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## What Was a University Press?

Doug Armato

*University of Minnesota Press*

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# From A University Press — The Twenty-First Century University Press: Assessing the Past, Envisioning the Future

Column Editor: **Leila W. Salisbury** (Director, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, MS 39211; Phone: 601-432-6205)  
<lsalisbury@ihl.state.ms.us>

**Column Editor's Note:** *These two pieces were originally delivered as part of a plenary session at the 2012 Charleston Conference, and they are worth running in ATG because they eloquently highlight the evolution and current transformations of university press publishing. — LS*

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the **Association of American University Presses**, or the **AAUP**. Collaboration among university presses began as early as the 1920s, with discussions of a joint catalog, and an organized meeting in 1928 included representatives from **Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Johns Hopkins, North Carolina, Duke, Chicago, Pennsylvania, Stanford, and Oxford**. According to a recent history of the AAUP, at that meeting,

“Cooperation among university presses was born amongst the luxurious surroundings of the original Waldorf-Astoria. When the Hotel Pennsylvania and the Commodore proved too expensive, someone negotiated a rate of \$6/single or \$9/double at one of the world’s most famous hotels. The organizers were quite pleased — **University of Pennsylvania Press** director **Phelps Soule** confessed a long-held ‘ambition to lunch someday at the **Waldorf**, as it looks very grand from the top of the Fifth Avenue Bus.’”

I mention this to emphasize that the vast majority of modern university presses are nonprofit entities and have a long and illustrious history of thrift.

Fast forward to the year 2012, which finds university presses at a moment of scrutiny as well as exploration. Money and mission are both equally on our minds as press directors, as the former makes the fulfillment of the latter possible. Though our missions as scholarly publishers have not changed significantly in the last 75 years, the path to arrive at that nirvana known as “breakeven status” has changed significantly, and many would argue that they’re not even sure where that path is anymore, or that now there are different paths for different types of university presses.

So before our main speakers **Doug Armato** and **Alison Mudditt** examine university press publishing in the past, present, and future, there are a few things I’d like you to know about university presses. As I’ve mentioned, we are nonprofits, and very different from commercial academic publishers. (Though as a colleague of mine at another press will say when an author asks him for something really outside of the scope of his budget, “Hey, we’re not not-for-profit”). Most of us depend on our home universities for some sort of institutional allocation to get to breakeven. According to the February 2012 AAUP Operating Statistics

report, those presses with net sales in the \$1.5-6M range receive host institution support averaging 10-20% of net sales. Very small presses often receive more; larger presses receive significantly less. But what these numbers mean is that 80-90% of operating income for most university presses is generated primarily through sales and grants.

As is true of libraries, even though we are all university presses, we are not the same. What works well for one press may not easily translate for the rest of us. As my marketing director is fond of saying, turning **Tolstoy’s** famous pronouncement on its head: “Unhappy presses are all alike; every happy press is happy in its own way.” Though we may have each taken our own paths to getting there, nearly all university presses do publish electronic content and are making it a priority. The great majority of us are placing that content with the vendors and platforms you use in your libraries, and we are constantly reevaluating business strategies and avenues for content discovery and dissemination.

Countless articles and blogs have been written about the so-called crisis in scholarly communication. Some of these writers portray university presses as antiquated operations that are resistant to change and that don’t care about — or are unable to meet the needs of — modern users. I have two immediate responses to this. First, I believe this happens, in part, because we as university presses haven’t always done a good job of explaining our value and promoting that message to our stakeholders, which include our campuses, libraries, scholarly societies, authors, administrators, and faculty. Truly connecting with your constituents is a very powerful thing and should be done at every possible opportunity. I was fortunate enough to recently spend an hour with one of the Mississippi university presidents, talking about our press’s work and exploring the many ways in which the press’s challenges were similar to the challenges he faced in formulating plans for the growth and success of his own campus. At the end of the meeting he said that the press should be getting more money to further fund our thriving program and allow us to make additional technological and infrastructure invest-

ments. You will not hear the words “I want to give you more money” very often on a campus these days, and I took this as a potent example of the importance of dialog and of finding commonalities with your stakeholders.

