

September 2006

## From the University Presses

Peter Givler

*Association of American University Presses*, [pgivler@aaupnet.org](mailto:pgivler@aaupnet.org)

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



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

---

### Recommended Citation

Givler, Peter (2006) "From the University Presses," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 18: Iss. 4, Article 25.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4932>

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

# From the University Presses

by **Peter Givler** (Executive Director, Association of American University Presses, 71 W. 23rd Street, Room 901, New York, NY 10010; Phone: 212-989-1010; Fax: 212-989-0275) <pgivler@aaupnet.org> [www.aaupnet.org](http://www.aaupnet.org)  
<http://aaupnet.org/booksforunderstanding.html>

In the last column I talked about the necessity, as I see it, for publishers and librarians to stop talking to themselves so much and begin to talk to each other more. There is a great deal of common ground between us, and if the areas where our interests diverge are real, they're also relatively few. Most of my professional career has been in nonprofit scholarly publishing, and most of my professional contacts in the library community are with university librarians, so I'd like to narrow down from librarians and publishers in general and focus specifically on university presses and university libraries. What do we have in common, and where do we differ?

What we share is obvious to us all. We're both creatures of research universities, dedicated to serving our universities' mission of advancing knowledge through teaching and research. We're both staffed by skilled and intelligent professionals who have chosen a career of public service, and who believe in the dissemination of knowledge as one of the highest public goods. We're both committed to the First Amendment, and to the protection of academic freedom. And we both believe we're overworked, underpaid, not sufficiently understood or appreciated, and never get out as much from the university budget as we need.

So why the tension? What are our disagreements really about? To a great extent I think they arise from some of the things we don't have in common. Presses and libraries share the same general goals, but the way they work to fulfill those goals is quite different; so different, in fact, that at times they may appear to be working at cross purposes.

To illustrate, think of the difference in the political constituency for university libraries and university presses. Basically, a university library's constituency has traditionally been highly localized and easily identified: it's the faculty, researchers and students of the university itself. In addition, the library may serve qualified researchers from outside the university, local AP high school students, and visiting scholars. To the extent that it is financially able to do so, a library may also augment its collection to meet future needs; in a field where the university wants to develop a new research center and recruit new scholars, for example. First of all, though, it has to be focused on serving the needs of its primary, intramural audience.

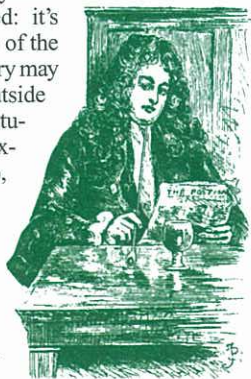
A university press's constituency, in contrast, is national and even international. It will be striving to publish the best work it can, no mat-

ter where it originates, and its scholarly publications will be read by those interested in the same topic, whether they are on the faculty of the press's university or at a different university on the other side of the globe. Every press will also publish some work by local faculty, but only work that has been thoroughly reviewed and that meets the standards used by the press's editorial board to judge all the work it considers for publication. A press seen as publishing too much work by local faculty, or evaluating such work by more relaxed standards than it applies to the work of scholars from other universities will soon lose its credibility as a serious publisher, and with it, its ability to attract good work from anywhere.

This difference in constituencies means that although presses and libraries share a common mission, they have worked to fulfill it in quite different ways: a university library by providing most of its services to the local university community, and a university press by providing most of its services to outsiders. Looking down from 30,000 feet it's easy to see that these opposites also complement each other — in fact, are necessary to each other if the advancement of knowledge is to flourish — but at ground level they're often more difficult to harmonize.

One consequence of the difference in the way libraries and presses fulfill their mission is the difference in their claim on the university's budget, which in turn explains their very different funding patterns — or business models, if you prefer. In a modern research university, decisions about how to allocate resources in the annual Battle of the Budget are driven more by program priorities than they are by bare financial necessity. Setting

priorities is a political process, and in that process, the university library will always have a larger claim than the press, because the library



## PALINET Fall 2006 Education Program Now Available

Register at [www.palinet.org/learn](http://www.palinet.org/learn)

### Featured Workshops

**Practical Library Assessment: Applying the ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education**  
with William Nelson, Augusta State University (GA)  
& Robert Fernecke, Georgia Southern University

**Strategic Planning for Libraries**  
with Frank Hermes, Library Leadership Network

**Pop Culture: Unlikely Advocacy Tool**  
with Sophie Brookover,  
Camden County Library System (NJ)

**Planning Digital Projects**  
with Tom Claeson, PALINET

**Strategies for Successful Instruction in the E-Classroom**  
with Elaine Gaber, Sadie Pope,  
Dowdell Library (NJ)

Plus many more!



spends most of its money and staff time directly serving the needs of the university's faculty and students. The press does not. It serves scholarly communication as a whole, and the benefits to its parent institution, while they may be of less direct application to the needs of local faculty and students, are also wider in scope and help establish the university's commitment to scholarly excellence, both nationally and internationally.

This distinction is not absolute, since university libraries may also serve national and international constituencies, just as presses can serve local ones. But I think it is a reasonable distinction between our core missions, and it has financial consequences. Although neither of us feels we get as much as we need, in absolute terms the library's share of the university's budget is one or even two orders of magnitude greater than the press's. Presses have no quarrel with that. Another consequence is that the bulk of the funding for university presses is recovered from the marketplace through sales. If the university supplies 90% of the library's operating budget and only 10% of the press's, which is about the current average, then the other 90% is recovered from the range of libraries, bookstores and individuals who buy the press's books. In this way the cost of publishing scholarship is shared by all the parties who benefit from it, and doesn't fall on just those universities that have presses. Again, this seems perfectly fair.

