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From the University Presses-Toward a Modest Agenda: Academic Library and University Press Collaborations

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of control over content, the scale and complexities of the supply chain are often underestimated. Just as a market grew for the server and database industry, there will soon be a viable market for eContent platform providers which will reduce costs and facilitate standardization. Integration of technologies with a variety of partners leverages many more resources and allows each partner to focus on its strengths. In the case of the vendor, these may be collection development expertise, profiling and content discovery methodologies and technologies, metadata, and technical services support, as well as old-fashioned customer service.

Comparative cost structures of print versus electronic content represent another challenge currently. The majority of academic libraries use *paper-preferred* approval plans, meaning that when a paperback and cloth-bound edition of a title are available simultaneously, the library will acquire the paperback. The library will receive whatever discount has been agreed to. Most eContent sources do not currently offer any discounts on individual titles, and further, the cost of the eBook is generally based on the cost of the cloth-bound edition (and is occasionally more). This means that the \$35 paperback from **Palgrave Macmillan** may cost \$90 as an eBook and possibly 50% more if simultaneous use is desired. As libraries shift to ePreferred content

acquisition, costs will not be sustainable. It is still early, and new models are already emerging designed to help contain costs. What seems clear, however, is that economics will continue to shift emphasis from content *ownership* to *access*. And this will have profound effects on how publishers and vendors are compensated.

III. The Pareto Principle

The Pareto principle, or the 80-20 rule, has particular importance to the vendor's stability as a business. While it is a core value at **YBP** that each library receive equal treatment, it should be noted that 80% of our business comes from fewer than 20% of our customers. It is equally important to consider that more than 80% of our sales come from fewer than 20% of publishers. But the Pareto principle also provides a basis for interesting questions. Few of our customers are able to acquire even 20% of the titles we profile annually. What does this mean for usage of the 80% of profiled content not acquired? The Pareto principle also applies to print usage in libraries — it has been widely reported that as much as 80% of the monographic collection may never circulate. Is this owing to a lack of discoverability, lack of access, or just lack of interest? If this content were discoverable and accessible electronically, would it be used more? What implications does this have for collection development? For the viability of the library as a resource?

Technology and economics are making anew the entire equation of production and delivery,

as well as consumption of content. **Alberto Manguel** wrote in *The Library at Night*² that if the Library of Alexandria reflected man's ambition to omniscience, then the Web reflected his ambition to omnipresence. He intended something different from my use here, but it struck me as apt for a time in which information is growing exponentially and libraries have long since had to abandon the mission of collecting all relevant content for current and future patrons. Given the reality of budgets and the easy reach of new technologies, making content 'omnipresent' may define the new mission of vendors.

We in the industry are eternally — and perhaps unrealistically — optimistic. So how do you eat an elephant? We expect it will take a lot of friends with spoons ready and long memories, but even then, the elephant may have the last word. 🐘

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Endnotes

1. See **Robert F. Nardini**, Approval Plans, in *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, V.1, pp. 131-138, ed. **Miriam A. Drake**, Marcel Dekker, 2003.
2. **Yale University Press**, 2006. p.322.

From the University Presses — Toward a Modest Agenda: Academic Library and University Press Collaborations

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It is tempting for academic librarians and university presses to dream grand dreams as they envision their particular roles in the future of scholarly communication. And as we dream these dreams we sense that the forces of history, aided by astonishing technological lurches, seem to draw us closer and closer, year by year. There is an aura of inevitability — that we should be more closely aligned, that we should partner, that we can identify and avoid redundant activities, that some form of functional integration would benefit the academic community and its stakeholders, not to mention the university's bottom line. That evolution is right and good, and there is no turning back.

Library-press initiatives at universities such as **California, Florida, Georgetown, Indiana, MIT, Michigan, Penn State, and Pittsburgh,**



among many others, are gaining momentum and the potential reach of that momentum is astonishing.¹ Scholarly communication will be the better for it.

But when academic libraries and university presses *do* collaborate, when they actually work together at various points along the publishing spectrum to produce and disseminate scholarship, grand dreams are not always useful: in fact, they can be disruptive and downright destructive. What *is* useful is a modest and realistic agenda, one that recognizes our common motivations and allegiances and commitments but also our economic and organizational and cultural differences. Deliberate, careful, incremental steps, not dramatic leaps of faith, are our best chance of cooperation and progress.

In that spirit I would like to offer four considerations for academic libraries and university presses as they engage one another and anticipate their future. I base these considerations on two sets of experiences. One is personal and local: For several years I have worked productively with the university librarian and members of the staff at **Georgetown University**. Another set of experiences, more recently, involves a small group of **Association of American University Press (AAUP)** directors and **ARL** librarians that is actively communicating and identifying mutual interests. I will say more about those conversations below.

