

June 1996

From the Other Side of the Street

Peter C. Grenquist

American Association of University Press

Kathleen Ketterman

University of North Carolina Press

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



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

Recommended Citation

Grenquist, Peter C. and Ketterman, Kathleen (1996) "From the Other Side of the Street," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 8: Iss. 3, Article 32.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1923>

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.

From the Other Side of the Street

The Diffusion of Knowledge

by Peter C. Grenquist (Executive Director, American Association of University Presses)

Column Editor: **Kathleen Ketterman** (University of North Carolina Press)
<kjketter@email.unc.edu>

One of the most thoughtful and best written books on the enterprise in which most readers of *Against the Grain* are engaged is Jaroslav Pelikan's *The Idea of the University* (Yale University Press, 1992). And the best chapter in that book, from a publisher's point of view, is on "the diffusion of knowledge." He talks about "the relation between the mission of the university press and the mission of the university, a relation that goes back to the beginnings of the printed book. 'The University Press,' William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago, declared upon the founding of the university (and the simultaneous founding of its press), 'constitutes an organic division of the University.'"

In describing the function of the university press, Pelikan also paraphrases John Henry Newman's admonition that "the university must have devices for immunizing itself not only against the dead hand of the past but against the dead hand of the present." As Pelikan explains, "the business of the university depends on the diffusion of knowledge through scholarly publishing."

It is precisely in connection with this *business* that references to copyright payments as incentives to scholars give rise to misunderstanding. No doubt authors who write for a living and investors in media enterprises are seeking monetary rewards. However, for most university presses, learned societies and the like, revenues collected provide not so much a reward but rather the indispensable financial support for the publishing activity itself. Therefore, in the absence of an improbable mutation from the partially subsidized to a wholly subsidized model like libraries, every book sale and every permission fee helps to sustain the enterprise of scholarly publishing. In fact even libraries with valuable collections are talking increasingly about their potential for generating necessary income from access fees. AAUP members and scholarly societies certainly need those revenues to continue, in Pelikan's words, to diffuse knowledge by conceptualizing, validating, refining, enhancing, and disseminating — all are exercises that will continue to prove vital to the health of scholarly communication in paper and digital formats alike.

In this environment a confusion also arises between the broad application of fair use to advance knowledge and the limited resort to fair use for educational copying purposes. No objection is raised when scholars draw on the

work of others in advancing a new argument, or reviewers criticize, or artists parody, etc. The problem for the creators of intellectual property arises when excessive uncompensated use, even for educational purposes, is made of material often created for those very markets in the first place.

In cyberspace, yet another confusion arises between browsing, which we enjoy as we prowl the stacks or pull books off shelves in a shop, and electronic document delivery. The problem is that once you have called up an electronic record in copyable form, you have acquired it, which should entail permission or payment. Fortunately, to accommodate researchers, copyright proprietors are adopting measures now and will certainly extend them in the future to let potential customers know what materials are available and even sample them, which is what they have always done in the print environment. That is their business.

The Association of American University Presses has demonstrated how this can be

The AAUP homepage can be reached at <<http://www.aaup.com>>


done with a comprehensive online catalog. The catalog contains fully searchable bibliographic data and descriptive text from more than fifty scholarly publishers. Currently, 65,000-plus titles are represented, and this number is expected to climb rapidly to more than 100,000 titles from nearly 100 publishers. The online catalog includes scholarly monographs in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences as well as trade and regional titles, reference works, electronic publishing projects, and scholarly journals. There are four basic search options:

- Full text of all book entries, including table of contents and book descriptions.
- Keywords from the title, author's last name, or Library of Congress subject headings.
- Full text searches can be confined to specific subject areas based on Library of Congress subject classifications.
- Full text searches can be confined to an individual publisher.

The next step will probably be universal

resource card (URC) and universal resource name (URN) servers to track electronic documents resident in publishers' databases.

Looking further at fair use as a concept, a plausible sounding but erroneous comparison is sometimes made between the functions of fair use and the benefits of free speech. The first amendment and freedom of the press, not fair use, guarantee that in a market economy the public will have an abundance of published information and access to competing points of view. By providing financial support for publishing of virtually infinite variety, copyright may be the greatest guarantor of the democratic institutions we seek to protect.

As to fair use in the electronic environment, it can be anticipated that all parties, users and providers, will support it. If, as proposed by the Commerce Department, "transmission" is to be one of the exclusive rights of owners enumerated in section 106 of the copyright law, then the fair use limitation of section 107 would logically apply to transmissions as well as other reproductions and distributions. The likely compromise guidelines on electronic reserves worked out by some members of the ongoing Conference on Fair Use are a good example of such even-handedness. Here the drafters from library and scholarly associations are proposing that advantages of the new technology should be exploited, while potential abuses of the new technology should at the same time be curbed. The limitation is as important as the access, for if scholarly publishers and learned societies are to continue to fulfill what Pelikan calls their "vocation," then, in the words of the Constitution, for limited times the exclusive right of authors and inventors to their respective writings and discoveries must be secured. 

Peter C. Grenquist has been Executive Director of the Association of American University Presses since 1990. Before that he was a division president at Prentice-Hall and McGraw-Hill. Dr. Grenquist earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University.

