

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD: A BIBLIOGRAPHY
Ryan R. Schumacher

INTRODUCTION

I began this project with a broad, indistinct goal: to examine some the ways university presses have grappled with the challenges of the digital revolution. I began with the belief that the scope of these challenges would, in the main, concern the digitization of content and the development of new business models for digital content, perhaps creating new revenue streams or cost-costing mechanisms for university presses, beleaguered as they are by a severe decline in the sales of scholarly monographs. Though many of the articles I read speculated on how the digitization of content could affect the financial sustainability of university presses (generally arguing that digitization would have positive effects), I have found that these issues are but a few that face university presses in the wake of the digital revolution. As these articles show, digitization portends drastic changes in the ways in which publishers deliver content (even in traditional printed form), manage copyrights, and work with another as well as the ways in which they present content and conduct business. What effect these changes will have on the financial sustainability of university presses is far from certain; it seems the only certainty is that the digital revolution is a revolution that is far from over. What is clear is that university presses are embedded in and often constrained by the context of a larger academic community of institutions, libraries, administrators, scholars, and students; technological solutions alone will not be enough for presses ensure their survival in that complex community.

BARTLETT, REBECCA ANN, compiler. “University Press Forum: Variations on a Digital Theme (and Other Matters).” *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* July 2007: 211-228.

For this forum, the directors of five university presses—Georgetown University Press, Johns Hopkins University Press, University of Massachusetts Press, Oxford University Press, and Purdue University—were invited “to speak out on whatever concerns them.” As the editor observes, “matters digital reign supreme.” The manner in which the press directors address these “matters digital” varies considerably. The press directors of Georgetown and Purdue focus on the need for collaboration and cooperation with institutional libraries, among other things (Georgetown University Press has already begun posting PDFs of books that it publishes in the Georgetown library’s digital repository); Kathleen Keane from Johns Hopkins focuses on her press’s efforts in keeping humanities and social science journals affordable through its Project MUSE electronic database; Bruce Wilcox from the University of Massachusetts press focuses on how the digital revolution “has transformed the *process* rather than the *product*”—meaning that editorial tasks, design, and distribution have changed, though not the kind of products (hard-copy, non-digital books) the press offers—though this may change, meaning that presses need to be ready for a “pluralistic” future; and Niko Pfund from Oxford University Press argues that academic publishers must look toward the digital future as full of opportunity and to answer librarians’ calls to provide content free of

“format discrimination” (they must relinquish at least some of their strong preference for printed matter, in other words).

BROWN, LAURA, REBECCA GRIFFITHS, AND MATTHEW RASCOFF.

“University Publishing in a Digital Age.” July 23, 2007.

<http://www.ithaka.org/strategic-services/Ithaka%20University%20Publishing%20Report.pdf>. Accessed 4 November 2007.

The authors of this paper argue that there are growing disconnections between university presses, their home institutions, and their users (assumed here to be academic researchers.) These disconnections, it seems, are at least partly responsible for the difficult financial situations in which many (if not most) university presses find themselves. The authors suggest that American universities can help their presses by making scholarly publishing and integral part of their mission (a strong press could help build the university’s reputation, the argument goes) and providing opportunities in which a variety of university resources, like those of academic libraries, are put to use in developing new models of scholarly publishing (particularly in creating digital content). For their part, university presses should develop more online content (including both frontlist and backlist titles) as this will help them better accommodate the research needs of contemporary academic users. Universities and university press should also collaborate to “[d]evelop a shared electronic infrastructure across universities to save costs, create scale, leverage expertise, innovate, extend the brand of U.S. higher education, create an interlinked environment of information, and provide a robust alternative to commercial competitors.”

DALTON, MARGARET STIEG. “A System Destabilized: Scholarly Books Today.”
***Journal of Scholarly Publishing* July 2006: 252-269.**

Dalton argues in this article that the “balance” achieved over several decades among publishers, booksellers, librarians, readers, and authors is currently destabilized, signaling a potentially hostile future for the scholarly monograph and a need for change. There are several reasons for this destabilization, including an academic certification system in which professorial job security and prestige depends on the production of monographs (especially in the humanities and many of the social sciences), with an increasing emphasis on quantity over quality, at a time when the publication of these monographs is becoming more and more financially unfeasible for university presses. Much of this financial unfeasibility comes from cuts in subsidies from the presses’ home institutions, but a large part also comes from declining monograph sales to what has traditionally been their most important market: academic libraries. The libraries, in turn, are increasingly constrained financially by “extortionate” prices for important scholarly journals (especially in science, technology, and medicine) and information technology expenditures. Dalton argues that “a systematic approach to a solution is not yet visible,” though “piecemeal” measures are currently being taken, including exploring the still uncertain possibilities of electronic publishing and print-on-demand technology (these

will require changes in the system of scholarly credentialization and user preferences in favor of online books to help achieve “balance,” however).

