

Why Marriage Matters: A North American Perspective on Press / Library Partnerships

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Key points:

- Around thirty percent of campus-based members of the Association of American University Presses now report to libraries, more than double the number five years ago.
- Beyond reporting relationships, physical collocation and joint strategic planning characterize the most integrated press/library partnerships.
- The main mutual advantages of deep press/library collaboration are economic efficiency, greater relevance to parent institutions, and an increased capacity to engage with the changing needs of authors in the digital age.
- There is emerging interest in collaboration at scale among libraries and presses that may extend the impact of press/library collaboration beyond single institutions.

Introduction

In a 2013 post on the Society for Scholarly Publishing's popular *Scholarly Kitchen* blog, consultant Joe Esposito explored "Having Relations with the Library: A Guide for University Presses" (Esposito, 2013). He wrote that "every way that you look at the relationship between a press and a library, you come away with little or nothing to support an organizational marriage. Presses are great things, libraries are great things, but they are not better things by virtue of having been put into the same organization." He concludes, "Both libraries and presses are better off pursuing their own aims, cooperating when useful, working separately when it is not. Surely it is not out of line to ask: Why can't we just be friends."

In this article I argue the case for "marriage," with its connotations of long-term, deeply-embedded partnership; a case that the rapidly growing number of university presses that report into libraries in North America will recognize. As mission-driven, non-profit organizations, university presses and academic libraries should be natural allies in the quest to create a more equitable scholarly publishing system. Expert in scholarly information management, situated on university and college campuses, supported to a varying degree by

This is the author manuscript accepted for publication and has undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the Version of Record. Please cite this article as doi: [10.1002/leap.1044](https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1044)

the same funding sources, and sharing many philosophical ideals, librarians and university press publishers seem to be logical partners in supporting the production of knowledge. But it is only recently that there has been much traction on the idea.

While the opportunities for publishing collaborations had been a topic of low-level discussion for many years (e.g., Day, 1995), a particular focus on this issue arose in the late 2000s. Between 2007 and 2009, several important reports (Brown, Griffiths, and Rascoff, 2007; Crow, 2009; Hahn, 2008) examined the opportunities for campus publishing partnerships, highlighting a few major initiatives that had started to emerge. These early experiments did not immediately appear to stimulate emulation, and a period of relatively little apparent activity ensued. For example, a survey of library publishing activity across a wide range of North American institutions conducted in 2010 found that fewer than 50 percent of the responding libraries that had access to a potential university press partner within their parent institutions were engaged in any form of collaboration (Mullins et al., 2012, 16), a number that had changed little from a similar survey three years earlier (Hahn 2008, 35).

This article proposes that we are now, however, seeing a resurgence of interest in the idea of library/press collaboration and that this time the movement is more sustainable since it is much more broadly based in character, with a diverse group of institutions involved. In the 2016 “AAUP Biennial Reporting Structure Survey,” thirty out of the one hundred and thirty three members of Association of American University Presses (AAUP) reported to libraries, representing a doubling over the five years (see table 1). Since AAUP includes some learned society, museum, and public policy publishers among its membership, it can reasonably be claimed that almost a third of campus-based university presses in North America now report to libraries.

2008/9	2010	2012	2014	2016
				Abilene Christian
				Akron
Alberta	Alberta	Alberta	Alberta	Alberta
	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona
Calgary	Calgary	Calgary	Calgary	Calgary
				Concordia
				Delaware

				George Mason
	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia
				Indiana
			Kentucky	Kentucky
Marquette	Marquette	Marquette	Marquette	Marquette
	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan	Michigan
MIT	MIT	MIT	MIT	MIT
Nebraska				
		New England	New England	
New York	New York	New York	New York	New York
		North Texas	North Texas	North Texas
Northwestern	Northwestern	Northwestern	Northwestern	Northwestern
Oregon State	Oregon State	Oregon State	Oregon State	Oregon State
Penn State	Penn State	Penn State	Penn State	Penn State
Purdue	Purdue	Purdue	Purdue	Purdue
				Southern Illinois
Stanford	Stanford	Stanford	Stanford	Stanford
Syracuse	Syracuse	Syracuse	Syracuse	Syracuse
	Temple	Temple	Temple	Temple
Texas Christian	Texas Christian	Texas Christian	Texas Christian	Texas Christian
				Texas Tech
Utah	Utah	Utah	Utah	Utah
	Utah State	Utah State		
				West Virginia
				Wilfrid Laurier

14

18

20

20

Yale

30

Table 1: Presses reporting to libraries. Data from AAUP Biennial Press Reporting Structure Survey, the most recent results accessible at: http://www.aaupnet.org/images/stories/data/2016_reporting_structure_20160415.pdf

A Continuum of Types of Relationship

A reporting relationship is one thing; truly leveraging the synergies that collaboration between a university press and library can offer is another. Collaborations on campuses are not only increasing in number but they are becoming richer in nature. This trend can be analyzed in the context of a proposed taxonomy of relationship types (articulated in more detail in Watkinson, 2014) in which three drivers seem to particularly affect where a press appears. These are (a) whether the press reports to the library; (b) whether press staff members are physically collocated with library colleagues; and (c) whether the press and library engage in strategic planning together.

