Beyond the Partnership

Integration of University Press into the Academic Library

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**Abstract**

University presses and academic libraries are natural allies in the scholarly communication ecosystem. (Watkinson, 2016, p. 342). Integrating these two entities both organizationally and physically will yield financial benefits to the parent institution as well as support scholarship by allowing the publication of materials that benefit both from the prospective of a full-service publisher and an academic library.

**Keywords** Library-press partnerships, University presses, Academic libraries, Scholarly communications, Publishing

**Introduction**

University presses and academic libraries occupy complimentary and overlapping roles in the scholarly communications ecosystems; as a result, academic institutions vary widely on the organization schemes for these two entities of their scholarly community. Sometimes the collegiate library and its publishing counterpart are largely independent of each other—keeping. each other at arm’s length. Other times a more substantive relationship exists between these two entities where the strength of such relationships depends on the degree of collaboration.

Lastly, some university presses have been integrated into the academic libraries. In fact, “almost a third of campus-based university presses in North America now report to libraries” (Watkinson, 2016, p. 343), although the literature does not provide examples of the reverse being true. If managed skillfully, integrating the university presses into the parent institution’s academic library could reap economic benefits by reducing duplication of functions and economies of scale and ultimately generate publications that would have been impossible without combing the expertise of both the academic library and the university press.

**Literature Review**

Kennison, Panourgiá, and Tartar detail a collaboration between the Fordham university Press and the Columbia University Libraries” Center for Digital Research and Scholarship (CDRS). In this collaboration, the author, the Fordham University Press and the CDRS were able to create an interactive e-book taking advantage of mainstream technologies such as XML, search engine optimization (SEO) author editing tools, and commenting functionality to create a rich online experience that paralleled the original text. It was observed that such collaborations should focus on the author, with each party member with clearly defined responsibilities, shared cost and a coordinated marketing effort (2010).

Watkinson advocates that university presses should be integrated within academic libraries. The main thrust of his argument is that university presses will more likely be viewed as a necessary component which supports a university’s academic mission rather than a separate unit whose success is measured in the unit’s ability to cover its costs (2016).

“The Library-Press Partnership: An Overview and Two Case Studies” takes a closer look at the Indiana University Office of Scholarly Publishing a collaboration between the university press and the libraries of the Indiana University and the collaboration between the Syracuse University Libraries and the Syracuse University Press. From these case studies, the posit that collaborations should grow at a project level rather than at the program level (Li et al., 2018).

Holzman identifies a trend of collaboration of university presses increasing, but that a lack of understanding of the financial demands on the university press persists (2014). Bakker introduces Scholar Commons @ Laurier a joint initiative between the WLU Press and Laurier Library of the Wilfrid Laurier University. From there, the article describes the groundwork form which other library-press partnerships may succeed such as including having a librarian on the editorial board of the university press (2012).

**Proposed Solution**

Universities should fold their university presses into their academic libraries. University presses have a long history of trying to justify their existence to their parent institutions. While administrators acknowledge their contribution to scholarly communication of material that for-profit publishers reject, the performance in fulfilling there mission is measured by their ability to cover their costs. 40% of standalone university presses cover are required to recover “the costs of their publishing program” (Holzman, 2014, p. 60). In contrast, “Only 8.5% of respondents are charged with covering the full costs of their publishing program” (Holzman, 2014, p. 60). Standalone university presses are generally classified as “auxiliary” operations by their parent institutions. Metrics for success of such unites tend to be primarily financial. Libraries, meanwhile, are classified as core academic united whose funds are “designated” for the pursuit of the academic mission of the university. A university press’s appearance under the umbrella of an academic library can change the way senior administrators understand the academic publishing unit as a necessary component to support the university’s academic mission (Watkinson, 2016, p. 345).

The organizational integration of the university press into an academic library should be reflected by a physical integration of the university press into the library building. “As libraries deaccession or remove print materials to remote storage…‘free’ physical space is becoming available that may be suitable for press occupancy” (Watkinson, 2016, p. 345). 53% of libraries provided benefits such as rent-free space, basic office functions, and preservation services (Watkinson, 2016, p. 345). These cost savings for the university press can be passed on to benefit the operations of the parent institution. In addition, moving the university press into the library, grants the press an attractive central location that not only benefits the publishing unit, but the academic community as a whole by boosting visibility and increasing access to publishing opportunities (Watkinson, 2016, p. 344).

One may ask how such an integration may benefit the library, but as libraries advocate for open access journals and repositories, They will be pressured to provide “time-intensive services that represent the hallmarks of traditional scholarly publishing, including typesetting, marketing, graphic design, and print production and distribution” that are rarely the purview of the academic library (Li et al., 2018, p. 325). By incorporating the collegiate press into their organization, academic libraries will not have to acquire that expertise from scratch—again generating saving for the parent institution. Another area of shared expertise and possible source of cost savings is support for issues concerning intellectual property (Watkinson, 2016, p. 345).

As scholarly communication evolves beyond ink and paper, integration of an academic library and a university press is the publication of a materials without “contributions from both the library and the press” (Li et al., 2018, p. 323). Take for example the monograph with extensive supplemental files that cannot be included due to volume considerations. By their very nature, academic libraries already have a robust IT infrastructure. By hosting the files on a library server, the print version only needs to include a link to the supplemental files (Li et al., 2018, p. 324).

Despite the above benefits, the giant caveat is whether or not implementation of what can be a radical reorganization is feasible. There are cultural differences of which the largest is the stance on open access. While libraries unequivocally support open access, university publishers as a revenue-generating entity ask if certain products of scholarship be reserved to produce revenue-producing items to help sustain the scholarly communication ecosystem (specifically—the cost of publishing) (Holzman, 2014, p. 61). Reorganization is a complex issue, and this paper’s proposed integration would require support from the staff or both entities. “The Library-Press Partnership: An Overview and Two Case Studies” posits that collaborations should grow organically at a project level rather than at the program level (2018). While shepherding such a change would have to be skillfully managed over a prolonged period of time, the benefits that the integration of an institution’s library and publishing unit make such an undertaking worthwhile.

**Conclusion**

By moving the press into the university library can boost the standing of the library by expanding the number of ways that the academic library contributes to the campus community. With a few notable exceptions, library publishers operate as fully subsidized units of the library, freeing them from the obligation to generate revenue” (Li et al., 2018, p. 321). The integration of a university press and the academic library will generate cost savings while simultaneously allowing the publication of materials that would not be possible without the expertise of an academic library and a publishing house.

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