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Production, distribution, and use of open access digital books in the Social Sciences and Humanities field: A systematized literature review

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RESUMO

Introdução: A comunicação científica em ciências sociais e humanas desenvolveu-se através de publicações monográficas. Nas últimas décadas, os livros eletrônicos ganharam destaque na comunicação nessas áreas. **Objetivo:** Dada a importância da criação de uma ciência mais democrática e da consolidação e avanços do acesso aberto apresentados nos últimos tempos, esta pesquisa identifica o estado atual do conhecimento científico sobre a produção, distribuição e uso de livros eletrônicos de acesso aberto nas áreas de ciências sociais e humanas. **Metodologia:** Baseado em uma abordagem metodológica qualitativa, o estudo utilizou o método de revisão sistemática da literatura (RSL) com as bases de dados Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) e Scopus, que possui reconhecimento internacional nas áreas de ciência da informação, ciências sociais e humanidades. **Resultados:** Foram verificados quarenta e dois artigos que abordavam os temas analisados com base nos protocolos SLR definidos e na ferramenta StArt. **Conclusão:** Concluiu-se que a área de ciências sociais e humanas tem utilizado livros digitais de acesso aberto em suas pesquisas, sendo as bibliotecas acadêmicas e a editora universitária os principais atores na sua distribuição. Além disso, persistem alguns obstáculos tecnológicos, sociais e econômicos na utilização e produção de estudos sobre o tema devido à sua reduzida importância em comparação com pesquisas em periódicos de acesso aberto em diversas outras áreas do conhecimento.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Comunicação científica. Acesso aberto. Livros eletrônicos. Bibliotecas universitárias.

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Produção, distribuição e uso de livros digitais de acesso aberto nas ciências sociais e humanas
Uma revisão sistematizada da literatura

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Scholarly communication in social sciences and humanities has developed through monographic publications. In recent decades, electronic books have become prominent for communication in these areas. **Objective:** Given the importance of creating a more democratic science and the consolidation and advances of open access presented in recent times, this research identifies the current state of scientific knowledge on the production, distribution, and use of open access electronic books in the social sciences and humanities. **Methodology:**

Based on a qualitative methodological approach, the study used the systematic literature review (SLR) method with the library and information science abstracts (LISA) and the Scopus databases, which has international recognition within the areas of information science, social sciences and humanities. Results: Forty two articles that discussed the analyzed themes were verified based on the defined SLR protocols and StArt tool. Conclusions: It was concluded that the social sciences and humanities area has been using open access digital books in its research, and academic libraries and university press are the main actors in their distribution. Moreover, some technological, social, economic obstacles persist in the use and production of studies on the subject owing to its reduced importance compared to research on open access journals in various other areas of knowledge.

KEYWORDS
Scholarly communication. Open access. Electronic book. Academic library.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Scholarly communication is one of the most well-established topics in information science. The approaches through which research results have been communicated over time are marked by social, economic, cultural, and, most importantly, technological transformations.

Scholarly communication involves discussing the paths of information resulting from scientific studies. Thus, by understanding scholarly communication as a system of characteristics and dimensions with social and economic elements, it is possible to start with a correlated analysis of the factors that influence and are influenced by the perception of researchers involved in the production, distribution, and use of scientific information (Garvey, 1979).

The open access (OA) movement was born, debated, and eventually reached maturity in recent decades, culminating in many other open science guidelines. With a solid democratic pull and, therefore, scientific appeal, OA has widened and often superseded the boundaries of the reach of scientific and academic knowledge worldwide. Even in the face of business models that seek compensation and cyclical crises of major journal publishers, the movement has proven to be an urgent and viable alternative for using and distributing scientific data, especially during pandemics, wars, and political exceptions.

Social sciences and humanities (SC&H) have monographic publications as their primary and most consistent form of communication. In line with the technological advances that the first decade of the 21st century brought, such as an increasing use of the internet, more powerful computers and gadgets, among others, digital books have also become an item of consumption and production in this area. Much is being studied and debated regarding periodic publications in the sciences. However, reviews and research on the use and access of OA digital books did not reflect the commitment and protagonism of peers in periodic publications.