The first consideration is the most important: **persons precede institutions**. By that I mean that any genuine collaboration is ultimately based on relationships between individuals, not organizations. We have a bad habit of generalizing about academic libraries

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and university presses, “us” and “them,” and those kinds of sweeping characterizations tend to cause a fair amount of mischief — though it seems clear that the more we get to know each other the better our chances of taming our crouching tigers and hidden dragons. Being committed to a vocation is healthy and necessary. But believing in the inherent superiority of one’s worldview is another matter, and we must resist that impulse as we explore our connections and test our convictions about how to best contribute to scholarly communication. Viable collaborations must begin with and be sustained by one-on-one conversations, lots of maintenance, some degree of trust, and a sense of individual responsibility and accountability — not simply broad institutional aspirations.

For the past several years I have served on **Georgetown University Library’s Scholarly Communication Committee**, which holds quarterly meetings and includes several librarians, an associate provost, and other representatives of the university community. The principal aim of the Committee is to develop biannual educational programs, such as panel discussions on copyright or the impact of digital scholarship on promotion and tenure decisions or the implications of the **Google Settlement**, all of which have been well attended and worthwhile. That said, one of the most significant outcomes of the entire enterprise is the contact and conversations committee members share. The simple act of bringing people together around a table with a shared purpose is enormously significant. Of course something constructive needs to happen to sustain the group’s interest and energy. But these kinds of basic interactions are critical building blocks for long-term aspirations.

Second, **metaphors matter**. In their brilliant book, *Metaphors We Live By* (**Chicago University Press**, 1980, 2003), linguist **George Lakoff** and philosopher **Mark Johnson** explain how metaphors not only help us describe experiences, but also shape, in subtle ways, our perceptions about the world. Metaphors are more than colorful, rhetorical flourishes; they structure how we think, how we interpret events, and our sense of right and wrong. As such, we ought to employ them with care. I say this because I was struck — thunderstruck might be too dramatic — by a metaphor about copyright that came up during a library forum in Chicago two years ago. According to one report, a panelist claimed that a scholar agreeing to give up copyright is like giving birth and then turning the baby over to the midwife. That’s a powerful metaphor. The idea of giving up a helpless and vulnerable baby is viscerally horrific. We can debate the benefits and burdens of copyright, but as **Lakoff** and **Johnson** make clear, metaphors are much more than words. We understand ourselves, and everything around us, through metaphors. Metaphors are a fundamental mechanism of mind. And this particular metaphor, copyright as baby, reflects a powerful claim.

So we ought to avoid lobbing casual metaphors: university presses as dinosaurs or money-grubbing capitalists, the **Georgia State** case as

“brother suing brother” (as one librarian said to me), printed books as relics, librarians as naïve open-access zealots, and the beneficiaries of a rich uncle (a.k.a. the provost, though these days truly rich uncles are in short supply). I think we are more careful about our language than we used to be, but wisps of this kind of thinking remain. These metaphors are not constructive; they crush any hope of genuine discussion and help perpetuate a pernicious understanding of the library-publisher relationship. We can disagree about lots of things, including open access policies and subscription prices and **Georgia State**, but we should try to stick to facts. Using sweeping metaphors to describe people and issues is risky business.

Third, **start small**. In 2004 **Georgetown University** established Digital Georgetown (DG), an institutional repository (IR) designed to be the open access hub for the university’s scholarship and research initiatives. As my press colleagues and I watched DG evolve, along with a wave of IRs on other campuses, we wondered: How much open access to our content can we really afford? We felt morally compelled to contribute some sort of content to DG, but we also had reservations about the impact of OA on the sale of our print editions. Further, we had concerns about the role our staff would need to play and how much energy it would take to clear permissions for digital use. We pondered the opportunity costs. Just how much time did we want to invest in this? After some discussion with our friends at DG we identified an alignment of interests: content that matched the mission of the site and that was also low-risk, financially speaking, for the press. So we turned over digital files of several **Georgetown University** conference proceedings volumes in the field of linguistics. All of these titles had been available in print for at least several years, with diminishing sales; all now appear in DG with a “buy” button that leads readers to the press Website. Not long after that we found more points of contact: DG was looking for content relating to **Georgetown University** identity and Catholic higher education, and the press had a list of roughly twenty titles on our deep backlist that qualified. Given the age of these titles the press had no digital files, so we agreed to a deal: DG would create pdfs of each title and post them, while at the same time turning over a copy of those files to the press. There is more to the story, but the point is this: for academic libraries and university presses that are chronically understaffed and underfunded and wanting to collaborate — a description that fits most of us — starting small with low risk and low investment costs is entirely appropriate. See if it works; scale can come later.