DARNTON, ROBERT. “The New Age of the Book.” *New York Review of Books*. March 18, 1999. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/546>. Accessed 4 November 2007.

While Darnton argues that the then fashionable prediction that e-books would replace traditional books completely are greatly exaggerated (Darnton notes that even Bill Gates has said he far prefers to read printed matter than material on a computer screen), he also argues that a move to electronic publishing could have a positive impact on scholarly publishing. With university libraries spending most of their budgets on the acquisition of periodicals (for example, the University of Illinois at Chicago spends 78 percent; the University of Hawaii, 84 percent), purchases of scholarly monographs have severely declined. As such, academic presses are less inclined to publish monographs, which could stymie the careers of young scholars in the humanities and social sciences since they are unlikely to earn tenure without publishing one or more monographs in the early stages of their careers. Electronic publishing offers a possible solution to this problem (and possibilities for innovative scholarship incorporating new ways of reading and writing, to boot) as it is possible to “dump unlimited numbers of dissertations on the Web,” but the scholarly community must make sure quality standards remain high and veteran scholars must pave the way for their younger colleagues by ensuring that electronic monographs gain legitimacy within academia (that they become acceptable means of establishing tenure, in other words.)

DAVIDSON, CATHY N. “The Futures of Scholarly Publishing.” *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* April 2004: 129-142.

Here Davidson offers a number of suggestions that may help mitigate the current “crisis” in scholarly publishing. Davidson notes the reasons for the crisis are varied and numerous; however, she argues that scholars and editors must move beyond diagnoses of the problem(s) and focus on measures that well distribute the costs of publishing more equitably: “The bottom line is that scholarly publishing isn’t financially feasible as business model,” she observes. “*If scholarship paid, we wouldn’t need university presses.*” Though electronic publishing is just one of the many partial solutions Davidson offers to help alleviate the crisis (and is one that has been found wanting in past experience), she argues that it could prove workable and cost-effective in certain situations with a practical business model.

EATON, NANCY, BONNIE MACEWAN, AND PETER J. POTTER. “Learning to Work Together: The Libraries and the University Press at Penn State.” *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* July 2004: 215-220.

Although university presses and university libraries have often had an adversarial relationship in recent years (budget constraints have forced most university libraries to cut scholarly monograph purchases, causing great financial difficulties for the similarly constrained presses), the authors of this article cautiously argue that a more collaborative

relationship could have a positive impact on the future of scholarly publishing. The authors are all employed at either the libraries or the press at Pennsylvania State (Penn State) University; in this article they describe some of the partnering ventures they've undertaken in recent years. Described in most details are two projects which involved the publication of a book and the creation of a companion website: one a book on federally sponsored photographs taken in Pennsylvania in the 1930s and 1940s and another on the Three Mile Island accident. Another area for possible partnering includes the digitization of books from the press's backlist and the digitization of financially unviable, though academically valuable series. The authors stress that theirs is not the only model which will develop through collaboration between presses and libraries, but both of these groups have distinct areas of expertise they can offer to "ensure cost-effective and integrated access to the research we [the scholarly community] produce."

ENGLISH, JAMES. "Scholarly Journals in the Digital Age: Old versus New Forms of Inquiry." *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* (look up date): 8-18.

English shares in this article some of his observations on the impact of digital technologies on scholarly writing as seen from the perspective of his involvement with *Postmodern Culture* since its founding in 1990 (before widespread access to the internet—making the journal quite a novelty at the time—as English happily points out), the first all-electronic, peer-reviewed journal in the humanities. English notes that while digital journals have become commonplace in the humanities and "New Media, Digital Media, and Humanities Computing have . . . become recognized sub-fields in the discipline of English," scholars have rarely taken advantage of the new possibilities that writing for electronic publications offers. Most of the articles in *Postmodern Culture* have tended to resemble traditional (pre-electronic) journal articles; for example, an article on the music videos of the rock band Radiohead featured stills of the videos rather than embedded clips. Although the article did feature links to the videos, the links were no longer active when English wrote this article. This unreliability suggested to English both why scholars are reticent to employ electronic media and ways in which scholars might integrate that media into their work critically and playfully.

