

October 2016

Mark Saunders Profile

Follow this and additional works at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(2013) "Mark Saunders Profile," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 25: Iss. 5, Article 20.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6616>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

creation of knowledge. All of this enhances our impact on behalf of our host university.

ATG: *Mr. Klein also acknowledged that scholarly publishing is a “fast-changing industry.” What do you think are the most critical transitions facing UVA Press in successfully dealing with this change? What about for university presses in general? How does the university press adjust and succeed amid this everchanging landscape?*

MS: The tools of our trade are expanding at a very high rate — it’s no longer enough for us to be good editors or designers or publicists alone. It’s a challenge for us all to keep up and to make informed decisions about which technologies and business models are transitional and which will take root in the scholarly publishing environment. To complicate things further, the legal ground under our feet is constantly shifting, too. What we’ve learned from developing *Rotunda* — which was like building a plane during flight — is to master the variables as best you can but don’t assume that you know the solution. Collaboration is increasingly important, even crucial, to fulfilling our mission.

ATG: *There are a number of instances where the university press is very involved with the library. In fact, at some universities the press is part of the library operation. What is the relationship between the library and press at the University of Virginia? Has there been any formal collaboration? If not, is that a future possibility?*

MS: Presses and libraries have historically had very different cultures, but I think that the two are growing together, which is good for the system as a whole. UVA has a long tradition of digital innovation from entities that make their home in the library, from the original E-text center to the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities and the Scholars Lab. The Press has enjoyed strong, collaborative relationships with those digital incubators at all levels. I think that in the near future new mechanisms for sharing resources will develop that will increase the opportunity for more formal, shared innovation.

ATG: *Are there some specific examples of these “collaborative relationships with the digital incubators” housed in the library? And what about the “near future new mechanisms for sharing resources?” Can you talk a little more about those?*

MS: Last year our Provost, **John Simon**, commissioned an environmental scan of the digital humanities at UVA, with the goal of conceiving a framework through which resources, including people, technology, and funding, could be more effectively managed across the various DH shops at the University. This initiative is meant to nurture and increase the kinds of collaboration that have thrived here since the 1990s. The original grant for the UVA Press Electronic Imprint was co-written with the founder of IATH, **John Unsworth**, in 2000. The *Rotunda* publication, *Herman*

against the grain people profile

Mark Saunders

Director, University of Virginia Press
Box 400318, Charlottesville, VA 22904
Phone: (434) 924-6064 • Fax: (434) 982-2655
<mrsaunders@virginia.edu> • www.upress.virginia.edu

BORN AND LIVED: D.C area, Philadelphia, New York, and Charlottesville.

EARLY LIFE: My father was a diplomat, so I traveled overseas a lot as a child.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I came up in university presses through sales and marketing, first at **Columbia**, then **Virginia**, where I became involved with our electronic imprint, now called *Rotunda*, at its founding in 2001 and started managing the project in 2004.

FAMILY: My wife, **Robin Stafford**, is an antiques dealer and we have a daughter and two sons, ages 17, 15, and 13.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Playing outside, building things, coaching and watching my kids’ sports.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *All the Kings Men*, *The Quiet American*, *The Moviegoer*, *Dog Soldiers*, *The Untouchable*, among many others.

PET PEEVES: “This American Life.”

PHILOSOPHY: Existentialism.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: *Rotunda*, with a whole lot of help.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: I would like to integrate the content workflows of the books and digital side of the Press in a sustainable way.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: While the core values of university presses and what they add to the creation of new scholarship will remain, I think that our community will see a great deal of integration, adoption of shared services, and collaboration with other entities within the next five years. This change will take place at every stage of the publishing process and even within the larger cycle of scholarly communication. Scale and the pace of change will drive this transformation. Not even the largest presses will enjoy the necessary scale to develop, define, and deliver the content, platforms, and tools by themselves, so all the players, including scholars, societies, presses, and libraries will need to work together even as the presses remain competitive with each other. 

Melville’s “Typee,” was originally conceived at IATH, and *Clotel* was built at the E-text Center. Collaboration with IATH and other incubators has taken place at the level of technology and expertise sharing, and service to the TEI consortium. We would all benefit from a more formal administrative structure for that activity.

ATG: *What is the primary source of funding for the UVA Press? Does it have a line in the university budget, or does it have to be self-sustaining?*

MS: Our primary source of revenue is cost recovery through the sales of our books and *Rotunda* content, so we are largely self-sustaining. We receive a small subsidy from the university that amounts to less than 5% of our operating costs, and we have an endowment that provides an additional funding stream. Of course we enjoy numerous benefits from being a part of the University that do not show up strictly in the budget, but are worth a great deal.

ATG: *Can you tell us more about the “numerous benefits from being part of the University” that don’t show up in the UVA Press budget?*

MS: Two major benefits that come immediately to mind from our host institution, in addition to various back-office functions,

are the services of our faculty editorial board and the advice of our associate general counsel. The UVA Press board helps to guard the integrity of our imprint as the final stage in the peer review process. Our counsel, **Madelyn Wessel**, provides an expert opinion in intellectual property and other legal matters, including contracts that come before the Press.

ATG: *What would you say are the topic/subject strengths of the UVA Press? How many books do you publish a year? Journals? What proportion of your publications are electronic, and what are print? Do you expect this mix to continue moving forward?*

MS: We publish roughly 70 books per year on American history, literature, politics, architecture, religious studies, and topics about Virginia. The *American Founding Era* is a particular area of strength, reflecting **Jefferson’s** role in the creation of UVA. We are strong in African American studies across all disciplines. Last fiscal year, over 85% of our books were published in print and electronic formats simultaneously, and we released three new *Rotunda* editions. I expect most of our content to be available in multiple formats for the near future.

continued on page 42