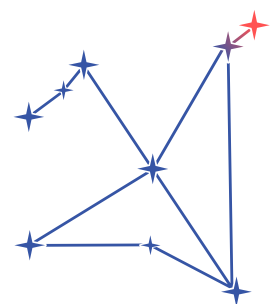


Open Access Brandenburg



**Vernetzungs- und
Kompetenzstelle
Open Access
Brandenburg**

When Transparency Meets Publishing Reality

Analysing Publisher Cost Breakdowns in the
Brandenburg OA Monograph Fund

Dr Anja Himpsl-Zeltner
OpenCost Conference – Hamburg
18 March 2026



The Open Cost Question

What do publisher cost breakdowns actually tell us about OA monograph costs?

Context

- ✦ increasing demand for cost transparency
- ✦ OA funds require detailed cost breakdowns
- ✦ expectation: transparency → understanding → fair pricing



Brandenburg Open Access Monograph Fund

- ✦ funding programme for OA books
- ✦ supports researchers at Brandenburg institutions
- ✦ publishers submit cost breakdowns
- ✦ data collected since 2021



The Dataset

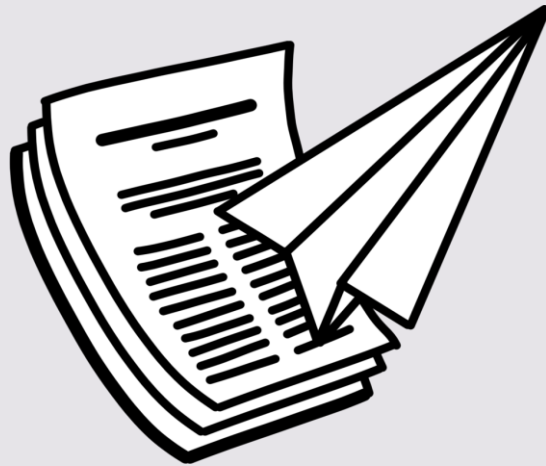
- 48 funded monographs
- cost breakdowns from several publishers
- 2021–2024
- anonymised
- openly available

3	Allgemeine Lektoratskosten								
4	Verlagsinterne Manuskriptprüfung		336,13 €						
5	Qualitätssicherung und Verwaltung								1.000,00 €
6	Editorial						1.738,00 €		
7	Lektorat						1.042,79 €		
8	Notiz Lektorat	chen: 5,50 EUR pro Normseite (brutto)							
9	Korrektorat		500,00 €	450,00 €					200,00 €
10	Notiz Korrektorat	chen: 2,50 EUR pro Normseite (brutto)							
11	Übersetzung								
12	Notiz Übersetzung	hen: 23,80 EUR pro Normseite (brutto)							
13	Endkorrektorat Übersetzung								
14	Notiz Endkorrektorat Übersetzung	hen: 3,50 EUR pro Normseite (brutto)							
15	Herstellungskosten								
16	Technische Herstellungskosten		1.544,00 €			1.100,00 €	2.896,65 €		
17	Notiz Technische Herstellungskosten	Satz, Korrekturen, Reproduktion, Bildbearbeitung, 304 Seiten				medienneutral			
18	Satz- und Layouteinrichtung		2.600,00 €	2.000,00 €			2.350,00 €		510,00 €
19	Notiz Satz- und Layouteinrichtung		3,70 EUR nett 5 EUR pro Seite bei 400 Seiten wegen komplizierter Formatierung						Medienneutr 3,
20	Umbruch								
21	Notiz Umbruch								
22	Satz		731,16 €				521,40 €		
23	Notiz Satz	(brutto)							
24	Layout		420,17 €				927,00 €		
25	Notiz Layout								
26	Bildbearbeitung		420,17 €						610,00 €
27	Notiz Bildbearbeitung								Bildbearbeitung
28	Abbildungsprüfungen		126,05 €						
29	Covergestaltung		420,17 €	50,00 €					
30	Redaktion/Cover								
31	Einfügen von OA-Hinweisen in allen Buchversionen								
32	Vertriebskosten								
33	Vertrieb		588,24 €						850,00 €
34	Notiz Vertrieb								DOI-Registrierung, Aufbereitung u
35	Digitaler Vertrieb		1.300,00 €	1.500,00 €	1.000,00 €	1.300,00 €	2.650,00 €		750,00 €
36	Notiz Digitaler Vertrieb	PDF-Erstellung, DOI-Vergabe, Metadaten-Hand							Digitale Aufbereitung, Verbreitung und OA-V Di
37	Marketing		420,17 €	400,00 €	735,00 €		579,33 €	500,00 €	650,00 €
38	Notiz Marketing					Marketing, Metadatenverteilung, A & I			Anzeigen, Kongressauftritte, Wert
39	Indexierung						521,40 €		
40	Notiz Ind								
41	DOI-Verg								