Second, I believe university presses are consistently labeled “in crisis” because we cannot predict exactly what scholarly communication or publishing (and there is an increasing difference between these two things) will look like in five years, or even two. University presses are in the very same boat as libraries, administrators of campus textbook and course management systems, faculty, and campus IT managers. We are firmly in the middle of a period of highly disruptive technological change. The issue is this: old systems no longer work well, there is a new system introduced every 3-6 months, and we simply have no way of guaranteeing that the systems in which we do choose to invest will be the ones that will still serve us well in two years. We are all well acquainted with the effects of this disruptive change, but it does not mean that university presses are inherently broken or irrelevant. It merely means that my crystal ball is just as foggy as yours, and we have to experiment, innovate, listen to our users and customers, and then ultimately make it up as we go along.

This is actually deeply reassuring to me. If the real issue were that no one cares about scholarly content, then university press directors and staff should be lying awake nights. The issue instead is that we are charged with finding *new* ways to fulfill our longtime mission of selecting, developing, editing, producing, marketing, and disseminating high-quality, peer-reviewed scholarship. We as presses can today learn a great deal from academic libraries about the new paths on which scholarship may travel. So I hope this conference, and the official AAUP-sponsored University Press Week that will run November 11-17 and that we’re kicking off here, will foster the greater mutual understanding and dialog that will help us find and navigate those future paths. Please take some time to visit [www.universitypressweek.org](http://www.universitypressweek.org) and look at what university presses across the country are doing to connect with their places and their readers.

## What Was a University Press?

by **Doug Armato** (Director, University of Minnesota Press)



I’m going to take this occasion of the **Association of American University Presses’** 75th anniversary and of the 36th University Press Week to speak a little more personally than I usually would about our joint enterprise of university press publishing — its past, present, and potential futures.

What was a university press? The first book published at an American university was at **Harvard** in 1636, and the first formal American university press was established at **Cornell** in 1869 — heralding a familiar phenomenon of university publishing operations

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being closed or threatened with closure: the press at **Cornell** ceased business just six years later, in 1884, only to be resuscitated in 1930. The longest continually-operating university press was founded at **Johns Hopkins** in 1878, a press that has remained at the leading edge of our profession, co-founding **Project Muse** in cooperation with its parent institution's **Milton S. Eisenhower Library** in 1985 and, last year, joining with a broad consortium of university presses to add frontlist scholarly eBooks to its invaluable platform.

But while university presses have been a part of the North American academic and publishing landscape for over a century-and-a-half, the **Association of American University Presses** has its roots in 1928, when the directors of twelve presses met at New York's Waldorf Astoria hotel to discuss joint marketing and sales initiatives — it is significant that they were already marketing and sales discussions. The **Association** itself was founded in 1937 — the anniversary we celebrate this year — with 22 members, my press among them. At the height of the Depression, university presses were being founded at a rate of about one each year, a rate which continued through to the 1970s, when the end of the Federal subsidies for university libraries under the *Cold War Era National Defense Education Act* began the long slide in library monograph purchases, the “Monograph Crisis,” that gained speed with the “Serials Crisis” of the 1980s and faces new challenges with the movement toward Open Access today. Arguably, then, university presses have been in some form of crisis since the late 1970s, some 35 years ago.

I started my career in university presses in the late 1970s, some 35 years ago. So, startlingly to me anyway, I have been in university presses, with a brief diversion into trade publishing, for almost half of the **AAUP's** existence, from the apogee of the print age to the brink of what I believe will be a new digital golden age for university presses. When I started in university presses in 1978 at **Columbia**, over 70% of our book sales were to libraries, with the rest — to bookstores, to individuals, scholars, and graduate students for course use, and overseas — seen as “icing.” That “icing” now overwhelms the cake itself, with libraries accounting for only an estimated 20% to 25% of university press sales. (Here, a brief parenthesis to say that the consolidation of the book distribution chain over the past decade has made it much more difficult to establish fully accurate market statistics). Yet amid this career-long “crisis,” university presses have in fact held their own, with overall sales even increasing by about ten percent over the past, economically difficult decade. And, I'd argue, we've become more significant culturally and intellectually by paying more attention to the market — by being as concerned with the needs of scholar-readers as scholar-writers.