Thus, this research sought to answer the question of what state of the art in scientific knowledge is regarding the production, distribution, and use of OA digital books in the social sciences field, with the specific objective of identifying and analyzing this state of the art, based on the literature, within SC&H. The chosen method was the systematized literature review (SLR), which is based on well-defined protocols, and sought to recognize and verify the possible answers to this question in specialized literature from the information science area.

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2 SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION AND OPEN ACCESS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Humanity's discovery, evolution, and history are intertwined with a chain of knowledge built through communication, dialogue, and the collective construction of new discoveries. This process has been widely identified as scientific. Scholarly communication legitimizes the construction of science and academic research (Meadows, 1999) and is considered a dynamic activity permeated by several aspects that go with the origin of its questions. Therefore, communication differs in form and content in three major areas of scientific knowledge: sciences, humanities, and social sciences (Costa, 2000).

In scholarly communication, information science is one of many research fields and sources of studies because it provides a framework to outline how to (re)create science and identify formal and informal academic knowledge. Scholarly communication is possible because of the following characteristics: the ability to identify major players such as organization, distribution, and consumption. The information cycle describes and explains the phenomena through which scientific knowledge and information behave. This demonstrates how such information can reach society and other researchers. Thus, analyzing communication phenomena in scientific information in isolation, without considering the researchers' areas of study, may not reflect the

behavior within a context because the communication of scientific discoveries has specific behaviors that depend on the disciplines to which they are linked.

Since the 1950s, researchers in the field of information science and other related areas have been studying the behavior of social scientists and humanists in searching for academic information. Folster (1995), in his research, indicated the results of these studies, demonstrating that scientific journals were the sought-after sources of information for social scientists and humanists and stressed the importance of informal communication channels, combined with the fact that library services were not substantial factors for this audience.

However, Line (1971) and Costa (2000) analyzed the Investigation into Information Requirements of the Social Sciences (INFROSS), one of the most significant projects to study the information-seeking behavior of social scientists (Spink; Cole, 2001; Wilson, 2010). The project was conducted between 1967 and 1970 by professionals from the United Kingdom. INFROSS concluded that this group of scientists favors monographs and books over journal articles in searching for information and publishing their discoveries. Besides corroborating Folster's (1995) indication that informal communication is used more in the area, Costa recalls that, for humanists, the role of monograph publications is more relevant. They were selected as the format to distribute their communications and informal exchanges of information.

There is a consensus that the advancement of information and communication technologies and the Internet in the context of scholarly communication may have repealed the idea of strictly outlined behavior in the search for information by scientists and researchers. In this environment, it may be more important to have access to integral texts than the publication type (Kern; Hienert, 2018). However, understanding the behavior of social scientists and humanists in the search for information is equally important, whether in the context of the 20th or 21st century.

Costa (2000) and Huang and Chang (2008) related the intrinsic differences between the natural sciences (NC) and SC&H. In the academic literary compendium, it is possible to identify some understandings of both fields, and some even claim that SC&H do not fit in the interpretative set of science and are the only sets of human knowledge(Huang; Chang, 2008). However, there is more consensus that SC&H can be considered a knowledge field that uses scientific practice with different subjects, objects, and applications; hence, it has the same academic and conceptual status in the field of human knowledge as NC.

Despite disparities in the ways of doing and disseminating science in NC and SC&H, formal information communication is considered the most recognized way of searching and sharing information since they have instruments for affirming scientific methods, such as peer review and bibliographic analysis of sources. Nevertheless, as previously analyzed, there are behavioral differences between scientists in both areas. Understanding the components of this communicative path is essential for expanding, improving, and disseminating the available tools and information channels.

NC scientists are known to use more scientific journals to disseminate and seek information than SC&H scientists; therefore, it is crucial to understand which phenomena contribute to this context. The substrate used for scientific work in NC is considered very dynamic because it does not involve research on humans and their behavior but on physical, chemical, and natural elements. It is necessary to use formal communication channels faster each time so that the relevant scientific community can dynamically share results to enrich new research and related academic findings. Another reason why the practice of publishing preprints is widely used by researchers in the areas of physics and health sciences is to make their revisions, methods, and findings available as quickly as possible, even before the objects of study change over time.

