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# Why Libraries and University Presses Should Support One Another

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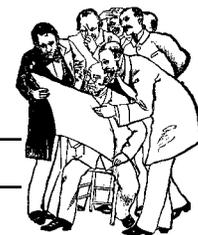
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# Why Libraries and University Presses Should Support One Another



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The past few years there has been a small but bullish turf war going on among scholarly communication units. Libraries, the acknowledged centers of academic holdings and research, began using language that sounded like they were the true owners of scholarly publications. University presses, the acknowledged creators and purveyors of some of the most renowned scholarship created, felt dismissed and side-lined in a conversation they have owned for years. Recently the tide has turned for smoother sailing. Both entities realize there is much to learn from one another, and that scholarly dissemination takes many forms and outlets, and these are increasingly not “yours” or “mine” but “ours.” Embedded in this discussion is the growing context of more and more library-press collaborations and partnerships.

In the state of Florida, we have a statewide university press, the **University Press of Florida (UPF)**, that serves all of the state universities and is hosted by the **University of Florida**, and, just across the street, is the large and reputable **George M. Smathers Libraries**. The director of the press and the dean of libraries have developed a collegial and cooperative environment where both units enhance and complement one another. We have found many more shared values and interactions than confrontational turf wars. So here in a nutshell is what we have learned — so far.

## Our Shared Values

Both units are dedicated and have encoded into their DNA the desire to distribute and disseminate the best in scholarship; to allow discovery of everything a researcher needs to accomplish their research goals, using whatever variety of methods of delivery, format, or intended use suits the content and meets the needs of the users. Each is committed to excellence in research, to helping faculty and research associates work toward internationally recognized standards of excellence in research, and to engaging in positive and focused curation of scholarly production. At the heart of each unit’s mission is service to faculty, visiting scholars, and students by providing tools and information to help answer the research question. In these trying times of budget cuts and attacks on higher education, both share a need to get the most out of limited resources, with the express acknowledgement that one cannot exist without the other. The relationship is much more than vendor/customer; we are auxiliary units that share an academic mission of high standards, dedicated curation, and imaginative use of resources.

## Collaborations

There are many ways university presses and libraries work together. In Florida, there

is a shared open access repository for academic texts and textbooks, Orange Grove Textbooks, created by the press and hosted by the library. Both of us are dedicated to encouraging open resources, educating faculty about the advantages of open access publishing and encouraging administrators to support the development of open educational resources (OER). We are co-authors and recipients of the recent NEH grant to digitize selections from the **UPF** backlist, forming an open access collection of important titles that increases access to and visibility of both the **UPF**’s acquisitions history in Spanish Florida and the Caribbean and Smathers Libraries’ vast Latin American and Caribbean collection. **UPF** offers its unique skill set in print and eBook editing, design and production as publication services to the library and other **UF** departments. We are exploring a mentorship between **UPF** and library’s Director for Scholarly Communications to share skill sets, as well as having a **UPF** representative on the university-wide scholarly communications task force.

## Positive Interactions

So many of our skills — acquisitions, curation, discipline specialization, identification of scholarly excellence — parallel and complement each other. We have found that by teaching and sharing skills and tasks, both units benefit from more successful grant writing, more collaborative digitization, and a curated, value-driven repository. Each of these activities has deepened our mutual respect and understanding of each others’ challenges, missions, and talents. As a result, the press is viewed less like a vendor and more like a collaborator, and the library publishing program is viewed as complementary and not competitive with press offerings, and each of us is gaining a deeper understanding of the differences between commercial and non-profit publishers.

## Positive Differences

As with any relationship, there are differences that add depth and color to the partnership. At the **Smathers Libraries**, we have worked to help create **LibraryPress@UF**, a division of the Press that features complementary content that is frequently offered in limited editions, is very campus specific, or does not require peer review.

These are products that would not normally be published by a university press but certainly meet the campus-driven mission of the libraries. By understanding what kinds of products the libraries want to produce, and using university press skills to facilitate production and distribution of these products, both units meet their missions without competition.

## Wisdom

Obviously, these are not relationships that were built in a day, but over the course of years, through dinners, meetings, and conferences. What we have learned is that both units need to reach out to each other without the presumption that there will be antagonistic or competing views of scholarly communications and with an expectation that we can learn from each other and assist each other. Each unit needs to take advantage of complementary visions and personalities, sharing the mission statements, vision, and strategic plans to identify places where the minds may meet and collaborations can flourish.

It may seem obvious, but we often overlook the importance of taking advantage of geographical location. It is easier to find opportunities for collaboration when we are able to meet in person and build the relationships face-to-face. But most importantly, each of us needs to break the historic patterns of distrust and fear, of customer versus vendor, of product producer and distribution channel, both at the level of the director of the press and the dean of libraries, but also throughout our own units. We need to set a good example and make the benefits of our collaboration visible to our staff and to the campus and community we both support. By supporting one another, we make the press and the library more effective.

The iconic phrase “information wants to be free” is attributed to **Stewart Brand**, who, in the late 1960s, founded the *Whole Earth Catalog* and argued that technology could be liberating rather than oppressing. The earliest recorded occurrence of the expression was at the first **Hackers Conference** in 1984. **Brand** told **Steve Wozniak**: “On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it’s so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting against each other.”<sup>1</sup> At the **University Press of Florida** and the **Smathers Libraries**, we no longer see these two concepts as fighting, but as two sides of the same coin that are essential parts of a vibrant university ecosystem. Accepting that allows us to move forward in a strong and collaborative partnership that reflects our shared values and benefits our university and the researchers who rely on us to obtain information to support their own scholarly endeavors. 🍀

## Endnotes

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information\\_wants\\_to\\_be\\_free](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_wants_to_be_free)