- Type 1, little evidence of currently active relationships between press and library
- Type 2, good relationships between the press and one or more libraries, but no reporting
- Type 3, reporting and joint projects, but relative autonomy and no physical collocation
- Type 4, physical collocation, reporting, but relative autonomy
- Type 5, more integrated, shared vision approaches

Should the taxonomic outline above be understood as snapshots of different stages along a process, where relationships move from collaboration to integration, or as representing different models appropriate in different contexts? Arguments could be made for both suggestions.

On the one hand, some organizational models may make progression beyond the type 2 category, in which collaborations exist but there is a lack of reporting relationship, difficult. A particular structural challenge faces presses that are tied to a university system rather than a specific campus. The system-based university presses of Florida, Kansas, North Carolina, and Mississippi, for example, have extremely positive relationships with libraries but publishing responsibilities across many different institutions. Such an organizational structure may make integrated relationships with any one campus challenging.

At other institutions, a clear progression can be seen as a press is moved into a

reporting relationship with a library for administrative reasons but then the two partners find increasing synergies. At both Purdue University and the University of Michigan the presses were “rescued” by far-sighted library directors at a time when large deficits had been accrued and the provosts had become concerned about lack of oversight. From such inauspicious beginnings, however, a process of movement from collaboration to integration can be shown as various opportunities were explored, with the relationship developing from type 1 (prior to 2008/9) through type 3 to type 5 today.

Both examples highlight the importance of reporting, physical collocation, and shared strategic planning as the main taxonomic delineators. While initially the press staff and library staff were in different buildings, collaboration increased dramatically when they were moved into the same location. In the case of Purdue, the press moved from the periphery of campus to an attractive central location, in close proximity to the Dean of Libraries’ office. At Michigan, librarians from the Scholarly Publishing Office were relocated to a library facilities building at the edge of campus to join press staff. Joint strategic planning exercises were the next step, with an important part of these being the increasing inclusion of the press director in library senior leadership meetings. Type 5 situations are often reflected by the press director also having a position within the library, represented in the individual’s title: For example, “AUL for Publishing and Director of University of Michigan Press,” “Director of Purdue University Press and Head of Scholarly Publishing Services, Purdue Libraries,” “Executive Director Temple University Press and Scholarly Communications Officer, University Libraries”, “Director, Indiana University press and Digital Publishing”, and most extremely “Donald and Delpha Campbell University Library and Oregon State University Press Director.” Even where titles may not reflect it, press directors can be highly involved in library leadership decisions as at MIT Press where the press director and library director have set out an ambitious joint agenda around the transformation of scholarly communication (MIT, 2016).

The variation in the types of relationship represented by press/library collaborations was on display at a recent meeting convened by AAUP, the Association of Research Libraries, and Coalition for Networked Information and held at Temple University in Philadelphia on May 9 – 10, 2016. Sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation this P2L (Presses to Libraries) summit brought together directors of university presses and deans/directors of libraries from most of the institutions with a reporting relationship. After establishing a common understanding of the barriers to and possibilities for alignment, the participants focused on the opportunities their partnerships might offer for system-wide approaches to managing the total cost of the scholarly publishing system and better supporting the needs of digital scholarship. It is to these benefits (the reasons that press/library collaborations once established tend to progress along the continuum) that we now turn.

Why Marry?

While many press/library collaborations are initiated by anticipated “economic” benefits, the partners increasingly find “sociopolitical” advantage which is often closely linked to “technological” opportunity in an environment where the need to sustain digital scholarship is an increasing theme. These three themes are discussed below. The benefits realized are not only relevant to the two partners, of course, but also allow them together to better serve the scholarly communication needs of institutional faculty, staff, and students and to develop powerful solutions for particular disciplinary communities whose subject interests align with the strategic strengths of the parent university—an idea strongly focused on in the recommendations of the 2007 Ithaka S&R report on *University Publishing in a Digital Age* (Brown, Griffiths, and Rascoff 2007).

Economic: In the economic sphere, the reasons why a university press could benefit from closer relationships with the library may initially be clearer than the advantages for libraries. As described in a number of reports, university presses have long been suffering from the declining market for scholarly books and increased financial scrutiny from their institutions (Thompson 2005, 108–9). Reducing expenses is a priority, and opportunities to share overhead costs with campus partners are beneficial. As libraries increasingly either de-accession or remove print materials to remote storage, subsidized or “free” physical space is becoming available that may be suitable for press occupancy, although presses interested in a central campus location will often have to wrestle with other priority needs (especially those focused on student learning) when lobbying for premium library space. Other opportunities for synergy frequently come in the areas of IT services, combined human resource and business office support, and shared legal counsel.