Social scientists and humanists have substantially disseminated their studies, and research results through academic books and chapters. They often extrapolate to literature that considers commercial entertainment according to the literature in the area (Baruchson-Arbib; Bronstein, 2007; Budd; Christensen, 2003; Eve, 2014; Leite, 2014). Although considered as publications

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demanding more editorial and authorial efforts, monographic publications have a greater possibility of being cited within the SC&H context because they allow greater room for outlining scientific discoveries in the area without considering the tradition that has been established in recent decades in the informational behavior of social scientists and humanists (Huang; Chang, 2008).

Scholarly communication through books and book chapters reflects a moment in the history of citations in SC&H. Huang and Chang (2008) stated variations in the citations of more recent and older literature within this field. However, this is one aspect that can characterize how social scientists and humanists communicate. Some of the bibliographic references come from the last century or decades, which does not necessarily compromise the results of their research because of the specificity of the objects of study in the area. Another explanation may be that SC&H uses less quantified or quantitative data in their surveys than NC s. This implies a lower need for agile communication, allowing for the non-obsolescence of information.

2.1 Open access digital books in social sciences and humanities

OA was first considered in 2002 by the Budapest OA Initiative (BOAI). Suber (2022) describes OA as a publication medium that is absolutely free of most digital and online copyright restrictions. Harnad (2007) described OA as a current, permanent, free-of-charge, full-text, online, and accessible medium. This new perspective in scholarly communication reached the world of academia and research as an alternative to the traditional ways of communicating science to overcome obstacles and restructure the production, consumption, and distribution of scientific knowledge (Costa; Leite, 2016). Different definitions of OA dimensions exist in the literature. Among them, one is related to technology that stimulates open archive initiatives in institutions and publishers, in addition to the primacy of interoperability between systems and the adoption of free software. This event culminated in the concept of Open Science (Costa; Leite, 2016).

Corroborating with the authors previously analyzed. Eve (2014) states monograph as the key component in communication and assessment in SC&H; however, its economic parts are more complex than journal articles. Eve (2015) established that the OA versions of digital books did not impact the possible commercial sales of their physical counterparts. In contrast, they boost the number of citations and recognition of the work and its content. According to Pyne et al. (2019) and Ferwerda *et al.* (2013), the Gold Route (Gold OA books) for OA digital books has been the most chosen and cherished option by authors. In addition, it costs approximately 50% less in its production when compared to the printed version and could directly connect more frequent distributors of this type of OA literature derived from and resulting from SC&H research, as would be the case for university libraries and publishers, through the direct publication of content exclusively or in OA.

Scholars recognize the importance of universities, especially their libraries and publishing houses, in the search for information, particularly in the case of OA digital books within SC&H. Whether through institutional repositories, libraries, digital publishing tools, knowledge and information literacy accumulated over the years by organizing printed monographic information, the recognized ability with green and gold routes, and through the editorial flow of journals and printed books, these institutions have been essential for the study of the use and distribution of OA monographs in SC&H (Ferwerda; Snijder; Adema, 2013; Shaw; Phillips; Gutiérrez, 2022).

3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

A qualitative study was conducted in dialogue with the theoretical framework to answer the research question. The framework aims to understand social problems through investigation

and document interpretation based on a reflective and analytical study of the information collected from a specific social situation (Creswell, 2010).

Following a descriptive purpose, which, according to Serakan (2003), aims to analyze and portray the characteristics of the studied phenomenon, this study uses the systematic literature review (SLR) method to describe the current state of the art in terms of scientific knowledge regarding the production, distribution, and use of OA digital books in the SC&H.

Prospecting research results through well-defined criteria and summarizing what is most notable in the academic literature have been standards to support science. Grant and Booth (2009) defined and listed the literature review types considered helpful for updating scientific knowledge. Among the existing methods, SLR seeks to systematize the knowledge already completed and published in a given area or topic by considering one or more sources of information. Moreover, codifying the retrieved results systematically makes it easier to demonstrate the state-of-the-art knowledge in a topic according to predefined criteria (Grant; Booth, 2009). According to Biolchini et al. (2007), SLR can be used as a tool to identify academic literary works on a given topic; thus, it is a valuable resource for achieving the objectives of this study.

