

## Publarians and Lubishers: Role Bending in the New Scholarly Communications Ecosystem

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# Publarians and Lubishers: Role Bending in the New Scholarly Communications Ecosystem

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## Background Note

Several years ago at the Charleston Conference, a speaker drew a laugh by speculating that in the future, we Charlestonian attendees would all become publarians and lubishers. Although the year and the name of the speaker unfortunately receded from our memory, the concept behind the witticism struck a chord. These prescient coinages envisioned a world in which divisions between publishers and librarians that now seem intractable would dissolve, simply because the evolving ecosystem of scholarly communication would compel us to learn new skills from each other. Although our professions are a long way from becoming indistinguishable (nor is such an outcome likely or even desirable), publishers and librarians increasingly have occasion to appreciate each other's skills.

This panel was conceived not so much to address overwhelming philosophical questions head on but rather to put a spotlight on specific ways in which we are now learning from each other. Having set out to present a structured conversation about practical matters, we found that each rehearsal, and the actual version in front of the audience, was quite different because each participant had so much more to say than time allowed. In this written summary, we have taken advantage of the opportunity to include all of the most important points that came up in our preparatory conversations as well as in the "live" version of the panel.

## Nancy Maron: Introduction

There is something in the air. In the past few years, libraries have taken on scholarly communications activities with gusto. In an ARL

study last year, over 90% of respondents reported engaging in scholarly communications work, whether that means hosting a repository, issuing conference proceedings, or running a peer-reviewed journal. Last month, a group called the Library Publishing Coalition issued their first Library Publishing Directory including entries from over 110 institutions. And this is not just ARL; Amherst's library announced last year the creation of Amherst College Press, and other Oberlin Group libraries are investigating this topic, as well.

Publishers are moving closer to libraries in several ways, too. Metadata are not just for catalogers anymore. Publishers, who mainly cared about what shelf in a bookstore to code a book for, now must be much more savvy about how their books become part of a data collections and otherwise integrate with library systems.

Most significant, a couple dozen university presses now report to the library, sometimes as a primarily administrative arrangement, but sometimes leading to more fundamental partnering with library staff on publishing activities.

As my colleague Sylvia Miller suggested in the invitation to this session, "It has been said that the work of publishers and librarians will merge over time until we are all publarians and lubishers."

The pure fear that those two new job titles might enter the vernacular might be enough to permanently halt the trend right here. Nevertheless, we will forge on.

So, how is it going? To judge from the sessions at this conference, sorting out this merging, blurring, transitioning moment is a real priority. At least

five sessions of all types—plenary, concurrent session, lively lunch, Neapolitan, and the Hyde Park Corner Debate—all address, in some form or another, the question of what this transition is, should be, or could be.

On occasion, the discussion can tend to slide into generalities, as some librarians characterize publishers as ill-intentioned and see undertaking publishing activities as a way to work around them; some publishers wonder if libraries know what they are in for by taking on publishing roles, and speculate that perhaps libraries are just looking for something new as the models they have known become less relevant.

Clearly, there are issues to be resolved. The panel today takes the point of view that the only way to get us there is by opening up a candid discussion with concrete examples about not just the benefits that these shifts can offer, but the difficulties, as well. And we will do that with three outstanding representatives of these roles:

In the publisher's corner, we have Charles Watkinson who is Director of Purdue University Press and Head of Purdue Libraries's Scholarly Publishing Services. Charles plays a wide range of roles there, from acquisition to strategy and many things in between. He was previously Director of Publications at the American School of Classical Studies in Princeton, New Jersey. He has been an active part of the community in openly and eloquently discussing press-library partnerships, including the model now in place at Purdue which is notable for addressing a broad spectrum of publishing activities.

Representing the libraries, we have Anne R. Kenney who is Carl A. Kroch University Librarian at Cornell University where she has been since 1987 and has served as University Librarian since 2008. She leads Cornell's system of 20 libraries and has played a major role in some of the most innovative digital resource projects in memory, including hosting and developing a sustainable strategy for the e-print system arXiv; developing Project Euclid in partnership with Duke University Press; and Signale, a monograph publishing program in partnership with Cornell University Press.

And to offer the perspective of someone who has both worked in an editorial capacity and in project management both with presses and with libraries, we have Sylvia Miller.