This impulse to start small is now being realized through an initiative between the **ARL** and the **AAUP**. In August a group of twenty-four **ARL** librarians and university press directors met for a day at **Columbia University** to discuss the perpetual transition in scholarly communication and how we might collaborate on common goals. It was a remarkably civil engagement, especially given the occasional flame-throwing in the past regarding copyright and fair use. After further exchanges and an-

other round of meetings we agreed to establish a working group, comprised of four members from each organization, whose charge will be finite and manageable and, to some degree, measurable.

And fourth, we have professional and even moral responsibilities to **educate each other**. We need to learn about life on the other side. University presses should be well aware of the critical issues and success factors and strategic plans and institutional forces at play within libraries; this is a necessary step toward fruitful partnerships. Keeping up with *Library Journal* and posts on liblicense and essays by **Robert Darnton**, et al. is a start. So is attending Charleston or other library meetings. But perhaps more important are regular conversations with the university librarian and members of the library staff — and librarians at other institutions. Is the library fully embracing patron-driven acquisition? What about aggregations of scholarly monographs such as **Muse Editions** and the **University Press Ebook Consortium**? Where does **YBP** fit into these paradigms? We need to keep our ears and eyes open.

A few months ago my colleagues and I invited our university’s associate librarian to our offices for coffee and a group discussion as part of our own strategic planning process. We spent an hour asking questions about the library’s digital needs and aspirations, inter-library loan, approval plans, accessing and purchasing revised dissertations, the impact of journal subscription prices on monograph acquisitions, and so forth. We could only scratch the surface. One of the takeaways was this: academic libraries are not monolithic, and what works at **Georgetown** may not work at **Oberlin**. But the biggest takeaway for our press staff was to see the world, for a moment, through a librarian’s eyes: why perpetual access matters, why DRM is problematic, the true impact of soaring STM journal subscriptions, and so on.

Of course the same goes for librarians: they have a responsibility to educate themselves about university press publishing, particularly in regard to the financial realities of being a revenue-driven organization and how that influences all the decisions presses make.

This kind of education is happening, again, between the **ARL** and the **AAUP**. During the August meeting at **Columbia** a university press director shared aggregated financial data of member presses, illustrating the pressures they face in covering their costs. Meanwhile, members from the **ARL** shared anecdotes of administrative and budget constraints. We wisely avoided debates about copyright and fair use, issues that lie at the heart of the business models that currently sustain the vast majority of university presses. But the transparency and candor and general goodwill of these exchanges gave all of us a reasonable amount of optimism that ongoing communication and collaboration, even in the midst of disagreements, are the only way forward.

It is beyond dispute that the common interests of academic libraries and university

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presses far outweigh the differences. If we take a few quiet moments we will recognize that in many ways we are cut from the same cloth: we love words, we believe ideas matter, we are all, ultimately, members of the academy. We are adapting to a digital world as rapidly as we can and as rapidly as we can afford to. We also know, intuitively, that in the midst of information hyperabundance, society depends on us to develop and disseminate and archive reliable scholarship for the common good. My experience at **Georgetown** and my conversations with **ARL** librarians lead me toward hope about the future of effective collaborations between academic libraries and university presses — but it is a hope that must always be framed by a modest and realistic agenda. 🌱

Endnote

1. In 2004 **Nancy Eaton** and **Bonnie MacEwan** of **Penn State Library** and **Peter Potter** of **Penn State University Press** wrote a helpful and prophetic essay about their experiences: "Learning to Work Together": <http://www.aaupnet.org/arlaaup/projects/pennstate.html>.

Random Ramblings — A Digital Dilemma for Public Libraries

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An undergraduate student at the library of a local mid-size university didn't like the fact that the only copy of a book she needed to read for class was available only as an eBook. She asked the reference librarian if the library would order a print copy because she preferred that format. The librarian took her request and sent it up the administrative chain. After a bit, the answer worked its way back down to the student. While the response was phrased a bit more politely, its essence was "tough." This academic library, like many, had a policy of not ordering material in multiple formats even if a user specifically requests another version for whatever reason.

This story, which I heard from a student in one of my classes, got me to thinking about how this scenario would play out in a public library. I can't believe that the answer would be the same. In fact, a public library might have the same popular book

in multiple formats — book, large print, CD audio book, CD audio cassette, and eBook. The public library would have even bought multiple copies of those items in high demand so that patrons didn't have to wait forever.

Why the difference? The academic library has a captive audience that must complete required assignments with whatever information resources that the library provides unless students buy their own copies or have access to other libraries. If this student has required readings, she had better learn how to manipulate the eBook reader. If she had complained, I expect that the authority figures would repeat the standard response: "By avoiding buying books in multiple formats and in multiple copies, the collection has much more breadth and can therefore support the needs of more users." I might then respond, "But not this one." Finally, one student has virtually no power to change this decision. I'm not even sure that a faculty member could unless the faculty member were particularly powerful or influential within the academic community.

The public library, on the other hand,

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