Since the early 2000s, SLR has collaborated to describe and report relevant evidence in an area of knowledge. In response to the analytical challenges of this research method, initiatives have provided technological tools to support researchers (Fabbri *et al.*, 2016). State of the Art through Systematic Review (StArt) software is an initiative tested and disseminated globally through the distribution and support of the Research Laboratory in Engineering and Software (LaPES) from the Brazilian Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar). StArt provides researchers with a complete SLR support protocol, whose stages are described in Table 1.

Table 1. StArt analyzing stages

Stages	Description
1 Planning	Elaboration of an SLR protocol containing the following: research question and objective; definition of Population, intervention, control, results, and context (PICO) criteria; definition of keywords and their variants; definition of the language of the documents; methods for choosing the source of information and its definition; description of inclusion or exclusion criteria of documents; definition of text quality analysis elements; definition of data that will be extracted from the selected studies.
2 Execution	Addition to the chosen database; transfer of search results as .RIS files; analysis and automatic categorization of the documents located through the criteria set out in the planning phase.
2.1 Selection	Initial analysis of the texts. The results are categorized into accepted, rejected, duplicated, and unclassified.
2.2 Extraction	Second in-depth analysis of the articles accepted in the selection stage. Data extracted from the document should be defined after reading the complete report or strategic sections from the articles.
3 Summarization	SLR results according to predefined strategies and criteria from the planning stage and executed in the Selection and extraction stages with an indication of each document's importance to achieve the general objective and answer the proposed research question.

Fonte: Adapted from (Fabbri et al., 2016)

StArt software was used in the collection, selection, and summarization stages to tabulate and analyze the information in the selected articles. To this end, an analysis form was developed using the necessary data from the research. These data were included in the SLR planning and initial protocols.

3.1 SLR protocols

The research question from the SLR was derived from the definitions of the elements presented in Table 2: These are part of PICO's research strategy. According to Mamédio *et al.* (2007), this strategy guides the construction of the research question and a possible bibliographic search by enabling the researcher to access the available scientific information effectively with less possibility of error (Mamédio *et al.*, 2007). Widely used in medicine, the PICO strategy is also recommended for research in the social sciences because of its framework.

Table 2. Description of the Research Criteria

Criteria	Description
Population	Published scientific knowledge in the production, distribution, and use of open access (OA) digital books in the social sciences and humanities field (SC&H).
Intervention	Reading, analysis, and summarization of scientific journals on the production, distribution, and use of OA digital books in SC&H.
Control	Articles from scientific journals that follow the inclusion and quality criteria related to the research question.
Result	Articles from scientific journals that demonstrate the state of the art of scientific knowledge regarding the production, distribution, and use of OA digital books in SC&H.
Application context	Strategically analyze how research has been carried out on the production, distribution, and use of OA digital books in SC&H.

Source: Own work

As the most relevant database in the field of information science, one of the sources of information chosen for the SLR is the Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) database. The database indexes approximately 440 journals in over 20 languages from over 68 countries. The other database chosen was Scopus, which is recognized as one of the information sources with the broadest coverage of academic journals in various knowledge fields, providing constant updates to its database, high-quality indexing, and document retrieval in the information science, social sciences, and humanities fields.

There was no fixed timeframe, and only scientific articles were analyzed. The relationship between the objective of the SLR and the search strategy, set up in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, followed the criteria described in Table 3.