Sylvia can speak both to a vanished age of publishing, where she was at one time an executive editor when Scribner's still made multivolume scholarly encyclopedias...and was able to sell them. She also speaks to the new generation of innovative digital initiatives, serving as project manager of the Long Civil Rights Movement during her time at UNC Press. Today, she is Special Projects Coordinator at the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University where she is leading a Mellon-funded initiative to draw humanities scholars together into collaborative work settings.

As for me, for the last 6 years, I have been at Ithaka S+R where our team has spent time studying the "sustainability" question: How do digital projects—that were never conceived as commercial objects—nonetheless develop coherent strategies for securing the financial and nonfinancial resources they need to remain vibrant and useful to the community? How do digital project leaders think about audience? Where do they go to seek funding? And how do they measure the impact of it all?

Next week, we will issue a report in partnership with the ARL, entitled *Searching for Sustainability: Strategies from Eight Digitized Special Collections*. If you have a chance to read this, you may notice the same things we did: that increasingly, the most dynamic digital resources are the ones that do think hard about certain things once deemed the domain of publishing: curating content, identifying an audience, developing intuitive interfaces, and putting time into reaching their audience. A survey of ARL institutions we conducted with the ARL last year demonstrated that when it comes to their digitized collections, few librarians devote much time to direct outreach and promotion of these collections they have worked hard to acquire and digitize; the users of this content are understood in only very broad brush terms; and absent any financial goals, clear metrics of success have not yet emerged to replace them. This feels like an area ripe for really

fruitful press-library collaborations, for example. But enough about me.

We will ask that you hold questions until the end.

### Question 1

In what ways have you seen your institution start to move towards publishing activities (or towards greater partnership with library)?

- What got you into this?
- Why would a library want to be a publisher (and vice versa)? What opportunities did you imagine this would offer?
- What does the arrangement involve today?

Anne

What are the cultural assumptions that we have about each other; press-library structural relationships vary across universities. It is instructive to look again at the 2007 Ithaka report's conclusions about libraries and consider how libraries have changed since then. Some presses are part of the library. What good is a university press to a library; why would they want one? The advantage to the press is obvious. Libraries are funded from a materials budget; this is a serious issue because this type of budget has more restrictions. The digitization budget is in this materials budget.

Charles

The aim at Purdue is to explore what a university press truly integrated into an academic library can accomplish. The Press reported to the Dean of Libraries from the early 1990s and, as Nancy noted, is one of currently 27% of AAUP member university presses to do so. In 2008, the Press staff were physically moved into the libraries, which is, again, an increasingly common initiative. Physical proximity encouraged closer relationships and trust to develop, as well as more understanding of the nature of publishing skills and knowledge and how it could be deployed usefully. In 2012, the Director of the Press was put in charge of the institutional repository, Purdue e-Pubs.

Reconceived as a publishing platform, the repository platform allows us to serve a range of campus publishing needs, from student journals to technical reports, that do not require heavyweight publishing services but need to look professional, have some quality control, and appear fast. To protect the Press brand as a peer-reviewed, disciplinarily focused publication venue, we created the Scholarly Publishing Services "imprint" for these informal, institution-focused materials.

The primary advantage of these organizational changes lies in our ability to better serve the needs of our community (scholars, university staff, and students) in a digital environment where the "book" and "journal article" are not the only containers they care about and to also better promote our institution. Vinopal and McCormick, in a recent article in the *Journal of Library Administration* (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2013.756689>), have usefully differentiated between a Tier 2 "production-level" scholarly publishing service where standardized systems serve daily needs and a Tier 3 "research-intensive" service which is much more tailored to specific projects. We currently provide the former more than the latter, looking for ways in which we can apply the technology we have (mainly the Digital Commons platform from bepress) rather than developing new solutions. In this mode, we have had particular success in growing an undergraduate research journal, the *Journal of Purdue Undergraduate Research* (<http://www.jpur.org>) and bringing a long-running technical report series, that of the Joint Transportation Research Program (<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/jtrp>) out of its "gray literature" limbo. These projects, along with other niche open access journals, white paper, and report series, comprise about 40% of the ca. 35,000 items in Purdue e-Pubs but account for ca. 70% of the usage, which is now running at a level of over 2 million downloads a year.