HENRY, CHARLES. "Rice University Press: Fons et Origo." *Journal of Electronic Publishing* Spring 2007. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3336451.0010.205>. Accessed 4 November 2007

Henry is director of Rice University Press, re-created in 2006 as the first fully digital university press in the United States, a decade after its traditional publishing operations closed down. Henry gives some of the reasons why Rice University Press was able to start up again, including the partnership between Rice's Fondren Library and Connexions, which is a "a set of Web-authoring, teaching, and learning tools that may be used by students, teachers, professors, and anyone interested in education." Connexions gives the press the tools to create digital books, and, through its own partnership with QOOP, print-on-demand technology. Henry argues that digital publishing may prove to be especially valuable for disciplines like art history, which have suffered especially hard in the wake of the "monograph crisis" due to high printing costs (Henry also argues that

digital publishing also gives art historians the means to present their research in more engaging ways than has traditionally been possible).

HONEY, SADIE L. “Preservation of Electronic Scholarly Publishing: An Analysis of Three Approaches.” *Libraries and the Academy* 5:1 (2005): 59-75.

Honey explores an oft-overlooked aspect of electronic publishing: preservation. After all, scientific knowledge is cumulative, and with preservation in printed books and journals, the chances of most of this knowledge being irretrievably lost have been slim (for example, if a library’s academic journal collection is destroyed by fire, the information is likely not gone forever, as other libraries probably have the same materials). However, as more libraries are moving toward online-only journal subscriptions, the need to ensure the long-term durability of electronic material has become clear (electronic materials may be in more danger of irretrievable loss if stored in a small number of locations; this could also make them more susceptible to natural disaster and alterations to fit political, economic, or personal purposes, thus a potential loss of historically significant information). Honey examines three approaches: dark archives (employed by a handful of commercial publishers like Elsevier and a few universities), moving wall archives (like JSTOR), and caching software (of which the “lots of copies keep stuff safe” [LOCKSS] network appliance is probably the best known). She compares them in a number of areas—including accessibility, long-term economic sustainability, and provisions for technological integrity (making sure that multiple copies of materials are stored in multiple locations in case of disaster, making sure all Web links in the articles still work, etc.) and intellectual integrity (i.e., that the material cannot be altered to suit personal, economic, or political purposes)—concluding that, while none of these approaches are perfect, the moving wall archives and caching software balance these factors better than the dark archives, which tend to have very restrictive access.

LYNCH, CLIFFORD. “The Battle to Define the Future of the Book in the Digital World.” *First Monday*. June 2001.
http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue6_6/lynch/index.html. Accessed 4 November 2007.

Writing at a time when predictions that digital books would eventually replace printed ones were fairly common, Lynch sought to expand the debate in several ways with this extended piece. First, he noted that there is a significant difference between what exactly a digital book is: there are handheld digital book-reading appliances like the Rocket E-Book (already obsolete when Lynch wrote this article) and there is software like Adobe Acrobat that renders digital books readable (or at least viewable) on personal computers. He also noted that there is a significant divide over how the material in a digital book is presented: there have been a few experiments with combining text with other media, but far more often, digital books have essentially sought to mimic printed ones, whether designed for book-reading appliances or general-viewing software. A more important issue for Lynch—one that needs much more attention in public debates over digital media—is the implications of digitization for copyright and fair use: aided by the Digital

Millennium Copyright Act (DCMA) and emerging technologies, publishers may be able to severely tighten their control over the dissemination of content (by charging relatively high fees for access or limiting the number of times readers can access content, for example), undermining the traditional role of the book in making information widely available to the public.

NITTERHOUSE, DENISE. “Digital Production for Scholarly Publishers.” 2005. http://www.cddc.uchicago.edu/digital_prod_strategies.pdf. Accessed 4 November 2007.

Nitterhouse examines ways in which university presses can move from offset printing to digital printing in a cost-effective manner. (It should be noted that the main concern of this article is the production of books in traditional hardback and paperback forms, not as electronic objects.) Though digital print quality has traditionally lagged behind that of offset printing, the gap is closing, and digital printing is more cost-effective for the small print runs of most university press titles (as of the writing of Nitterhouse’s article, offset printing was still more cost-effective for print runs of over 500 units in initial printing).¹ The cost-effectiveness of digital printing for lower print runs can give presses more flexibility in managing inventory, allowing them to avoid potentially costly warehousing fees for unsold stock of the higher print runs offset printing tends to encourage. Aside from these measures for frontlist titles “born digitally” (almost all current university press manuscripts are submitted for printing, whether offset or digital, in PDF form), some presses, including Harvard and MIT, have found digital printing to be cost-effective for limited runs of backlist titles once converted to PDF files. The creation of and conversion of titles to digital forms (almost always PDF files) also allows presses to better exploit print-on-demand technology (or, as the Ohio State University Press has done, make backlist titles available for free on the Internet), effectively meaning these titles never have to go out of print.