Table 3. Existing search strategies vs. our research objective

General Research objective		
Identify production, distribution, and use of OA digital books in the field of social sciences and humanities based on results from scientific research		
SLR objective X search strategies		
Database: LISA	Database: LISA	Base de dados: Scopus
results from scientific research	Type of source: scientific journals Type of document: articles Languages: Spanish, English, and Portuguese Publication Date: all Search fields: Title, abstract and keywords / Anywhere except full text (NOFT)	Type of document: articles Languages: Spanish and English Publication Date: all Search fields: Title, abstract and keywords AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "Spanish")

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SC&H	noft ("social science*") OR noft (humanities) OR noft ("humanist*") Observation: no results found for the term "social scientist"	AND ("social scienc*" OR "humani*")
production, distribution, and use of digital books	AND noft ("university librar*") OR noft ("academic librar*") OR noft ("university press") OR noft("library publishing services") Observation: no results found for the terms "university publisher*" and "library publishing services*"	AND ("academic librar*") Observation: no results found for the terms "university publisher*", "university press" and "library publishing services*"
	AND noft ("book*") OR noft (monograph*) Observation: considering the mandatory term 'open access,' it was decided not to use the terms 'e-book*,' 'digital book*,' and 'open-monograph*' in order to avoid redundancies in the search results."	AND ("book*" OR "monograph")
OA	AND noft ("open access") Observation: no results for the term "open science"	AND("open access")

Source: Own work

Because LISA does not allow the formulation of comprehensive search strategies, we apply nine different procedures that could encompass the objective of the SLR. In Scopus, only two search strategies were required to encompass the entire research objective, as shown in Table 4. In addition, the study conducted searches simultaneously in title fields, abstracts, and keywords. From September to October 2022 searches were made on the LISA, and from August to September 2023, on Scopus.

Table 4. Search strategies and results

Number of searches	Search strategies	Results
9	LISA	63
2	Scopus	86
Total		149

Source: Own work

4 RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The survey carried out under the SLR protocol retrieved 63 journal articles from the LISA database and 86 from Scopus. The retrieved articles were analyzed using the StArt tool. The extraction results are given in Table 5.

Tabela 5: Resumo da coleta da RSL

	Selection stage	Extraction stage
Accepted articles	63	42
Rejected articles	38	21
Duplicated articles	48	0
Unclassified articles	0	0
Total	149	63

Source: Own work

In the extraction stage, besides applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Appendix A), the data extracted and analyzed for the acceptance of documents resulted in an evaluation form that analyzed the publications, authorship, content, and research data. After analyzing the 63 identified articles, 42 were chosen for summarization, review, and interpretation to answer the research question.

4.1 Discussion: SLR characterization

In agreement with the theoretical foundation partially demonstrated in Table 6, the analysis of the selected articles revealed that books were the most used means of scholarly communication among researchers in SC&H, with the academic library (40.47%) being the leading distributor of this type of communication compared to university presses (38.09%). As Shaw *et al.* (2022) pointed out, most books produced by university presses are still printed or have restricted access. Compared to commercial academic presses, the academic library emerges in the analyzed studies as the main focal point for the distribution and availability of OA digital books, either in established digital libraries or in institutional repositories built for this purpose.

Most of the analyzed documents used mixed (71.42%) and quantitative methods (19.04%). The primary research method used was a survey (92.85%). They varied among interview collection techniques (9.52%), questionnaires (21.42%), and bibliographic research (45.23%). This set of data can characterize studies with more subjective and individual-centered approaches when seeking a more interconnected analysis of the use, production, and distribution of OA digital books. This can be justified precisely by the nature of their themes: SC&H, studying human relations and their intertwining with the world.

It is important to emphasize that the articles summarized in the SLR considering   from authors' origins included Switzerland, Austria, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Russia, Pakistan, Poland (2.38%), Spain and U.S.A. (4.76%), Netherlands (9.52%), India (14.28%), Germany (16.66%) and the U.K. (33.33%). The geographic location of nine (21.42%) of the studies were universities and students from U.K.; another five (11.90%) were from the India and Germany, and one each was from other countries listed in Table 6 (2.38%) was from the U.S.A.; sixteen (38.09%) were not clearly expressed. Therefore, it can be inferred that most studies on the production, distribution, and use of OA digital books in SC&H are predominantly conducted in U.K., Germany and India.