However. In every deck of cards there's a  
*continued on page 78*



# And They Were There

## Report of Meetings — SALALM and ALA New Orleans

Column Editor: Sever Bordeianu (University of Mexico) <[sbordeia@unm.edu](mailto:sbordeia@unm.edu)>

*SALALM Annual Conference, "Crossing Borders, Latin American Migrations: Collections and Services for/from New Library Users."*  
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, March 19-22, 2006.

Report by Claire-Lise Bénaud

Borders — geographic borders, political borders, linguistic borders, and even culinary borders—was the theme of the 2006 SALALM Annual Conference ("Crossing Borders, Latin American Migrations: Collections and Services for/from New Library Users"). It thus made perfect sense to hold the conference outside of our borders. This year's SALALM Conference (Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Materials) took place in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic from March 19-22, 2006. The setting was lovely, with the conference hotel located right across from the Caribbean sea. Because of the location, more panels/meetings than usual were conducted in Spanish.

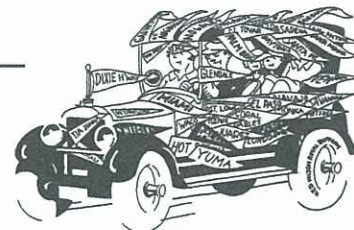
As usual, the first two days of the conference were devoted to committee meetings. These meetings are an essential part of the conference as Salalmistas report on projects and discuss national and international trends. Some included formal presentations while others consisted solely of discussions. Regional groups (LANE, Latin America North East Libraries Consortium; CALAFIA, California Cooperative Latin American Collection Development; MOLLAS, Midwest Organization of Libraries for Latin American Studies; LASER, Latin American Studies Southeast Regional Libraries Consortium) met as well as LAMP (Latin American Microform Project) and regular SALALM committees such as Reference, Cataloging, Bibliographic Instruction, Gifts and Exchanges, Serials, Libreros/Librarians/Publishers, etc.

I'll report briefly on two committee meetings, Cataloging and Electronic Resources. Ana Cristán, from the Library of Congress, current chair of the Cataloging Committee, conducted the meeting in English and Spanish. She reported on cataloging rules updates and on IMEICC meetings (IFLA Meeting of Experts on an International Cataloging Code). She noted that the next set of cataloging rules will not be book-centered and will describe the cataloging universe from a totally different perspective. Rules will no longer be Anglo-American, but most likely still be Anglo-centric. She also reported on the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, which now numbers 63 international participants. She was glad to report that 50 Dominican librarians attended a SALALM pre-conference workshop on MARC21. The Electronic Resources Committee attracted a large crowd, over 50 people. Participants reported on digitization projects, open archive portals, the Cibera portal ([www.cibera.de](http://www.cibera.de)), and the redesign of the HAPI Website (Hispanic American Periodicals Index) based at UCLA. Committee members also reported problems with online newspapers, an issue that never seems to go away.

Panel presentations ran the gamut from Latin America collections in Europe and Canada, to librarians and book dealers, migration issues, digital projects, bibliographic instruction, and film. Lief Adleson and César Rodríguez presented two perspectives on the relationship between book dealers and librarians. At SALALM, this relationship is crucial. Unlike

other library groups, book dealers are an integral part of SALALM. Adleson, Mexican book dealer, gave an overview of how the business has changed. Academic librarians in the US have less time to select and rely more on approval plans. Cooperative acquisition has also changed the environment for the vendor. One library may concentrate on one region, and another library on another. As a result, the vendor simply sells less books. Vendors also feel pressured to contribute bibliographic records, which is an added cost. Adleson concluded that to prosper, vendors need to provide more specialized services and more personal attention to customers. César Rodríguez, from Yale, and Lynn Shirey, from Harvard, reported on their institution's cooperative acquisitions pilot project. At first, cooperation was discussed in very broad terms: digitization projects, cataloging, inter-library loan, etc. Finally they decided to narrow it down to collection development. Both institutions have strong Latin American collections with the end result of a fair amount of duplication. They have overlapping approval plans with some materials getting little use. Both institutions still want to collect core materials but only collect non-core materials for specific areas. They approached their respective faculty members and received muted support rather than enthusiastic support. They needed help from book dealers to change their collecting strategies and they picked two countries, Mexico and Chile. They divided Mexico geographically, Harvard collecting for the southern states and Yale for the northern states and Mexico City. Since publishing is centralized in Chile, the country was divided by topic rather than geographically. The goal of the project is to reduce non-core duplication. In a nutshell, this is how it works: book vendors decide what is considered core versus non-core; they send non-core material to the other institution first (i.e., the vendor sends Harvard's books first to Yale. Yale reviews the titles and decides if it wants some for its own collection. Yale then sends the books to Harvard). This process ensures that the vendor's idea of what is considered non-core materials closely follows the bibliographers' ideas of what is considered non-core. Both libraries hope to skip this fairly complicated first step once they feel that the system is working well. Vendors in the audience remarked that as they sell less duplicate copies, their profits will lessen. Others noted that the use of ILL will increase and that considering that the average ILL transaction costs an average of \$60, it may actually be cheaper for libraries to buy the book. But others reminded us that the cost of ordering, cataloging, and shelving was higher.

A panel was devoted to the exports of mi-



*continued on page 79*

### From the University Presses from page 77

joker, and so far I've been ignoring a big one: digital communications technologies and their manifold disruptions, for good and ill, of the whole scholarly communications enterprise. Scholars are finding new ways of doing research and of presenting their findings. University libraries have been developing new ways of providing access for their faculty and students, not just in the library, but in dorms, off campus, and even abroad. Legislators and the courts are struggling to amend and interpret the consequences of the new technologies for the laws on copyright, the First Amendment, libel and privacy.

And university presses, often in collabora-