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People Profile: Susan Hinken

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is necessary to the system's health and vigor. I'm not sure the reality is that clear-cut, but for the sake of this discussion let's say that it's true — that if the UP goes away, the system is irreparably damaged. The question remains whether that reality entails a responsibility on the part of libraries to prop up the system by buying books that their patrons don't need. Doing so simply amounts to a redirected subvention; instead of (or as well as) the UP's host university supporting the press in its creation of new scholarship, the library at another institution supports the UP by paying it for a service the library doesn't need. Your argument is that the library benefits from doing so in a real but indirect way, by helping to ensure the ongoing health and vigor of the system (and when libraries fail to do so, they act as "free riders," which I still maintain is fundamentally incorrect). But even if it were true, that same argument could be made by many other players in the system, some of whom create scholarly products that are actually heavily demanded by my library's researchers. Given that every dollar I give to one player in the system is a dollar I can't give to another, why does it make sense for me to support a player who produces stuff I don't need rather than one who produces stuff that I do? (And the response that "UPs create products that are uniquely valuable and essential to the integrity of the system" won't cut it, because, again, lots of players — including for-profit publishers — create products that are also uniquely valuable and also important to the system, both for their quality AND for their relevance to my patrons' needs.)

ST: You make excellent points here, and I'm inclined to alter my argument as follows.

Instead of placing the burden of sustaining the university press system on librarians, I should properly place it on top university administrators (presidents and provosts) collectively. This would be in keeping with my argument in "Dissertations into Books?" (*Against the Grain*, April 2007) that the separate actors in the system are all acting rationally within their own spheres, but the result overall is dysfunctionality for the system as a whole. It is the responsibility of top administrators to fix this situation. Those of us at the lower levels can't be expected to act in ways that betray our own immediate responsibilities and priorities. So my message was misdirected in being targeted at librarians.

You're quite right that there is disagreement among the experts about what constitutes high quality. Not infrequently, we acquiring editors will have different experts make opposing recommendations, which we usually then resolve by going for a tie-breaking third report. And of course commercial publishers do publish many important books of high quality.

I will confine my claim to this one point: only university presses can guarantee customers that the books they publish have been put through a rigorous peer-review process. (You're right that this is not equivalent to a guarantee of quality, but at least it establishes a prima facie case for it.) How is this known? Because no press can be a member of the **AAUP** unless it adheres to

against the grain people profile

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BORN AND LIVED: Ypsilanti, MI, grew up in western Washington.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Worked in special libraries before moving to academia in cataloging and then into acquisitions and collection development.

FAMILY: Husband, **Steve**; son, **Tom**, 23 years old.

IN MY SPARE TIME: Cook, sew; watch movies.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Anything by **Jane Austen** or on American social history.

PET PEEVES: Catalogers singled out for criticism at professional meetings.

PHILOSOPHY: It will work out.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: I hope it's the successful DDA pilot.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: To sit in my new office in our remodeled library (in the planning stages) working on CD issues.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: Blended collections, print and electronic, with a continued growth in providing just-in-time services. 🌱

the by-laws of the **Association**, which mandate that a system of review of this sort take place. Commercial publishers may consult expert reviewers (and as an acquiring editor for **Lynne Rienner** now I am using just the same kinds of reviewers as I did at **Princeton** or **Penn State**), but no customer — librarian or scholar — can know for certain that such a review process has occurred, and of course there can be no counterpart in commercial publishing to the role of the faculty editorial board.

My argument, then, boils down to these two claims: 1) there is something uniquely valuable about the peer-review system operated by university presses that is worth saving; and 2) it is ultimately the responsibility of university administrators to do what is necessary to save this system. Notice that these claims are entirely neutral with respect to publishing business model. Indeed, I would argue that OA would better support the ideal of university press publishing now than would a continuation of the market-based model.

RA: I can see the logic behind this point. If universities want to support the production and wide distribution of scholarship, then maybe they need to do more than just produce scholarship. Of course this means, inevitably, additional investment: as I continue (fruitlessly) reminding OA evangelists, a dollar that supports the production of research cannot also then be spent on the significant projects of 1) turning research data into publishable info products and 2) distributing them. Money that is redirected in those ways will not be available for the support of future research, and the end result will be less research, distributed more widely. (None of this is to say that the tradeoff is necessarily bad, only that it must be kept in mind if our decisions are going to be reality-based. If we

make decisions based solely on how nice it is for everyone to have access, then we may well end up hurting more than we help.)

The problem, of course, is that university administrators are constrained by the same fiscal realities as libraries are. Money earmarked to support publication of books that may or may not be wanted by anyone is money that can't be used to refurbish physics labs or hire faculty or build classrooms. For administrators, as for librarians, it won't always be wise to put quality above relevance and local need. Is another 500-page treatment of *La Morte d'Arthur*, even a very good one, necessarily more important to the scholarly enterprise than classroom space for, say, two more students? I don't know the answer to that one.

Xan: Any concluding remarks, **Sandy** and **Rick**?

ST: The result of this conversation would appear to be that both libraries and university presses have good reasons to be concerned about current developments in the dissemination of scholarship, and that their own strategies for survival, which are rational when viewed from their different perspectives, may end up conflicting at a system-wide level. But as **Rick Anderson** nicely puts the point in his final comments, this is a problem that is ultimately one for top university administrators to solve as they balance many competing demands on limited resources. Librarians and presses may agree in emphasizing the primacy of supporting and disseminating scholarship and providing service to faculty and students as preeminent among the missions universities are meant to fulfill, but realistically administrators have alumni, state and federal legislators, sports boosters, and many other constituencies to satisfy also.

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