The analyzed literature was published between 2010 and 2023. The use and distribution of OA digital books in SC&H have been predominantly studied in this period. This event corroborates the growth of the debate about OA and digital books, as stated by Suber (2022), Eve (2015)and Fund (2017). It is essential to emphasize that this period was not included in the SLR search strategy, as seen in the previously described search strategies. Table 6 reveals the data extracted from the seven articles selected in the SLR according to the defined protocols.

Table 6. SLR characterization

| Data	Number of articles	Total % of articles
Publication Year		
2010 - 2016	18	42.85%
2017 - 2023	24	57.14%
Author Country		
Switzerland, Austria, Canada, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Russia, Pakistan, Poland	1 (each country)	2.38%
Spain, U.S.A.	2 (each country)	4.76%
Netherlands	4	9.52%
India	6	14.28%
Germany	7	16.66%
United Kingdom	14	33.33%
Type of Research		
Exploratory	5	11.90%
Descriptive	37	88.09%
Methodological Approach		
Qualitative	4	9.52%
Quantitative	8	19.04%
Mixed Methods	30	71.42%
Method		
Other	3	7.14%
Survey	39	92.85%
Field of knowledge		
Other	7	16.66%
Humanities	34	80.95%
Social Sciences	37	88.09%
E-book distribution format		
Other	4	9.52%
University Publishing houses	16	38.09%
Academic library	17	40.47%

Source: SLR

All studies deal with the issue of OA contextualized to digital books in the SC&H field. Some had more preponderance and focus than others, being one of the inclusion criteria of the research. Nearly twenty-four (57.14%) of the documents described in the SLR explicitly indicate the theme of OA in their research objectives, whereas others address the issue in sections of the texts. Particular attention must begiven to the study by Eve (2015), who discusses the relationships and imbrications of digital books in the SC&H and OA fields. Thus,

we assume that there is a scenario of practices and studies considering the reality of SC&H OA digital books being distributed by university libraries or publishing houses. In addition, studies seek, with a certain modesty, to relate a priori this type of publication with OA, as in the OA Movement, with articles from journals following the gold and green path.

All studies cited or described OA digital books within the SC&H area, with approaches to their use and distribution from different perspectives. Figure 1 makes a qualitative and contextual connection between the objectives of this research and the analyses of the authors in the selected articles in the SLR.

Figure 1. Our research objectives vs findings of selected articles in the SLR analyses
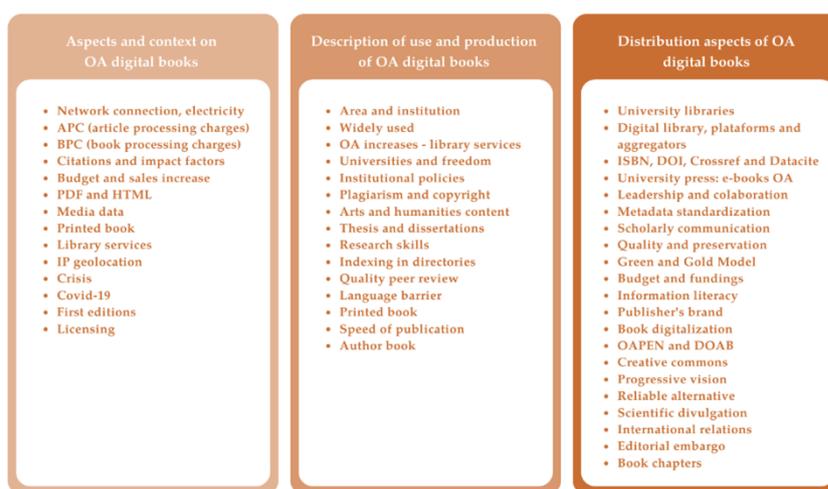
Source: SLR adapted

Given the data related to geolocation on which the research focuses, the impacts of technological and economic access are considered when the authors discuss using digital books. Because some universities in India are one of the foci of studies on this SLR, this is a key area and a necessary point to be raised. Moreover, economic and strategic decisions can affect using OA digital books, as seen in aspects that relate to OA adoption based on the institutional origin and original field of researchers. For example, if a library, publisher, or university encourages using OA digital books, they are more likely to be used as a source and distributor of scientific knowledge.