So why be concerned on this 75th anniversary of the impressively resilient **Association of American University Presses**? One reason

is that the current challenges of the digital environment and Open Access — of what I referred to above as a potential “new digital golden age for university presses” — require a renewed partnership with academic libraries in order to fully realize their promise for scholarship. The second is that academic libraries are struggling with their own budgetary and existential crises, as are the universities that support both libraries and presses. And the third is that library and press relations are increasingly showing signs of fraying, mimicking in several ways the political polarization — the lack of joint problem solving and reaching across the aisles — that besets American society as a whole. These are problems to solve not in the next 35 years of crisis, but in the next 3.5 years of crisis, for, as we all know, the economic landscape is shifting rapidly as are the needs of scholars and students and the expectations of university administrators.

## II: Eden

I referred earlier to the inversion of the university press book sales from overwhelmingly library-driven three decades ago to overwhelmingly non-library driven today. Some have seen this as evidence of the university press mission's having moved away from that of the university — and scholarship — itself. Some have spoken of presses as turning away, like **Eve** and **Adam** leaving Paradise from the purity of monographs toward “midlist trade books,” but any look at university press catalogs quickly reveals that those “midlist” trade books are overwhelmingly written by university faculty — they are, in fact, scholarly books, some of the best that we publish. And there is nothing new in this at all. In 1928, three years after my press's founding, we published a book on healthy eating titled *Prunes or Pancakes* by the Dean of the School of Dentistry at **Columbia University**. A midlist trade title if there ever was one.

Nevertheless, **Kathleen Fitzpatrick's** carefully-argued and thought-provoking **NYU Press** book, *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy* has traced an earlier model of university publishing from the 1893 founding of the **University of California Press** to publish works by that institution's own faculty, mostly pamphlets which she sees as proto-blogs, noting that model prevailed for forty years until about 1930 — a decade we'll recognize as that of the creation of the modern university press with the cooperative movement that would result in the formation of the **AAUP**. A widely-read library blogger extrapolated from **Fitzpatrick's** account of the early decades of the **UC Press** that presses — he makes it sound greedy, even Satanic — “demanded autonomy to broaden their lists and retain their profits.”

Anyone who has worked for a university, not to mention a press, would find comical this idea that a university press thus bullied its parent institution into submitting to its will. Also, this is the period most active for the founding of presses by universities and they were clearly started as publishing houses rather than the evolved university print shops of that earlier era's **Fitzpatrick** documents.

Within eighteen months of the founding of my own press in 1925, we had published books by faculty from **California, Columbia, George Washington, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, Smith, and Virginia**.

But even more to the point, we should look at the context of this Edenic, prelapsarian, university publishing of the 1890s into the 1920s — a period at the beginning of which the entire body of Humanities and Social Science researchers at U.S. universities numbered fewer than 1000 men (for they were almost all men) and when most library collections were housed in departments, and managed by scholars, rather than centralized. Indeed, as the **University of Chicago** sociologist **Andrew Abbott** has found, the rise of the modern university press occurred at the same time as the professionalization of the university libraries and both in response to a dramatic, ten-fold expansion in research faculty between World War I and World War II. “This period,” **Abbott** writes, “produces the first clear evidence of a division between the scholars and the librarians” — note the division here — “the scholars favoring specialized tools and departmental librarians, the librarians universalist tools and centralized libraries.” **Abbott** continues, “the emergence and consolidation of university presses in the 1910s and 1920s was essentially a response of universities to the overburdening of the earlier scholarly publication system.” Thus the birth — and, I would argue, the fate — of the modern university library and university press is intertwined in the professionalization of Higher Education management, with centralized libraries and university presses founded by growing universities to solve, yes, a “crisis in scholarly publishing.”

So if there was a pre-Capitalist “gift economy” **Eden** when faculty managed their own publications and universities saw to publishing their own faculty, “tending to their own gardens,” rather than contributing to the global enterprise of scholarly publication, it was ended with a bite of the apple of professionalism by both libraries and presses — that is, in the modernization of publication, distribution, bibliography, collection, and preservation of knowledge. Returning to an algorithmically-enhanced, institution-specific system modeled on that of pre-War America in our own time of increasingly networked scholarship and amid a complex, highly commercialized information ecology would involve a lot of devolution by both presses and libraries.

