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Talk 1

Presses and Libraries: Getting Down to Business

Digital Publishing in the University Press Mission, Part I: In-House Players

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Digital publishing raises issues for university presses in a number of areas, both inside and outside of the press. How should we engage our press staffs to decide whether and how to develop an electronic publishing program, and then how can we leverage our relationships with outside colleagues to help us develop our digital future? The first part of this two-part session will take on these questions by hearing from representatives of individual departments within a press. These panelists will present their particular perspectives from presses who have built or are building very different programs, including opportunities and challenges faced by presses attempting to move into this new landscape.

I. Introduction.

I've titled my talk, "Presses and Libraries: Getting Down to Business" because my own experience of moving a university press into digital publishing is based, almost completely, on working with a University Library. I spoke at last year's AAUP meeting about the burgeoning press/library partnership at Penn State. I want to continue the thread of that talk today, focusing particularly on the issue of staff engagement.

As Kate mentioned, I've just recently moved to Cornell, so I haven't had the opportunity to really work yet with Cornell's librarians, but what I'm saying here has the benefit of both hindsight (what worked at Penn State) and foresight (the practical realization that I'm at a new place with it's own institutional culture and new set of players).

In fact, it is actually quite interesting for me to look back on my experience at Penn State now from my new vantage point because one of my beliefs about presses and libraries working together is that personalities really do matter. And I know that much of the early collaboration at Penn State was built around relationships with the Dean and Assistant Dean for Libraries. Since then both myself and the Assistant Dean have moved on. The important thing, though, is that by the time both of us left Penn State, the Press/Library partnership had evolved significantly beyond our own personal relationship. Not only had staff members on both sides become engaged in collaborative activities, the two organizations had become linked together administratively—thus ensuring as much as possible that the partnership would be rooted enough institutionally to carry on regardless of whether one or two key personnel leave.

I also want to point out that at Penn State the press is small but the university is large, which means that the press potentially has access to resources beyond its own means—a

situation that is worth pondering for other university small- to medium-size presses envisioning e-publishing programs but wondering where the resources will come from.

So let me point out some of the key issues I see in engaging our staffs—both at the press and at the library—to move into electronic publishing.

I. Early Steps

1. Find a small project or two to work on that a) engages both the library and the press, and b) benefits both the library and the press.

At Penn State, an example of this was:

- A book published by the press of Depression-era photos from PA. The press published the book and the library created the website containing a complete bibliographic catalog of the more than 6000 photographs taken in Pennsylvania during the Depression and WWII years. We held a joint lecture and reception for the project in the Libraries, which was well attended by the university community. In conjunction with this lecture we displayed a selection of the photographs and mounted an exhibit of WPA-era books from the Libraries' holdings. The photographs then traveled to other sites throughout the state. This engaged members of the press's staff from editorial, production, and marketing.
- From there we moved to a slightly more ambitious project—a book about Three Mile Island authored by 2 engineering librarians (and a nuclear engineer from Penn State) who oversee the major collection of materials from the accident and cleanup. The book was published as a POD title too. This created numerous opportunities for interaction among the staff of both units.

2. Another important step is to make an effort to engage the Library's goals for scholarly communication—even if it doesn't immediately benefit the press.

- For instance, at Penn State the Library has an extensive collection of Pennsylvania history books, and in recent years it has put a lot of time, effort, and resources into digitizing that collection while at the same time expanding the collection with a wider array of digital content. They're digitizing old PA newspapers, county histories, and historic document collections. The Press, meanwhile, had recently taken over publication of the history journal of the PA Historical Association.
- As the history editor at the press, I was deeply involved in the PHA, and I knew how much the association wanted to see the back issues of the journal digitized for general use, but like many small historical societies they didn't have the money. The Penn State Library had major state funding to digitize PA resources, so I helped to put the two groups together.

- The entire back file of the journal is now online (using DPubS software developed by the library at Cornell) and the library has agreements with the other 2 major state history organizations to digitize their journals and put them up online open-access.

In the short term, this took some time on my part—time that didn't necessarily have an immediate pay-off. It certainly helped the library in its effort to build up its online collection. But in the long run it definitely helped the Press:

- PSUP is credited as a partner on the website with a link to the Press's own website.
- PSUP is part of a Mellon-funded grant to build an electronic publishing platform for scholarly literature.
- It also enhances the Press's relationship with state history organizations by giving them something they dearly want—at no cost to the Press.
- This in turn helps the Press and its ongoing regional publishing program. It's hard to imagine better advertising for the Press.
- Frankly, it also helped me personally to learn more about the Library and its staff and to bring that knowledge and experience back to the Press—the importance of this cannot be underestimated.
- So, think long-term!

II. Next Steps

1. Identify a more ambitious project that can challenge both the Press and the Library a bit more—and that builds upon the accumulated experience.