Some articles affirm that university libraries considerably support distributing and publishing OA digital books, corroborating the literature review (Ferwerda, 2010; Jobmann; Schönfelder, 2019). Some university libraries already have specialized services to support this type of communication, such as scholarly communications or a publishing office, with partnerships connecting the university's publishing and IT area. Furthermore, they can play a strategic role in supporting these publications with their digital resources, such as repositories and directories, reliable metadata standardization, as well as grants and budgetary funds, by collaborating with the creation of sustainable business models (Adema; Schmidt, 2010; Fathallah, 2022; Hacker, 2014; Hartmann, 2017; Shaw; Phillips; Gutiérrez, 2023; Taylor, 2020).

Another issue raised by the authors of the SLR was the budgetary and financial aspects due to the use and distribution of OA digital books. As the production costs of books can be slightly higher than those of journals, there is an increasing effort to continue recognizing viable ways to provide knowledge communication, especially OA. In addition, there has been an escalation in the budget cuts of university libraries for acquiring printed and digital bibliographic

materials. Researchers have claimed that there are indications that the level and importance of OA digital book model in SC&H is different from that of OA journals (Eve, 2015; Shaw; Phillips; Gutiérrez, 2022). In addition, they suggested that some standards practiced in OA publications, such as the Article Processing Charge (APC) for journals or Book Processing Charges (BPC) for books, do not meet or even make this type of communication more difficult. That is, there is a gap to be studied and practiced for establishing continuity in the OA digital book publishing model for some niches of the publishing market.

Some authors have recognized that this type of communication is no longer restricted and perhaps has never been limited to the conceptual and physical contexts of libraries (Feenstra; López-Cózar, 2022). Some alternatives for studying and monitoring their uses have already been discussed among librarians and information professionals, such as tracking downloads and views through IPs with the support of relevant directories, such as Directory of OA Books and OAPEN.

One of the recurring points in the articles was the authors' concern regarding the issue of licensing, copyright and the quality of peer review of OA digital books, even though some groups claim that this type of communication is faster and generates greater impacts on their citations (Adema; Schmidt, 2010; Eve, 2015; Giménez-Toledo; Tejada-Artigas; Borges-De-oliveira, 2019; Shaw; Phillips; Gutiérrez, 2023). In this area, a discussion that is frequently raised is the green and gold publishing models. In the U.K. there is already a government regulation that regulates the green model in institutions that use public money to produce e-books, guiding the embargo period of a maximum of one year. In the gold model, the issue of BPC is already seen as a model used by countries in Europe and the USA and is often seen as a barrier in the publication of open access e-books, since the costs charged by publishers are still quite steep (Shaw; Phillips; Gutiérrez, 2023).

Ferwerda (2010) states that there needs to be a differentiation between open access archiving (green) and publication (gold). In both cases, the contents are made available in open access on the internet. However, OA archiving refers to the preservation and dissemination of academic production, by providing unrestricted access to materials that have sometimes already been published. Publication, on the other hand, deals with the validation and certification of research results, by including the entire process of review, editing, design, production and distribution.

University publishers tend to have a more progressive audience that accepts new publishing possibilities, such as OA e-books. They were one of the great catalysts for the use of open access academic literature during and after the covid-19 pandemic, corroborating its importance in the distribution of scientific research results. During the pandemic period, there was a significant increase in the distribution and access of this type of publication. This behavior has continued in a certain sense to the present day, enhancing the use of open access e-books. This phenomenon reinforces the need for more support and maintenance of infrastructure for open access scientific communication, as well as its importance and impact on the life of society (Frankl, 2023; Maryl *et al.*, 2020; Shaw; Phillips; Gutiérrez, 2023; Watkinson, 2021).

The dynamics of studies and knowledge production in the areas of SC&H are closely connected to the nature of the book (Giménez-Toledo, Tejada-Artigas e Borges-De-Oliveira, 2019). However, when dealing with open access e-books, it is possible to identify some barriers in the articles, such as the recurrent use of different images and media in communicating the results of these disciplines. Such a scenario could harm the issue of copyright licensing (Crossick, 2016; Frankl, 2023). Furthermore, subjects in these areas can be text-oriented, with specific studies on language, in addition to the descriptive support of information. Language becomes a topic of study, as is the case with books published in German about the German language, which does not make them particularly capable of translation and wide international distribution, even though they are published in open access (Bargheer *et al.*, 2017).