Our experiments in Tier 3 services have focused on building a disciplinary repository for the study of the human-animal bond with the College of Veterinary Medicine (<http://habricentral.org>) and projects to highlight special collections in the

Archives, such as a joint Apple iPad App focused on the astronaut Jerry L. Ross, which incorporates an autobiographical book and an archival collection of papers, artifacts, and videos (<http://www.jerryross.com>).

### *Sylvia*

I have now two stages or sets of experiences in role bending and experimenting with crossing traditional boundaries (both enabled via the support of the wonderful Mellon foundation). So here are what and why, very quickly:

#### Stage 1

What? UNC Press, LCRM collaboration of Press, Special Collections Library, SOHP, and Center for Civil Rights at the Law School: We were charged with publishing in innovative ways on civil rights, which we took to mean electronic in some way. Over 5 years and two stages of grant funding, we ended up creating an online collection with a commenting feature and multimedia e-books with outbound links to archives (with associated development of skills and processes). We also published paperback and e-book editions of archival slave narratives (including *12 Years a Slave*, which is now a movie, so that one ought to be doing well!). We also digitized 4,000 oral histories and started a project to map oral histories that has developed into a tool called DH Press.

Why? Mellon Foundation was following up on the 2007 Ithaka report on university presses (*University Publishing in a Digital Age*) which recommended that university presses align themselves more closely with their home institutions and collaborate with libraries. I think the Press saw the library as more technologically advanced at that time and hoped some sort of joint venture would bring them more thoroughly into the digital age. The library was interested in the opportunity to digitize collections in a targeted way and perhaps experiment with a revenue-producing publishing venture.

#### Stage 2

What? Currently, I am coordinating two international scholarly collaborations for a consortium housed at Duke, one on Religion,

Secularism, and Political Belonging and another on Humanities and Climate Change, under the aegis of the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI). The whole venture is called “Integrating Humanities across National Boundaries.” Clearly, I am fated to work on projects with long names and mysterious acronyms! There are five universities around the world working on each project, and we have proposed two more such projects for funding. Each project presents interesting scholarly-communications challenges (admittedly, my favorite part).

Why? CHCI and Mellon are interested in experimenting with international and interdisciplinary scholarly collaboration, in crossing disciplinary, national, and cultural borders as one possible way to strengthen the humanities.

Potentially a lot of school-com role bending—why? We need web sites that help these far-flung collaborators in Tel Aviv, Dublin, Hong Kong, and so on to actually work together and so that, eventually, they can produce concrete outcomes such as (all these are being discussed or are in the works in some way): shared content repositories, interactive maps, annotated bibliographies, white papers, special journal issues, and contributed volumes. This sort of swirling constellation of scholarly communications refers to the ecosystem in our session title, but more on that later!

### **Question 2**

In practice, what have been the benefits and challenges to the model? (So how is it going?)

- Specifically, how has this had an impact on how your organization thinks about:
  - audience
  - revenue
  - impact
  - the culture of the organization?

### *Charles*

The main benefit of the more integrated press/library relationship at Purdue has been that

we are now better able to serve the needs of scholars in the digital environment. For example, because the libraries have technical skills and infrastructure to support data, we can produce enriched books that include links to multimedia. Also, because we are freed from just publishing formal, extensively peer-reviewed products, we can help get their scholarship out more quickly through online conference proceedings, white papers, and technical reports. And we can support their teaching as well as research activities by supporting the publication of student scholarship, a powerful incentive for students writing honors theses, etc.

This is all possible for three reasons: (1) the library has taken on more of our financial burden through the free-of-charge provision of shared services such as business office, legal, IT support, and support for professional development activities. This allows us to experiment without always looking over our shoulders for the next dollar; (2) the libraries have the technical infrastructure in their repository operations and staff skills to allow us to deliver sustainable digital products; (3) through our central position on campus and leveraging the relationships librarians have already developed, we are able to engage much more with our parent-institution's community so we can learn much more about evolving scholarly communication needs across a range of disciplines.