“Principles for Emerging Systems of Scholarly Publishing.” May 10, 2000. <http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/tempe/index.shtml>. Accessed 4 November 2007.

This statement, containing the so-called Tempe principles, grew out of a meeting of representatives of university presses, libraries, and administrations held in Tempe, Arizona. Though several years old now, the nine principles contained in the document grapple with still-relevant issues of high prices for STM (science, technology, and medicine) journals and the transformation of scholarly communication by recent technological change. The first principle focuses on “containing” the prices of STM journals, demonstrating clearly what the meeting’s participants felt was the most important issue facing them, but even in that principle, they addressed the possibilities and perils of electronic publishing. While the authors of the principles saw electronic publishing as a way to possibly contain costs, they argue that those involved in scholarly publishing must also preserve dedication to accessibility and quality (through

¹ While this may not seem like an impressive number, it should be noted that most current scholarly monographs sell less than 300 units on initial printing (and are unlikely to generate significant sales thereafter, either).

preservation of a careful, thorough system of peer review) in the face of these technological changes.

SAVENIJE, BAS. "The FIGARO Project: A New Approach towards Academic Publishing." *Learned Publishing* July 2003: 183-188.

Bas Savenije, the University Librarian at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, describes a digital publishing project (FIGARO) his university and three others (Delft, also in the Netherlands, and Oldenburg and Hamburg in Germany) have recently undertaken. Savenije argues that FIGARO came about because of the high (and still rising) costs of scientific journals: a collaborative publishing model like FIGARO gives researchers and universities a lower-cost alternative. The article elucidates FIGARO's philosophy, business model, network organization, and financial model; FIGARO is a non-hierarchical (requiring more flexibility than a hierarchical organizational model allows), de-centralized (not housed at or "branded" through the auspices of one university), disaggregated (meaning a reformulation and blurring of the traditionally distinct tasks of acquisition, certification, accessibility, and archiving) venture. Savenije also notes that the future of scholarly publishing is uncertain; however, it will require innovation and a willingness to abide varying degrees of unpredictability and chaos.

WITTENBERG, KATE. "Scholarly Editing in the Digital Age." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* June 20, 2003.
<http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/book/Scholarly%20Editing%20in%20the%20Digital%20Age.htm>. Accessed 4 November 2007.

Kate Wittenberg is the director of EPIC, the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia (University), and she uses this article to both describe EPIC and argue that electronic publishing will require academic editors to re-conceptualize their roles. Wittenberg briefly describes EPIC's involvement with the Gutenberg-e project, an initiative started in 1999 that "provides prizes to young scholars whose dissertations have been selected for publication in digital form." She then goes on to describe how her experience in working on this project has shown her that electronic publishing ventures break down many of the traditional boundaries in the publishing process. Aside from altering the author/editor relationship, digital publishing blurs the lines between the editorial and production process, as Wittenberg sees it; this will require a collaborative spirit and editors who think and act flexibly and creatively.

WITTENBERG, KATE. "Collaborators in Communication: Publishers, Scholars, and Information Technologists." *EDUCAUSE Review* November/December 2004: 65-76.

Wittenberg tries to shift discussion of digital publishing away from a focus on technical issues toward organizational ones with this article. She argues that while specialists in informational technology (IT), scholars, and publishers all have talents and expertise that they can contribute to digital publishing, they need to work together, both within their home institutions (presses need to work more closely with IT specialists and libraries, for

example) and across institutions (presses need to collaborate more with each other), in order “to develop sustainable and valuable scholarly resources in the digital world.” This approach would not only combine different forms of expertise, but better distribute the risks and costs involved in the dissemination of scholarly communication. Not only would these collaborative efforts help revolutionize the content of scholarly communication, they would also revolutionize the entire organizational culture of academia.

WITTENBERG, KATE. “Beyond Google: What Next for Publishing?” *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* October 2006: 31-35.

Wittenberg argues that scholarly publishers must change the ways in which they deliver content and do business to demonstrate their relevance to the current generation of college students, a generation of “digital natives” much at home in the world of online social networking (through Facebook or MySpace), gaming, and commercial search engines. She argues that instead of reacting defensively against the possibilities that these venues bring—such as publishers have done in fighting Google’s plans to digitize books—university publishers must think creatively in order to meet contemporary student needs. They could form partnerships with social-networking websites “to build a networking space focusing on the information needs of students. Such a site could enable dialogue and collaboration among its users, discussion of readings, and creation of multimedia class projects.” And because “the lines between scholarly publishing and commercial ventures are blurring” publishers should explore the possibility of partnering with a commercial search engine (Google is the place where most students now start their research, Wittenberg observes) “to create edited, peer-reviewed content sections that could be found when exploring a specific topic.”