From the University Presses: Whither Library-University Press Partnerships?

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few inducements to join divisions and round tables. Programs sponsored by ALA units are open to all members, as are any committee or interest/discussion group meetings, though some special events charge a lower fee for members. Being appointed to a committee requires membership in the unit, but a subject for another column could be why ALA members are becoming increasingly disinterested in such appointments. The arrival in the mail of *C&RL* reminds me that I'm an ACRL member and am receiving a visible benefit from this membership. Over the years, I’ve dropped membership in two other divisions when they ceased distributing print publications. I have enough commitment to ACRL that I’ll most likely continue to renew each year. Perhaps this factor doesn’t concern other members who are more involved with ACRL through Facebook, Google Groups, Twitter, ALA Connect, and other social media.

The cost savings in eliminating the print version of *C&RL* will most likely far exceed the loss of revenue from any decreased membership dues. Nonetheless, I worry about this slippery slope that I see occurring in many parts of my life. My local daily newspaper went digital and reduced paper content to save money. In the beginning, I read the digital version daily, though not as thoroughly as when scanning the entire issue was more difficult as I’ve already discussed above. I stopped reading it completely when I lost the email that contained the password and didn’t consider it important enough to go looking for it. The same will most likely be true for the digital edition of *C&RL*. I’ll get the digital email about the new issue, perhaps even with a table of contents; make a mental note that I should really, really read it; file the email away in my “read later” folder; and eventually delete the email without reading the issue. To be fair, I have a stack of publications in my office that will also be discarded at some point without systematic reading; but I have at least scanned the most important ones when they arrived and noted the organization that sent them. In the end, I’ll have less of a connection with ACRL and ALA. I don’t know if other organizations have faced this same issue. A quick Google search indicates that many professional societies stress the benefits of receiving print publications as a perk for joining and at least a few have less expensive online memberships that don’t include print journals.

I’m beginning to worry that I look like a Luddite in too many of my columns, but I’ll remind readers that the Luddites were right — technology would change their lives in ways that they didn’t like. Where they were wrong was that they could do anything to stop these changes. I know better than to make that mistake but hope that I can at least mourn the losses attached to adopting new technologies, including not receiving a print edition of *C&RL*. 🙁

### From the University Presses — Whither Library-University Press Partnerships?

*Column Editor: Alex Holzman (Director, Temple University Press; Phone: 215-926-2145) <aholzman@temple.edu> http://www.temple.edu/tempress*

This is the last column I’ll write before I retire as director at Temple University Press, and it seems an auspicious time to think out loud about how the library-university press relationship has evolved in recent years and where we might thrive by working together in the future.

The January 2014 publication of the *Association of American University Presses (AAUP)* Press and Library Collaboration Survey ([http://www.aaupnet.org/images/stories/data/LibraryPressCollaboration_report.pdf](http://www.aaupnet.org/images/stories/data/LibraryPressCollaboration_report.pdf)) provided a good place to start. The good news — ninety-five percent of the respondents, which included both library and university press personnel — “see the need for presses and libraries to engage with each other about issues facing scholarly publishing beyond the usual topics of open access, fair use, and copyright.” A variety of responses to questions throughout the survey show an unmistakable trend toward increasing degrees of library-press interaction, though the benefits of those interactions seem much less clear.

The survey spends a lot of time on the scope and success of library publishing programs, how they differ from press publishing programs, and where (whether) they should cooperate on specific programs. It also notes that the press reports directly to the library at just over seventeen percent of the respondent institutions. That would seem to imply working together much more closely, or at least a better understanding of each other’s needs and priorities, but unfortunately, the study doesn’t treat that group with any further specificity.