Some identifiers and software that facilitate the use and distribution of open access e-books

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were remembered. ISBN has been considered an instrument that does not include all the possibilities for free and open distribution of e-book metadata, such as Crossref and Datacite (Taylor, 2020). The free software Open Monograph Press (OMP), from the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), was cited as a tool to support the publication of open access e-books by universities in the U.K. (Ayris, 2014), reaffirming the importance of the sphere of Open Science in the production and distribution of scientific knowledge.

Some authors have analyzed the crisis in book sales from the 1970s to the present day. It has impacted and still impacts the expansion and use of open access e-books, as libraries no longer have the necessary budget to acquire all printed items from their collections (Adema; Schmidt, 2010; Ayris, 2014; Crossick, 2016; Eve, 2015; Ferwerda, 2010, 2014; Georgiou; Tsakonas, 2010). The open access e-book model also assists in the publication of monographs, dissertations and theses, contributing to the dissemination of research results in the areas of SC&H, as well as continuing the context of initial publications by scientists in these areas, which usually have as their first publications books arising from their research papers (Bargheer *et al.*, 2017; Davies, 2014; Eve *et al.*, 2017; Gilliam; Daoutis, 2019; Look; Pinter, 2010; Maryl *et al.*, 2020; Shaw; Phillips; Gutiérrez, 2022).

5 CONCLUSION

The results obtained in this study instigate the debate on several factors related to the production, distribution, and use of OA digital books in SC&H by delineating a part of the related state-of-the-art research. Some possible findings were listed after applying the qualitative methodological approach using the SLR method performed in the LISA and Scopus databases. A tabular and summarized analysis was performed using the StArt Software, listed below.

- SC&H's knowledge of scholarly communication and OA through digital books is incipient.
- the concept of OA digital books is a means of scholarly communication in SC&H.
- There is a prominent debate about OA to digital books, particularly those used by SC&H s.
- university libraries and University press are the main institutions responsible for distributing and using OA digital books in SC&H, with growing performance and some mishaps related to budgetary and technological issues, according to the search strategy and database outlined for this research.
- authors of journal articles that were part of SLR are predominantly from India, the Indian, Germany and U.K.
- although the researcher's decision regarding the type of communication channel is more influenced by the scholarly discipline, the institutional incentives for production, distribution, and use pose as an influencing factor.
- there is a debate regarding the adaptations and choices between the green and golden paths researchers and institutions choose or use when distributing and publishing OA digital books, emphasizing the golden path.
- some existing consolidated OAs models for scientific electronic journals do not fully apply in reality and require OA digital books.
- OA digital book directories are essential for the distribution and organization of OA digital books in university libraries.
- distribution and publication of OA digital books have no significant effect on the sale of printed versions, often contributing to increased citations.
- publishing and distributing OA digital books can be up to 50% less expensive than printed versions.
- a university press publishes and distributes more OA digital books than an academic

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commercial press.
- researchers in the areas of SC&H demonstrate friendliness and knowledge regarding the advantages of production, distribution and use of open access e-books. However, they still have certain reservations regarding their licensing, copyright, quality and availability.

APPENDIX A: EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION CRITERIA

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION OF THE EXCLUSION CRITERIA
EC1	Articles that do not specifically mention Social Sciences and humanities fields in the use, distribution, and production of digital books
EC2	Articles that do not mention Open Access to digital books

Source: Own work

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION OF THE INCLUSION CRITERIA
IC1	Was the text written with textual coherence and cohesion
IC2	Were the methods or techniques reported objectively?
IC3	Were the use, distribution, and production of Open Access digital books explicitly mentioned?
IC4	Are the areas of knowledge present in the text related to Social Sciences and Humanities?
IC5	Are the digital books Open Access?

Source: Own work

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