## III: The Monograph

At the center of the debate over the future of scholarly communication — and the future of university presses — lies the humble monograph, of which libraries complain they do not get enough use and presses complain they do not get enough sales. Someone always seems to be to blame for the monograph — authors for writing them, publishers for publishing them, libraries for not buying them. A recent blog post from the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* estimable **Jennifer Howard** carried the impatient headline “Ditch the Monograph.” **Kathleen Fitzpatrick**, in her book *Planned*

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*Obsolescence* proposes that scholarship could be better carried out in blogs than monographs. And my own author, the media scholar and philosophical provocateur **Ian Bogost**, diagnosed in his recent *Alien Phenomenology* that too often scholars write “not to be read, but merely to have written.”

This concern is not a recent one. An early, almost annoyingly charming promotional piece from 1937, “Some Presses You Will Be Glad to Know About,” profiled ten scholarly presses — one based at a library — and cites the origin of the modern university press as coming from the universities’ realization “that it was unfair to expect the average publisher to market books possessed of such little popular appeal but at the same time such real importance.” The **University of Chicago’s Andrew Abbott** confirms that, as early as 1927, there were complaints about “the overproduction of second-rate material,” scholar’s “excessive specialization,” and the difficulty of publishing “important work with such small audiences.” There it is, the monograph crisis in utero, some eighty-five years ago.

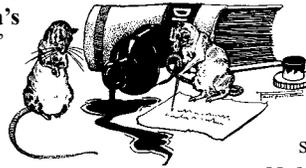
So what is the scholarly monograph, and why are we still publishing them? The **Webster’s** definition of a monograph is “a learned treatise on a small area of knowledge,” and most other dictionaries follow suit. But for scholarly publishing purposes, I have my own definition: “a monograph is a scholarly book that fails to sell.” At the time when the **University Press Ebook Consortium** (now part of **Project Muse**) was forming, I found myself in a heated argument with a fellow university press director on whether there was any such thing as individual, non-library purchasers of scholarly monographs. After an hour, I finally realized that he exempted from his definition of “monograph” any book that actually sold or had significant course use or bookstore sales. Monographs, thus, are what we in university presses call the books that don’t sell.

As that anecdote suggests, I could talk about this for an hour. But let’s look at the sales profiles of two revised humanities dissertations by untenured authors, published the same season by my press. As you can see, one sold twice as many copies as the other, and while library sales made up an overwhelming total — over 2/3 of the sales of the money-losing “monograph” — they were well under half of the successful “scholarly book.” Again these are both revised dissertations by untenured faculty in English departments.

Now look at a non-monographic scholarly book by a senior academic that came out the same year — one of those “midlist trade books” — and you’ll see the library share of sales goes down to below 20%. So where we’ve relied on libraries the most is with the books that don’t recover their costs — the books we publish for reasons of mission rather than sustainability.

In the economics of university presses, the two “scholarly” books helped pay for the “monograph” and others like it. When Open Access advocates make the point that most

scholarly authors do not benefit monetarily from sales of their works (they do, of course, benefit significantly from the status of having published them with university presses), that criticism is, strictly speaking, accurate. What happens, rather, is in the manner of the scene of the bank run on the **Bailey Savings and Loan** in **Frank Capra’s** beloved “It’s a Wonderful Life,” the money made from Author B and Author C’s books are reinvested by the press in the one by Author A. Unlike the predatory bank owned by the magnate **Mr. Potter** (by which we might read **Elsevier**), university presses do not exist to make a profit or serve shareholders, but rather to allocate investment and distribute risk. And when you consider that the **AAUP**, and the modern university press, was founded at the height of the Great Depression, this all makes sense.



The **Bailey Savings and Loan** did not provide “Open Access” to money — it was not part of a pre-Capitalist “gift economy.” Rather it distributed costs and reinvested revenues across the community of Bedford Falls much in the manner of Social Security and Medicare or, for that matter, **JSTOR** or **Project Muse**. And ask a scholarly publisher — you can hear a bell ring every time a monograph sells well enough to gain its wings as a scholarly book.