Here’s a striking difference between presses and libraries. Slightly over 40% of reporting presses are charged with recovering the costs of their publishing program, including staff salaries and overhead costs, while another 25% are charged with achieving an “acceptable loss,” which I expect means achieving a budgeted loss (subvention) negotiated with the administration at the start of a budget year. Libraries face a very different situation. Only 8.5% of respondents are charged with recovering the full costs of their publishing program. More astounding is that only about one in six cases engaged in a direct report (some parts of my life. My local daily newspaper went digital and also reduced content to save money. In the beginning, I read the digital version daily, though not as thoroughly as when scanning the entire issue was more difficult as I’ve already discussed above. I stopped reading it completely when I lost the email that contained the password and didn’t consider it important enough to go looking for it. The same will most likely be true for the digital edition of *C&RL*. I’ll get the digital email about the new issue, perhaps even with a table of contents; make a mental note that I should really, really read it; file the email away in my “read later” folder; and eventually delete the email without reading the issue. To be fair, I have a stack of publications in my office that will also be discarded at some point without systematic reading; but I have at least scanned the most important ones when they arrived and noted the organization that sent them. In the end, I’ll have less of a connection with ACRL and ALA. I don’t know if other organizations have faced this same issue. A quick Google search indicates that many professional societies stress the benefits of receiving print publications as a perk for joining and at least a few have less expensive online memberships that don’t include print journals.

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without presses allow those that have them to bear the rider problem, whereby universities and colleges always for STM materials); the outflow of student money to commercial presses (mostly, but not the larger issues that simply can’t be resolved by cross-institutional partnerships to deal with some compare their experiences and perhaps to foster meeting at report, as they did at the 2013 AAUP meeting, on their successes and their difficulties. At this writing, something like twenty presses report to libraries. It would make sense for them to meet at ARL or ALA or AAUP conferences to compare their experiences and perhaps to foster cross-institutional partnerships to deal with some of the larger issues that simply can’t be resolved by individual institutions alone. These include tackling the problem of the massive outflow of university money to commercial presses (mostly, but not always for STM materials); the outflow of student funds to commercial textbook publishers; the free rider problem, whereby universities and colleges without presses allow those that have them to bear by far the lion’s share of the costs; and the honest consideration of whether all scholarship needs to be open access or whether alternative solutions might offer OA where it’s most needed while revenue-producing items — more affordable priced to be sure — would help build a sustainable system. Indeed, as Temple Dean of the Libraries Joe Lucia has suggested, we need to work better together to define what constitutes success in scholarly communication. There is so much to do, and we can do it so much better if really engage each other so that we take full advantage of our complementary skills.

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With that I bid you all adieu. Many thanks to those who have read any of the pieces I’ve contributed in the past couple of years. If some of them have sparked a thought or two, then the effort has been worth it. I hope to find new ways to contribute to the scholarly communications ecosystem in the months and years ahead, so you may from time to time hear from me again in this space. Meanwhile, my thanks to Katina Strauch for the opportunity to share my thoughts and to Tom Gilson and Toni Nix for putting up with my challenges to the concept of a fixed deadline. You folks are great!

Pelikan’s Antidisambiguation — “Moirologists, Authority, and the Academy”

I heard someone say recently, “The textbook industry is in trouble. You can’t swing a dead cat without hitting someone who thinks they can write the next textbook replacement...”

Huh? Who would want to swing a dead cat? How would such a person be regarded in a professional setting? And where does the expression “you can’t swing a dead cat without hitting (this or that),” come from, anyway?

The World Wide Web seems to be, well, not-fully-informative on this last question. Yahoo Answers labels as “Best Answer” a meandering set of data points touching variously upon “the hit TV show Cheers,” the idea that the gestured form of the expression is performed “by circling of one hand in the air like a lassoing action,” and the assertion that “the term ‘dead cat’ is an expression from the mide-70s... not referring to our kitty friends though.” Finally, the Yahoo Answers entry links to an etymology site according to which, “...there is no trace of this phrase, [sic] before the last twenty years.”

Hmmm. If I remember my Tom Sawyer correctly, it was Johnny Miller who, for the privilege of helping Tom whitewash the fence, “...bought in with a dead rat and a string to swing it with...”

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