Repository
[github.com/VuK-OA-
BB/brandenburg_publication_fund_cost_breakdowns](https://github.com/VuK-OA-BB/brandenburg_publication_fund_cost_breakdowns)

Why Publish the Dataset?

Goals of publishing the dataset



- ✦ provide **empirical evidence** for Open Cost discussions
- ✦ encourage **other OA funds** to collect similar data
- ✦ build **community datasets**
- ✦ increase **transparency** in the publishing market



Terminology Differences

Challenge: terminology Examples

- ✦ project management
- ✦ overhead
- ✦ digital distribution
- ✦ technical production

Same terms ≠ same meaning

Publisher 1	Publisher 2	Publisher 3
Overheads	Overheads, project management	Publishing overheads



Most Frequent Categories 2021-23

✦ **overhead (n=35)**

$\bar{x}$ 1,378 EUR, Min. 120 EUR, Max. 6,320 EUR
($\bar{x}$ /2022: 1,640 EUR)

✦ **technical production(n=26)**

$\bar{x}$ 1,367.87, Min. 200 EUR, Max. 3,503.5 EUR
($\bar{x}$ /2022: 1,353.87 EUR)

✦ **digital distribution (n=27)**

$\bar{x}$ 1.319,18 EUR, Min. 200 EUR, Max. 3,080 EUR
($\bar{x}$ /2022: 1,319.13 EUR)

✦ **project management (n=16)**

$\bar{x}$ 1,503.70 EUR, Min. 400 EUR, Max. 4,500 EUR
($\bar{x}$ /2022: 1,307.42 EUR)

✦ **marketing (n=16)**

$\bar{x}$ 767.70 EUR, Min. 200 EUR, Max. 3,720 EUR (6
out of 10 publishers between 400 & 600 EUR)

Frequent Categories Since 2023

- ✦ **OA e-book basic costs (=20)**
- ✦ **typesetting and layout setup (n=17)**
- ✦ **proofreading (n=12)**
- ✦ **cover design (n=12)**