#### IV: Creative Destruction

As I have said elsewhere, the term “Open Access” has two lives, one as a description of the increasingly vigorous environment for freely-shared scholarship and the other as a political term and economic cudgel. Open access as practice, as in the digital humanities, can coexist with and enrich the existing system of formal monograph and journal publication and, I believe, even relieve some of the financial pressure that besets it. Open Access as oppositional rhetoric, as struggle to the death, promises instead a long stretch of turmoil, of “creative destruction,” but with the potential for a utopian outcome — utopias, however, being notoriously difficult to achieve in anyone’s lifetime and often accompanied by unintended consequences. As **Donald Waters**, the Program Officer for Scholarly Communication at the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** observed in a talk at the **University of Michigan Libraries** in 2007, later reprinted in the **Michigan Library**-sponsored open access *Journal of Electronic Publishing*, the issues surrounding open access publishing “may not be as straightforward as they appear to those partisans who are actively engaged in the debates.” **Waters** later elaborates, “open access [needs to] be balanced against the need for sustainability. It may be in the public interest to mandate open access, but it may equally be a failure of public trust if such a mandate is not balanced by consideration of a requirement for sustainability so that the content and the publisher endure.”

When I listen to Open Access advocates talk about the “broken” system of scholarly publishing, what I hear is cable news political pundits talking about how Social Security and

Medicare are “broken” and need to be replaced by mutual funds or vouchers — the prelude to solving a problem in our neoliberal epoch is always destroying rather than reinforcing what is already in place. The economic term for this is “Creative Destruction,” as elaborated

by Austrian-school economist **Joseph Schumpeter** in opposition to the Keynesian economics that guided New Deal programs of the 1930s. In our time, “Creative Destruction” has come to be seen as essential for economic growth, its “disruptions” necessary for the creation of the new. In the Urban renewal that swept American cities in the 1950s and 1960s and in the replacement of public transit systems, such as Los Angeles’s streetcar network by highways (highways that themselves became clogged with traffic, necessitating the current reconstruction of L.A.’s streetcar network at great expense), we can see the effectiveness of “Creative Destruction” in spurring new development as well as its unintended consequences of making a desert of the public sphere. As the geographer **David Harvey** described the process, “old places have to be devalued, destroyed, and redeveloped.”

In our own world of scholarly publishing, a recent example of “Creative Destruction” was the decision, later rescinded, to close the “broken” **University of Missouri Press** and replace it with something new and “next-generation” for which, the newly-arrived software-entrepreneur President of the University later admitted they didn’t yet have a plan. One Open Access blogger hailed the threatened closure as a “positive bellwether for a healthy shift in emphasis from one model of scholarly publishing to another,” without, of course, specifying what that “another” consisted of. As a tide of resistance to the closure to the **University of Missouri Press** rose from scholars, authors, university donors, readers, booksellers, public librarians, and the editorial pages of every newspaper in the state, many of us in university presses nevertheless fretted that our colleagues in the academic library world, our longterm allies, were largely, if not entirely, silent.

I am not going down the road of righteous indignation here. Indeed, the threatened **Missouri** closure was in the news at the same time as the **Georgia State** case, and the academic library community could itself feel our long partnership was being betrayed. Both **Missouri** and **Georgia State** strike me as warning signs that we are failing to openly and collaboratively solve the challenges that face both our professions in the digital transition. I continue to believe, as I said when I last addressed this audience in 2009, that “if we’re not in this together, we should be” for the good of scholarly communication and the university as a whole.

#### V: Evolution

In place, then, of Creative Destruction, I propose a model of evolution, or continued co-evolution of presses along with libraries. Arguably, libraries and presses have been

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evolving in different directions, but if that divergence gets much wider it will lead to chaos and to a less rigorous system of scholarly communication precisely at the moment when the explosion of information and discourse demands more interlinked systems.

Some will say, have said, that presses are an evolutionary deadend — a “dinosaur” — and eagerly await their extinction in the tar pits of the open Web, a commercialized mire that, frankly, is just as likely to swallow libraries. But I wouldn't count presses out. As **Leila** summarized and of which **Alison's** presentation will provide further testimony, while remaining true to their mission, presses have innovated constantly and continue to do so. A university press launched **Project Muse**, and we collaborated eagerly in the creation of **JSTOR**, cornerstones of Humanities and Social Science scholarship. And the eBook programs on both those platforms have the potential to bring new life and usage even to the disparaged monograph. After all, how many believed that journal backfiles could gain such usage before the advent of **JSTOR**?

