

Sidestone Press: Library Support Report 2025

1. Introduction

Sidestone Press is an independent academic publisher based in Leiden, the Netherlands, specialising in archaeology, anthropology and related humanities. As a scholar-led press, we operate as a small team and focus on sustainable, high-quality Open Access publishing.

This report outlines our activities in 2025, with particular attention to the role of Open Book Collective support in strengthening our publishing infrastructure and Open Access programme.

2. Publishing Activity and Open Access

In 2025, Sidestone Press published 51 new titles, of which 17 were released in Gold Open Access (33%). In addition, 35 backlist titles were made Open Access during the year. As part of our standard policy, all titles older than four years are converted to Open Access annually.

At the end of 2025, our catalogue comprised 544 fully Open Access titles, representing approximately 78% of our total list. The remaining titles, while not fully Open Access, are available for free online reading via our website.

Our Open Access model combines institutional support, library participation, selective Book Processing Charges (where applicable), and print-on-demand sales. This mixed model allows us to maintain sustainability while keeping author-facing charges as limited as possible.

In 2024, we began actively encouraging authors to adopt Creative Commons licences and to engage more explicitly with licensing choices (see: <https://www.sidestone.com/publishing/creative-commons>). While the adoption of a CC licence is not mandatory, uptake has been strong. In 2025, more than 80% of newly published titles were released under a Creative Commons licence. The remaining titles primarily concerned long-running or legacy projects initiated before this policy was introduced.

3. Use of Open Book Collective Funding

Sidestone Press joined the Open Book Collective in 2025. As this was our first year of membership, the total contribution received through OBC institutional support was modest, amounting to approximately € 5,000.

This funding enabled us to publish one volume in Gold Open Access while fully waiving all Book Processing Charges. Under normal circumstances, the combined BPC and Open Access costs for a volume of this scale would amount to approximately € 7,000 (excluding VAT).

The funded project concerned the translation and publication of one of the travel diaries of Heinrich Schliemann, the 19th-century archaeologist best known for his excavations at Troy. Before turning to archaeology, Schliemann travelled extensively and kept detailed diaries, often written in the local languages of the regions he visited. Although such historical source publications are of clear scholarly value, projects of this nature rarely secure dedicated funding.

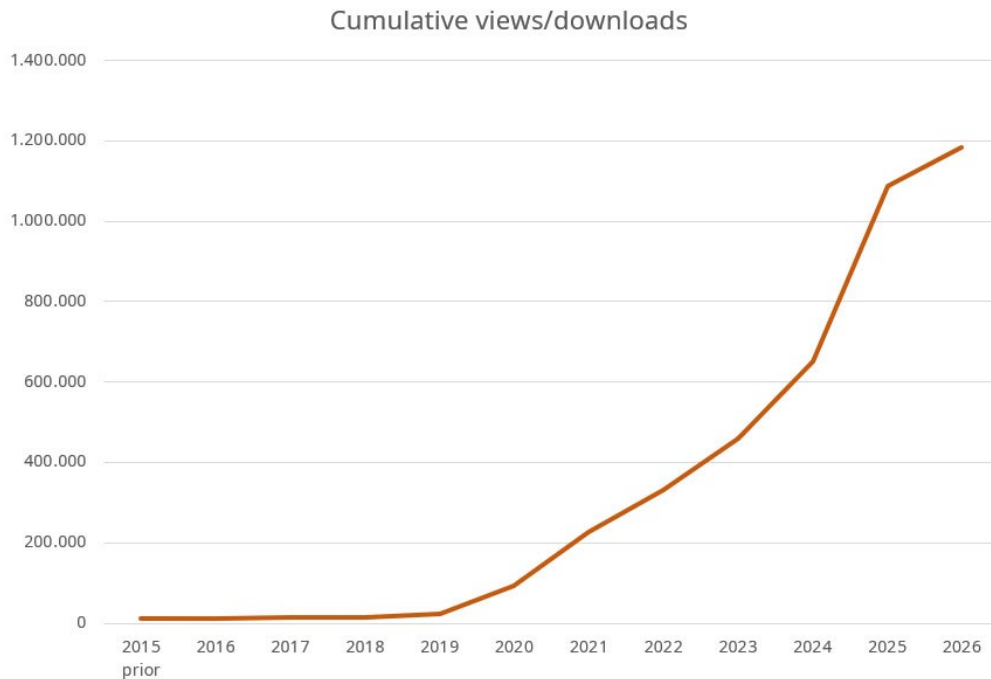
In this case, the translations were carried out by two early-career archaeologists. Through a combination of Sidestone's support and OBC funding, we were able to make this work openly accessible without transferring costs to the authors.

Further information about the volume is available here:

<https://www.sidestone.com/books/the-schliemann-eastern-odyssey-in-19th-century-china-and-japan>

4. Impact and Reach

Sidestone titles continue to reach a global audience. In 2025, our OA books recorded approximately 440,000 downloads, bringing the cumulative number of downloads to well over 1 million. Less than 1% of these could be attributed to institutes that support us either via OBC or via our own Library Program.



Beyond quantitative metrics, our books remain central to archaeological and heritage research communities, with continued adoption in teaching, citation in scholarly work, and presence in academic reviews and conferences.

We observed a significant rise in the number of downloads in 2025. While increased visibility and usage account for part of this growth, we believe that some of the increase is related to automated access. Our books are accessed not only by human readers but also by bots.

These automated accesses likely affect many Open Access platforms. They include search engine indexing, web scraping for large language model (LLM) training, and AI-assisted queries initiated by human users – for example, when users prompt an LLM to retrieve, summarise, or translate a PDF.

At present, we do not have a reliable method to distinguish between human and automated downloads in our usage statistics. Nor is it entirely clear that such filtering would necessarily be desirable, as AI-mediated access may represent a new mode of scholarly engagement rather than purely artificial inflation.

We consider this part of a broader discussion within the Open Access community regarding the role of AI systems in the scholarly communication ecosystem and how usage metrics should be interpreted in this changing landscape.

5. Infrastructure and Sustainability

A key infrastructure development in 2025 was our collaboration with Thoth Open Metadata. During the reporting year, we began integrating our backlist titles into the Thoth database. This process involves standardising and enriching metadata to improve discoverability, interoperability, and long-term dissemination across platforms and repositories.

Following completion of the backlist integration, we intend to incorporate Thoth into our ongoing workflow so that metadata for new titles can be deposited systematically at the point of publication. We expect this transition to be completed in 2026.

In addition to digital infrastructure, we continue to invest in environmental sustainability. Through our ongoing collaboration with OneTreePlanted.org, we make donations to support tree planting for every parcel containing printed books that we ship, including author copies.

In 2025, this resulted in the planting of over 1,700 trees, bringing the cumulative total to 12,710 trees. Further information about this initiative is available here:

<https://www.sidestone.com/about/a-forest-is-just-single-trees-put-together>.

6. Governance and Alignment

There were no significant changes in governance or legal structure during the reporting year. Sidestone Press remains fully aligned with the mission and principles of the Open Book Collective, particularly regarding transparency, scholar-led publishing, and sustainable Open Access models.

7. Outlook

In the coming year, we aim to:

- Maintain or modestly expand our Open Access output
- Continue strengthening dissemination and metadata infrastructure
- Further stabilise our sustainable funding mix

We remain committed to community-driven Open Access publishing and are grateful for the collective support model that makes this possible.

Acknowledgement

Sidestone Press gratefully acknowledges the support of the Open Book Collective and participating libraries. Collective funding remains essential to sustaining independent, scholar-led Open Access publishing.