$\bar{x}$ 2292,45 EUR, Min. 200 EUR, Max. 2.800 EUR

$\bar{x}$ 1.321,46 EUR, Min. 143 EUR, Max. 2.880 EUR

$\bar{x}$ 878,72 EUR, Min. 200 EUR, Max. 3454,22 EUR

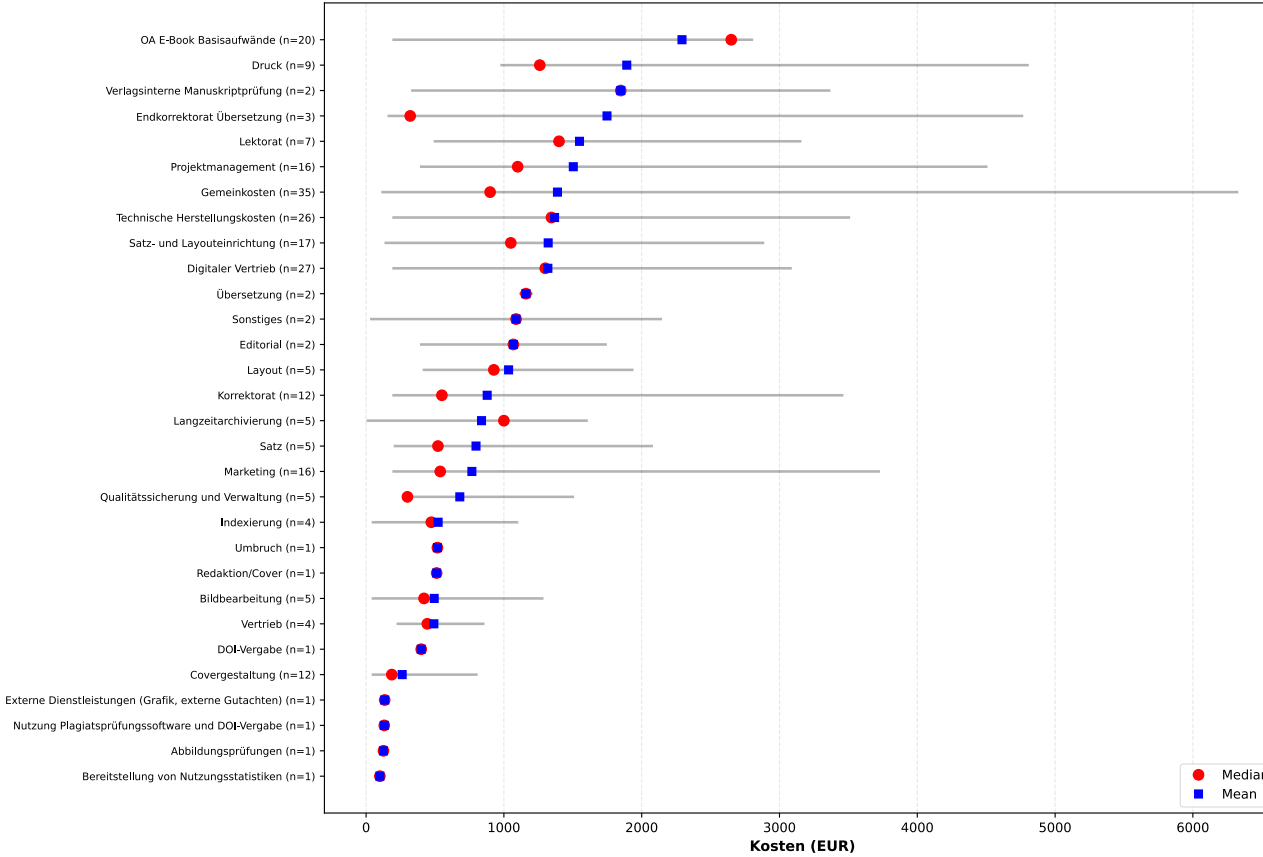
$\bar{x}$ 262,01 EUR, Min. 50 EUR, Max. 800 EUR

Cost Variation

Costs within identical categories vary significantly

Possible reasons

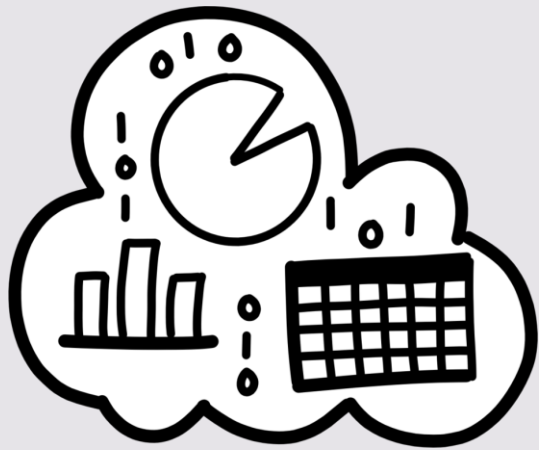
- different workflows
- organisational structures
- business models



Why the Data is Still Valuable

Cost breakdowns are still useful.