But there are different forms of evolution, one involving gradual change — hardly visible — and one punctuated change — occurring rapidly, often in response to a moment of systemic crisis and stress. Particularly now,

with the economic stress on higher education and the rise of the digital humanities and open scholarship, university presses — and indeed the entire scholarly communication system — are clearly in one of those periods of rapid and critical change responding to stress. And while university presses are evolving, they need to evolve faster — away from a closed system of scholarship and the contained, siloed content of the monograph and journal issue toward the kind of database structure that is implicit in the very system of rigorously-confirmed references and notes that underlie all our publications — for truly university press publications were hyperlinked via footnotes and endnotes decades before the creation of the Internet.

What will this new system look like when fully evolved? What I see ahead for the humanities and social sciences is an intensely innovative, hybridized environment for university scholarly communication — one that encompasses both open access and nonprofit models, scholarship in university repositories and that publishes by presses in the established forms of eBooks and e-journals, large digital humanities initiatives, and a lively constellation of individual and collaborative scholarly blogs, micro-blogs, and Websites.

In many cases, specific research projects will span and flow across all these forms in what I think of as a process of endosmosis and exosmosis, from less concentrated scholarly forms to more concentrated ones, such as the monograph, and back again.

The environment of scholarly communication, much of it informal and nonprofessionalized, has dramatically expanded in the past decade, and within it the boundaries of scholarly publishing, always formalized and professional, and of the scholarly monograph are breaking down. That is a good thing for both presses and authors. In line with the many discussions of tenure reform underway at research universities, the university press mission will, I expect, adjust from encompassing nearly all scholarship to specifically publishing works by authors who have the vocation to be scholarly authors. Not those authors, to repeat **Ian Bogost's** taunt, “who write merely to have written” but rather those who write to be read. And while I do not speak for all university press publishers, it is increasingly clear to me that a policy toward copyright that allows scholarly authors to have greater control of their work, to limit the rights they convey to publishers and more actively manage their own works, will help foster this much richer and more diverse scholarly communications ecology. Making that occur is something that libraries and presses should be talking about rather than lining up on one side or another.

But why are scholarly publishers and specifically university presses needed in this emerging environment when freely available software makes self-publishing an option for any scholar and when libraries are increasingly expanding their own missions to become

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publishers, but without the presses fiscal burden of cost recovery? The answer for me is that publication by a university press, by an entity with a mission that extends beyond its own institution, means something both academically and economically — it is both an *evaluative* process of editorial assessment, peer review, and faculty board approval and an *evaluating* in terms of the press's decision to invest financial and personnel resources in a particular author's work. At a time when the humanities and social sciences are being *devalued* within the academy, formal publication signals that such works have an economic and cultural value and are more than mere localized academic work product. Over the past decades, university presses have sponsored scholarly work in areas that in many cases were discouraged or actively disparaged by university departments themselves — areas such as feminist studies, Chicano Studies, and GLBT Studies and emerging areas of inquiry such as work on tourism, sports, and video games. Literary theory as a method flourished on the lists of university presses long before it had more than a toe-hold in language departments, presses focused on African-American history while vestiges of segregation still existed in universities themselves, even areas of science such as human genetics and cognitive science, once both thought of as marginal, were aided by the recognition provided by the presses at **Johns Hopkins** and **MIT**. Sometimes accused of rushing to “trendy” areas of scholarship, university presses at their best provide an alternate locus of accreditation for emerging areas of scholarship and scholarly method and, by working across institutional boundaries, help to correct for localized pockets of conservatism. As universities now address their budget crises by combining departments, shuttering interdisciplinary centers, and tightening tenure opportunities, university press imprints will be even more important to innovative and boundary-challenging scholars.

And university presses will survive and continue to evolve for this reason as well — that while new modes of scholarship continue to forecast “the death of the author,” the author is far from dead. Take it from a university press publisher, they bang down our doors, and not just to satisfy tenure and promotion requirements. And scholarly authors care: they revise diligently in response to peer review and editorial feedback, and obsess over how their monographs are edited, titled, produced, publicized, and sold. Authorship is more than communication — many of the best academic blog authors are also recent university press authors — and as long as there are scholars who consider themselves authors, there will be university presses.