In a survey conducted by AAUP’s Library Relations Committee in 2012, 11% of libraries provided some form of cash subsidy to university presses, while 53% of libraries provided some other kinds of service. This included rent-free space but also support for basic office functions, digitization, metadata enrichment, and preservation services. Both libraries and presses share specific needs in these areas that would not be well accommodated by other campus partners. For example, IT specialists in the library tend to understand the metadata standards needed for bibliographic information and the demands of digital preservation, HR recruiters are often advertising in similar venues for library and press staff, and legal expertise in areas such as intellectual property is desirable for both partners (even if they may sometimes approach the law from different angles). While many of the business office functions needed by the partners are similar, some challenges can emerge in this area. These are mostly related to handling a

revenue-generating unit whose income and expenditure fluctuate over a multiyear cycle (e.g., expenses incurred on a book in one financial year may not be recouped until the following financial year) rather than a library, which spends down an annually renewed budget over a single financial year, and having to track cash flow. Indeed, while many press/library collaborations have found synergies in back-office operations related to expenditure, it has been much harder to merge systems related to revenue, including the time-consuming demands of royalty tracking.

A less tangible area of economic opportunity for both presses and libraries is in developing a better mutual understanding of the economic challenges facing the scholarly communication ecosystem in order to develop more informed strategies for intervention. One example of this lies in the area of open-access publishing, where questions about the “real cost” of publishing both journal articles and, increasingly, books are at the center of library strategies to support this emerging field. University presses, over 50% of which publish journals, can help untangle the issues and inform an understanding of what might constitute a fair level of subsidy. With the growing interest in open-access monographs, questions of what constitutes a reasonable first copy cost are again coming to the fore, and the opportunities to work through cost components in an environment of mutual trust are invaluable. Where university press staff members are involved in discussions about collections development choices, presses gain insights into the processes by which libraries choose what and what not to buy. These are valuable for decision-making locally and may give a library-based university press a competitive advantage, but there are also ripple effects as informed press directors and staff spread an understanding of the constraints libraries are operating under within the publishing community more broadly.

Perhaps even more important than back-office efficiencies, there are perceptual advantages (especially for smaller presses) in having university press budgets incorporated into those of a larger parent organization on campus. Because they produce sales revenue, university presses generally are classified by their parent institutions as “auxiliary” operations alongside entities such as student housing, catering, and sometimes even athletics. Not only are academic publishing revenues dwarfed by those other sources of earned income, but the metrics of success for such units tend to primarily be financial rather than mission-related. Libraries, meanwhile, are classified as core academic units. Funds spent on the library and its subsidiary units are classified as “designated” for pursuit of the academic mission of the university. By changing its classification from “auxiliary” to “designated” in university accounts (the exact terms used will vary by institution), the press’s appearance under the library’s financial accounting umbrella can change the way in which the parent institution’s senior administrators understand the purpose of supporting an academic publishing unit – to the advantage of the

university press. No more being called before the Provost to account for yet another year of deficit!

Sociopolitical: As libraries move from stewarding collections to providing services, academic librarians are eager to acquire expertise in serving the needs of faculty as “authors” rather than “users” of scholarly information. Even though the individuals may be the same, the attitudes and expectations of faculty as authors and as users of scholarly content are as different as “Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde” (Mabe and Amin, 2002). The development of data management services and library publishing services are two manifestations of this change in emphasis, but it has become clear that libraries are struggling to gain acceptance by faculty members in these new “research support” roles, as reflected in the results of the latest Ithaka US faculty survey which suggests little advance in the library’s credibility as a research partner vs. increasing perception of its value in supporting students (Wolff, Rod, and Schonfeld, 2016). While the credibility of the university press as a partner to authors may be greatest in humanities and social science disciplines, an association between a press and a library can advance the reputation of the library in this space and provide valuable access to knowledge about effective ways to solicit and work with authors.

A perennial challenge for university presses has been in demonstrating relevance to their parent institutions. Focused on the needs of specific disciplines across institutions rather than on a single institution, university presses provide a public good that is clear at the system level but is much less apparent to administrators evaluating the local benefits of their investments. Partnership with the library allows the press to create programs that demonstrate alignment with the needs of the institution, while also advancing the ambitions of the library in areas such as scholarly communication and information literacy instruction. These successes can be represented to senior administration by the dean or director of libraries who, unlike the press director, is a visible presence in institutional leadership meetings.