They provide



- ✦ comparison points
- ✦ plausibility checks
- ✦ informed follow-up questions

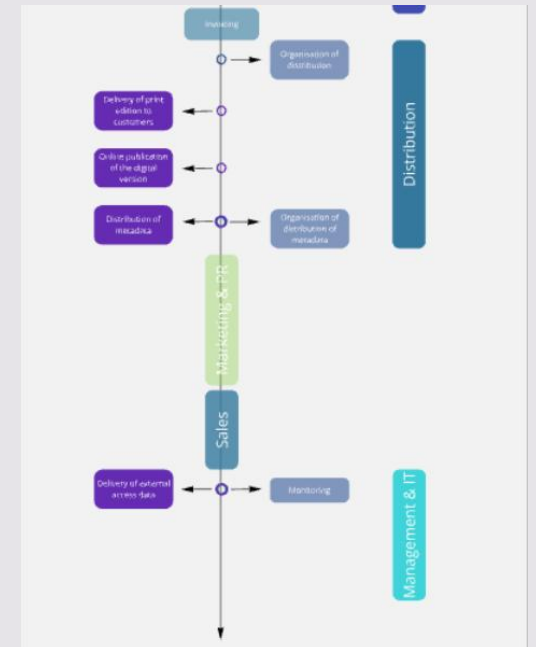
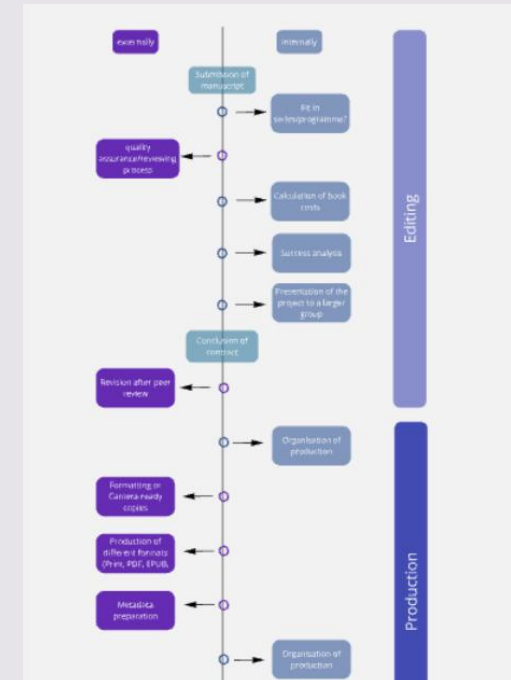
Publishing Workflows

author → editorial → production →
distribution

Same workflow for

- ✦ Closed Access books
- ✦ OA books

revenue model differs



Same workflow → different revenue logic

Traditional publishing model

Costs balanced through

- ✦ print sales
- ✦ e-book sales

OA model

- ✦ funding replaces lost revenue



A Structural Issue in Open Cost Debates

Early transparency expectations

Costs = production costs

But publishing economics also include

- ✦ expected sales
- ✦ cross-subsidisation
- ✦ portfolio logic

Commercial publishers vs scholar-led publishers & University presses

Different

- ✦ workflows
- ✦ revenue structures
- ✦ cost logic

Conclusion

Key observations

- ✦ cost breakdowns are valuable
- ✦ transparency $\neq$ comparability
- ✦ publishing economics matter

Next steps

- ✦ dialogue with publishers
- ✦ explore shared cost categories
- ✦ discussion within oa.network focus group

Discussion

- ✦ How much standardisation do we need for meaningful cost transparency?
- ✦ Should cost reporting include expected revenue such as print sales?
- ✦ What could we learn if many OA funds published comparable datasets?

Contact: vuk@open-access-brandenburg.de
Website: <https://open-access-brandenburg.de/>



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