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*Note: Look for University of California Press director Alison Mudditt's address in the next issue of ATG. — LS*

## Papa Abel Remembers — The Tale of A Band of Booksellers, Fascicle 20: Competition

by **Richard Abel** (Aged Independent Learner) <reabel@q.com>

The writing preceding this end-piece is manifestly a history. Ipso facto, the writer was wearing the hat of an historian. This role is hardly surprising for, as openers, the writer was trained as an historian, having found the sovereign means of understanding from the early years, a more-or-less detailed account of how we have gotten into virtually every situation from the most mundane to the larger picture of world history. Secondly, and almost as personally compelling, the writer lived every moment of this history from its first unlikely and shaky venture into an esoteric species of bookselling to its absorption into the **Blackwell** holdings.

But such a close historical involvement has necessarily led to casting this summation into terms which might well seem to some readers to be prideful recital of a personal achievement. So, this end-piece is added to draw attention to the conscious use of the term “Band” in the title and to recall to the reader's mind the use of the repeated image of the venture to that of the Greek Argonauts. In short this history would not have happened absent the conjoint knowledge, intelligence, and dedication of the entire crew of that Band, and particularly that of thoughtful input and sheer effort of the band of Branch Managers located across this nation and overseas.

Nor could it have been written absent the input and assistance of those still with us. The memory of any individual is potentially unreliable, subjective, and readily a partial thing. The writer was dependent from the opening of this story onward to resort to others to form a full and trustworthy account of what happened in the period 30 to 50 years ago. As good fortune would have it, a few of that Band continued on working with scholarly books and libraries. As a consequence, they were well-positioned to intimately monitor the continued use and utility of the computer and production systems that had been conceived and implemented by the Band. They were able to attest to the now continuous and world-wide employment of those systems we pioneered.

Unhappily, I was unable to turn to the memories of a considerable complement of that Band who have departed our mortal company. They must be remembered as having been contributors of merit equal to that of those who have been included in this account and whose memories contributed to the fleshing out of this history. Bent upon outcomes not often known and beset by a continuing array of risks, some foreseen, others neither foreseen nor understandable, they were key players in the game of navigating previously uncharted waters. But,

despite these gambles and incomprehensible hazards, they never shied from nor balked at the problems of greater or lesser difficulty that had to be solved as best as the Band's collective efforts could.

In dealing with the fledgling era the memories of **Fred Gullette** and **Lorene Dortch** were constantly relied upon. **Lorene** possesses a remarkably acute memory of details relating to much of the history of the Argonauts. The same may be said of **Oliver Sitea**, who was not only another repeated respondent but also a continuing volunteer of events no longer coming to my mind.

For the middle years, resort was again had to those mentioned above, as well as **Keith Barker** and **Dan Halloran**. These two, plus **Ralph Shoffner** and **Don Chvatal**, were the sources for the complexities of the last years. In this connection **Don Chvatal** deserves especial note for his critical assessment of the chronicle of the last several years.

Lastly the writer seeks the reader's indulgence in offering his thanks to that remarkable crew who served the world of books and libraries so inventively and diligently.

Note was made that such a Band as conceived, created, implemented, and oversaw the systems created by the firm to radically increase the speed and efficiency of getting books into the hands of users would be difficult to bring together again. Such a setting of this Band fails if it did not underscore the inescapable fact that all the Argonauts willfully gravitated to the venture. We shared a common mind as to the place and worth of books as representing and incorporating the total cultural capital of the West. We well understood that we were the extraordinarily fortunate heirs of a vast inheritance for which we had done nothing warranting the showering of such a gift upon us. We well appreciated that our cultural inheritance was encapsulated in books. It remains virtually an axiom that, were some universal solvent capable of selectively destroying all the books in the world invented and released, all cultures would simply collapse into barbarism in a generation or two. And we were of the related view that the sustainable additions to the culture in our generation would be incorporated in the books in which we dealt. In short, all viewed themselves as the committed, honest brokers of knowledge as a modest acknowledgement of their good fortune in receiving an inheritance of such magnitude and of their labors to pass that inheritance on, not simply complete in its entirety but marginally richer.

*continued on page 63*