A particularly interesting opportunity for collaboration lies in finding ways for the university press and library to engage with students in new ways. A number of university presses are working with their parent libraries to create open and/or affordable textbooks (e.g., Indiana, Temple, Purdue, Oregon State). Meanwhile, under the banner of “publishing as pedagogy” (Alexander, Colman, Kahn, Peters, Watkinson, & Welzenbach, 2016), others are working to integrate the experience of publishing student work into the experiential learning opportunities that are increasing in number on North American campuses. The development of scholarly communication curricula involving the production of the graduate-produced *Michigan Journal of Medicine* (<http://www.michjmed.org/>) or the undergraduate-run *Journal of Purdue Undergraduate Research* (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jpur/>) are examples. As well as

completing the scholarly communication cycle and providing a tangible output that students can use in their future careers, involvement in a publishing process also involves the application of a number of high impact learning experiences that can be shown to have a positive impact on student success (Weiner and Watkinson, 2014).

Technological: As faculty members increasingly apply digital tools to their research, their needs for support in publishing the full record of their work electronically is increasing. The evidence-based 2007 study by the Ithaka organization on “university publishing in the digital age” identified four emerging needs for scholars whose modes of information production and consumption are increasingly electronic. These are that everything must be electronic, that scholars will rely on deeply integrated electronic research/publishing environments, that multimedia and multi-format delivery will become increasingly important, and that new forms of content will enable different economic models (Brown, Griffiths, and Rascoff 2007, 13–15). Almost a decade later, it is clear that university presses are seeing these needs expressed by almost every author, not just “digital humanists.”

Press/library collaborations have the capacity to effectively meet these needs by not only harnessing the complementary skills of publishers and librarians but also enabling university presses to connect peer-reviewed scholarship with less formally produced material, the idea of publishing “across the continuum” described by Daniel Greenstein (2010). The inclination to experiment, which at many university presses has been suppressed by the need to constantly look to the bottom line, can be released by financial relief that being part of the library can offer to enable new opportunities to be explored. While a recent round of grants given by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to improve university press capacity to support digital scholarship in the humanities have gone to presses with a range of organizational structures, a disproportionate number of recipients represent library/press partnerships. The projects proposed by presses reporting to libraries have characteristics that leverage the relative strengths of each party and emphasize the logic of deep collaboration. For example, New York University’s Enhanced Network Monograph project focuses on issues of the discoverability of digital projects, especially open access publications, an area of joint concern to libraries and presses (NYU ENM, 2015). The University of Michigan’s Fulcrum platform (fulcrum.org), meanwhile, leverages library-based work to develop data repositories using the open source Hydra/Fedora framework to serve the needs of humanists for long-term digital preservation of the digital research outputs they wish to link to their monographs (UM Hydra, 2015). Michigan is working on this project with three other presses strongly linked to their libraries (Indiana, Northwestern, and Penn State) and one that is not (Minnesota).

Why Not Just Good Friends?

Achieving some of the benefits of the sorts of collaboration described above does not absolutely require an integrated press/library structure. There are good examples of collaboration where the press and library have different reporting lines, or even are at different institutions, such as Duke University Press and Cornell University Libraries for Project Euclid (Ehling and Staib, 2009) or Oxford University Press and University of Utah Library in hosting supplemental content for a faculty member's book (Anderson, 2013). University of North Carolina Press especially has shown leadership in creating relationships with its system libraries to advance initiatives such as the creation of open educational resources through its Office of Scholarly Publishing Services (Ruff, 2016). Some university presses that report to libraries continue to maintain self-conscious separation of functions: Stanford University Press has chosen to collaborate with the University of Richmond's Digital Scholarship Lab rather than its parent library to create its Mellon-funded digital scholarship platform (Stanford, 2015).

It is also important not to dismiss the real challenges that integrating two organizations with different cultures and traditions pose, especially since the historical relationship of client/vendor has built-in tensions. Cultural differences between librarians and publishers that make collaborating on joint projects challenging have sometimes been exemplified by the idea that "libraries are service organizations whose funding comes in part from their success in anticipating needs, they tend to say yes" while "publishers, working to break even in a highly competitive business, evaluating many potential projects, and with quantifiable limits on their productivity, tend to say no" (McCormick, 2008, 30). Meanwhile, the need to pursue business strategies that cover most costs through earned revenue and the razor-thin margins most university presses operate on are often overlooked by libraries, and university press directors often feel unfairly picked upon when libraries accuse them of dragging their feet on open access or being "disconnected from the academic values of their parent institutions," a common refrain in debate around the Georgia State University lawsuit (Smith, 2012).

However, as the above discussion has hopefully illustrated, the deep partnership required to truly unleash the power of the complementary skills and infrastructure that exist in university presses and academic libraries can only develop when press and library staff are collocated and share a common vision. Only in such "marriages" can resources be gifted and received, uncertain futures explored without risk, and the cultural differences between the partners truly appreciated and valued. Just good friends is not good enough.

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