- At Penn State the Press and the Library decided to work on the Press's backlist—putting a large selection of the books online as part of the Libraries' growing e-book collections. Online/POD access to 200+ **backlist titles**.
 - At the Library, this engaged various parts of their staff including IT, preservation, and cataloguing. It also helped the Library experiment with and troubleshoot the e-reader technology they were developing.
 - At the Press, this engaged:
 - marketing and sales staff—Tony Sanfilippo was the main person choosing the books for this program)
 - IT and design staff—the library was eager to have the Press's feedback on the design of the interface and determining the basic functionality of the package
 - It also led to the creation of a joint library/press internship with the College of Communications aimed at addressing the copyright/permissions issues. That person's duties included:
 - Scanning all of the press's paper contracts

- Creating a database of all rights issues
 - Clearing rights for first batch of backlist books to go online
- Another project that really helped to engage both staffs was a new series of OP regional books—**Metalmark Books series**. For this series we selected out-of-copyright books from the library's collections. The Library was already in the midst of putting its PA History collections online, and this new series cherry picks particular titles from the collections, which the Press publishes as POD books with a stock (Dover-type) format. These are very inexpensive to produce, and the income is then divided (percentages open to discussion) between the press and the library.
 - At the Library, this engages the preservation and cataloguing staff as well as the subject librarian who oversees PA history. (He knows the history collection intimately and has a great sense of what his patrons are interested in.)
 - Also very interesting and useful to see how librarians (especially the catalogers) approach reprint editions—they ask different questions than we do, which has ended up creating a connection between the library cataloguers and the press copy editors over CIP.
 - The Libraries have also bought quite a few copies of the books to give to donors and friends of the library—a great marketing tool for them.
 - At the Press, this is a great opportunity to engage anyone on the staff who has an interest in the Press's regional publishing program. The selection process is much more open than that of the scholarly books program.
 - It also engaged the production and design staff in designing the template for the series as well as the series logo.
 - Over time, the Press and the Library will gather data on sales and online usage in order to assess the effectiveness of this program.

3. One important lesson: Take risks—and don't be afraid to fail

- **WRREN project**—At Penn State we put a lot of time, effort, and money into an ambitious project called WRREN—Worldwide Rural Research and Education Network. And although it ultimately didn't come to fruition, it was an important early learning experience, the value of which shouldn't be underestimated. We didn't get discouraged, and it taught us that progress can be made despite stumbles along the way.

III. Getting More Ambitious

1. So, with a few successes—and near successes—the press and the library began to think seriously about more ambitious projects and what structural changes might be necessary to carry those projects forward.

For instance:

- a. **Born digital monographs**—The Press published a print monograph series in Romance Studies from 1991 to 2003, but the series was discontinued due in part to declining sales. When the MLA issued its report on the Future of Scholarly Publishing in 2002—which singled out foreign literature as a particularly endangered field, we began thinking of reviving our Romance Studies series in a new electronic format. The series will issue its first few books in 2007.
- b. **Electronic journals and conference proceedings**—Large number of journals based at Penn State but with an increasingly shaky future. Many migrating to commercial publishers. Similarly, many conferences at Penn State on subjects of interest to the Press—but fewer and fewer publishing outlets.

Might we be able to build on the skills learned from our previous experiences with the library to venture into these areas?

2. How to move forward?

Clearly, the Press was not in a position to do this on its own; partnership essential.

1. Piggyback on the Expertise and Technology of the Library

- a. Librarians have incredible expertise in programming, digitization, web site development, and access mechanisms such as indexing and metadata.
- b. They also have advanced knowledge of user behavior and demands that is essential for gaining widespread acceptance of new scholarly resources.
- c. And they have the technological resources. At PSU the Library has a suite of e-reader software that includes Greenstone open source, DLXS (Digital Library eXtensible Service), and Olive to serve out monographs and certain periodical literature. Also DPubS for journals and conference proceedings.

2. Extend the collaboration to other units on campus

- a. For the Romance Studies series, the Press involved the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and the Heads of the Departments of French and of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese.
- b. For journals and conferences, partnership with academic departments and organizations on campus—e.g. Women in Engineering, Nutrition Dept., English Dept. We can provide a permanent archive of proceedings and a model for printing copies as needed via POD.
- c. Another possible partner: Conferences & Institutes (unit of Outreach).

3. Rethinking the Place of the Press in the University

- 1. All of these collaborations raised basic questions about the place of the Press within the University and the nature of its partnership with the Library.

2. So far, Penn State has not hired a specifically e-publishing person. The Library and the Press collaborate while keeping the operations distinct.
3. Main point of contact is the editor-in-chief and the Assistant Dean for Scholarly Communication. These two positions are responsible for leading the collaborative effort, bringing along the respective staffs.
4. To formalize this, the decision was made to create an **Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing**.
5. This, in turn, gradually led to the decision to change the Reporting Line of the Press so that it could work more closely with the Library. In effect, the change was designed to make it easier to
 - Utilize the expertise and infrastructure of the Press and the Library to explore new digital publishing opportunities
 - Clarify the costs associated with electronic publishing—explore open access models for scholarly communication
 - Provide publishing alternatives to disciplines that are having difficulty finding publishing outlets as the current economic model collapses

IV. Conclusions: How has the staff responded to these developments?

1. I would sway quite positively. Because the transition was gradual, it was not seen as some arbitrary administrative fiat.

A. As Michelle says, it is important to get buy-in from the staff. Let them know that the changes are real, but not everything is changing

- You're not closing the warehouse
- Not all books will be e-books
- Not all books will be POD
- You're not planning to print our art books on a fancy photocopier

B. Having the Library as our partner has been great.

- Librarians are still book people—despite many reports to the contrary (mention limited edition of first Metalmark book)
- More natural home for the Press than before when the Press was lumped in with the Navy Research Lab and the Technology Transfer Office

2. Another important development has been the wider integration of the Press into the larger life of the university.

A. Whereas before the Press had few formal points of contact within the university—beyond the reporting line to the Vice President and the faculty editorial board—the Press now has regular formal contacts with the Library, various academic deans and departments, and other units on campus such as Outreach. And these contacts involve more of the staff than just senior management.

- B. In this respect, I think it has created an environment in which more of the press staff feel connected to the larger mission of the university and to the issues facing scholarly publishing in general.