defined ‘free software’ in 1996, it insisted that “[f]ree software’ is a matter of liberty, not price. [T]hink of ‘free’ as in ‘free speech,’ not as in ‘free beer’” (Stallman 2002, p. 3). Surely, in the spirit of OA, the free distribution of academic research is more important than its cost-less accessibility. But in practice the two meanings of ‘free’ tend to go hand in hand. To reach the widest possible audience, researchers are rightly moving away from paywalls, copyright restrictions, data silos, closed repositories, etc. (Dillen and Neyt 2016; Martinez et al. 2019).

When academic publications become ‘free as in free beer,’ however, that does not mean they come at no cost. Instead, librarians and researchers are increasingly taking on a series of tasks that were originally reserved for academic publishers – effectively shifting the workload to journal editors. To alleviate some of this burden, it is important that best practices are drawn up and workflows are shared. Encouraging authors to submit their contributions in LaTeX rather than a proliferation of (often proprietary and sometimes deprecated) text-formats for example can already make a significant difference. Designed as a high-quality typesetting system, LaTeX can easily safeguard the preservation

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of a uniform journal-wide layout. While the learning curve can be daunting and the initial setup time consuming, overcoming these hurdles saves considerable document preparation time in the long run.

Nevertheless, in the Humanities (even in the *Digital Humanities*), asking authors to write their contributions in LaTeX is still met with much reluctance – even with the availability of user-friendly tutorials and LaTeX editors such as fiduswriter (<https://www.fiduswriter.org>) and Overleaf (<https://www.overleaf.com>). What is needed among both authors and editors is a wider awareness of the advantages of LaTeX for the publication of peer-reviewed self-published OA journals, as well as skill training and workflow sharing initiatives. As part of the editorial teams of two Humanities journals that have recently made the move to LaTeX (*Variants*, the journal of the European Society for Textual Scholarship, and the new *Journal of DH Benelux*), the author will use this short paper to share some of these editorial teams' experiences in this regard.

## References

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