In terms of challenges, there are concerns about reputation, perspective, and capacity: (1) The closer relationship with our host institution through the libraries does require vigilance around protecting the "university press" brand which stands for editorial independence. As one works more closely with faculty within the institution, it is inevitable that a larger number of proposals from inside the university result. To avoid accusations of "vanity publishing," a strong peer-review process needs to be enforced and the Editorial Board needs to be alert. Recently, for example, the Editorial Board of Purdue University Press prevented me from publishing undergraduate student work under the Press imprint which they were right to do; (2) In terms of perspective, I am sometimes concerned about

losing the "business-like" perspective that university presses have had to build over the years to meet cost-recovery expectations. A library is tasked with being a good steward of a university subsidy, and earned revenue is a minimal part of most academic libraries' activities. In this environment, a publisher may relax its concern with producing products oriented to the market if it is no longer reliant on sales, which may lead to poorer quality. Ensuring that there are good metrics beyond sales is important, and we obsess about usage statistics for our open access products; (3) Capacity is a major concern. Whereas, previously, the secret to successful university press publishing was a remorseless focus on a few key disciplinary areas, we are now "drinking from the fire hose" in trying to serve the manifold publishing needs of a wide range of stakeholders across a large research university. This risks stressing the staff as well as impeding our ability to effectively achieve authors' ambitions for their publications. Establishing a system for selecting which projects to focus on is essential and is still a work in progress at Purdue. But I guess that demand outstripping capacity is a good problem to have, especially, as is often the case in the publishing opportunities we see on campus, there is often money available to sustain new projects.

*Anne*

The press tends to be more risk averse than the library might be, but both want to see the best scholarship made available. Let us challenge the general assumptions about a library-publisher culture clash (culture of "yes" versus culture of "no").

Scholars do not want their work mixed up with students' in a repository; they value the brand. There is more competition within and among libraries, too, than between libraries and presses: opportunity? In our Euclid collaboration, Duke University Press and the Cornell Library are not competing; there is a clear understanding that one is a press and the other is a library. We do need to recognize business-model differences. Are any university presses exploring open content? Does earned revenue have a place in library publishing?

Open access needs to be a component of a project; a moving wall for a monograph is a good example of how different models can work very well together. Could a multiuniversity press platform compete in the sciences? Euclid is an example of yes.

### *Sylvia*

Benefits: Some concrete benefits were already outlined when I described why we were doing these projects.

Benefits are innovative, hybrid models that improve on our traditional ways to serve scholars and researchers. Scholars in history and anthropology are especially excited about the university press–archival collaborative model. We have the opportunity to reach across perceived gaps between us to serve scholars better in their research and production of content.

Another major benefit is learning new skills and developing new processes. For example, we translated marketing metadata into Dublin Core for our Long Civil Rights Movement online collection; the Press learned XML, which the Library already knew, and shared our new-found knowledge with the university-press community.

The Library picked up on the process that book proposals go through at the Press to set up a process for requesting Library Systems support of digital projects. The Library appreciated specific requests for collections to digitize; this also happened with other archives we worked with, such as the Avery Center here in Charleston. The UNC Special Collections Library developed a process to make materials digitized on a small scale available immediately online via digitized finding aids, and they were excited about multimedia e-books potentially making their collections more discoverable.

Challenges: There are a lot; here are some:

- A shared Press-Library position of Digital Production Specialist was never really used by the Library, and his time was taken over by the Press. Eventually, the position became a permanent full-time position at the Press—a terrific

development for the Press but perhaps a lost opportunity for the Library.

- It is usually more efficient and sustainable to use existing tools. We spent a lot of money on programming, and no one has subsequently used the open-source software that we devised as a platform for online collections with a commenting feature.
- The business model for multimedia e-books with links to archival collections (a format I call a “portal book”) remained a challenge for the Press; it will probably take a critical mass of multimedia scholarly e-books to be available before audiences will really wake up to them; they will need Project MUSE and JSTOR to accommodate them.
- Experimental research-and-development projects benefit from having a dedicated director or coordinator which might not be affordable without a grant or special funding.
- Red tape such as subcontracts and budgeting bureaucracy are huge in interinstitutional collaborative relationships. These kinds of arrangements are common in the sciences, but to humanists they are new and bewildering, so I am developing guidelines for them at CHCI.
- Connecting interdisciplinary collaborative projects with the digital library and publishing services they need is a significant challenge that is important to address.

### **Question 3**

What can conventional publishers learn from library publishers, and vice versa?

- How can we take advantage of differences to learn from each other and, at the same time, challenge and move beyond them?
- Do the publishers and publishers of the future need the same or new skills?

### *Sylvia*

I have mentioned some ways we are learning from each other, but I would like to see us working together to serve new forms of scholarship in a more systematic, integrated way—offering joint services to scholars who are working on research projects with digital components.

When are editors at university presses going to stop saying no to interactive digital scholarship? When the author says “I have all these cassette tapes or digital video recordings of the 50 interviews that I did; do you want them?”—when is the editor going to be able to say, “Have you talked with the library? We have a model for working together, and maybe they will create a digital collection that we can link to from the e-book.” When I see how scholars’ eyes light up when they hear about this kind of possibility, I hope that we can make it routine someday. (When you can actually hear and see the music in a book about Mississippi blues, it is amazing; there is no going back.)

On my current international, interinstitutional projects for CHCI, we are putting together project

web sites and planning online collections of content and future white papers, journal issues, and books. I find myself in the position of saying, “Have you talked to your library? Do they have a digital librarian?” (In one case, they were just hiring one—hurrah!)

In other cases, I find myself saying, “Have you connected with your university press?” One director of a humanities institute said that his organization published a book and distributed it to libraries by sending copies around in envelopes from their office. I tried to explain that the book was more likely to end up on library shelves if it had CIP data, that there is a system for distributing books to libraries, what an approval plan is, etc.

Sometimes I wish I had librarian skills; for example, I made a metadata chart for 14 types of content that scholars on our “Humanities for the Environment” project want to upload to a web site for sharing and archiving. I listed every type of

data I could think of that I would need to publish that content; a digital librarian is translating that to Dublin Core so that the collection of contributed content can be archived for the future, as well as shared in real time. Together, we are working on usability issues.

Web sites, interactive maps, exhibits, blogs, articles, books—I would like to encourage scholars to stop looking at these as unconnected, either/or type manifestations of their work. Authors, publishers, and libraries will need to continue to change the ways that we think and work together. One priority we might address is the peer-review/tenure committee challenge for a multimodal digital work, a topic that is probably worth a separate panel! In my position with CHCI, I can recommend interdisciplinary humanities centers and institutes as a possible locus of connection for integrated services. It is important for scholars to know about such services at the right moment while they are planning a project and working on it, not just later when it is all done (and they put their video interviews in a box in the attic and/or send an off-the-grid print publication to libraries in an envelope).

### *Anne*

There is a perception that the library is good at metadata, while publishers have editorial and marketing. There might be more. For example, Cornell Library is bringing international experts to Euclid to help penetrate the market in Brazil and Turkey. Libraries have a lot of interest in innovation. There are unexpected things we bring to the table. I learned from Duke University Press how to present a business case.

We could all draw from the same pool in the future. The library generalist is gone. We need to share digital humanists across our fields.

### *Charles*

We have so much to learn from each other, but that requires mutual respect and an understanding that we are all “information professionals” even if publishers generally do not have a formal qualification, such as an MLIS. University presses can learn a lot from the

lightweight, digital workflows and new-form IP agreements that library publishers have developed. Born in an age of print, university presses still have a lot of legacy processes that are not so necessary in a digital environment. For example, does it really make sense to have separate people copyediting and designing books when the relevant computer programs are so much more user friendly? At Purdue, the production editors handle the whole process from raw manuscript to print-ready files. And should university press contracts not loosen up a bit? Are copyright transfers really necessary when a license to publish can secure the necessary rights while promoting an “author-friendly” aura that may be a competitive advantage.

On the library side, it is important that library publishers recognize that university presses are not as fuddy-duddy as they are sometimes portrayed. There has been a lot of innovation in recent years. The core functions imbedded in university presses require substantial skill and experience to accomplish successfully. The acquisitions and marketing roles are particularly difficult to outsource or replicate, and library

publishers have much to learn about disciplinary differences in author needs and perspectives and the role publishers play in understanding what a specific area of scholarship needs before the practitioners imbedded in its subdisciplines realize it themselves. There are also important tricks for sustaining publishing programs that university presses have developed which library publishers have not quite mastered.

When I look at an arrangement like the one between Cornell Libraries and Duke University Press around Project Euclid I am impressed at the level of understanding about complementary skills and roles that it reflects. I am also optimistic about the openness of some of our younger colleagues in the university press world to equipping themselves with the range of skills needed to operate effectively in both library and publishing contexts. Whether it is publarians and lublishers, or liblishers and pubrarians (somehow more euphonious to me), I think experimentation and role bending will be an increasing feature of our environment and will yield exciting results over the next few years.