University press in libraries: potential for successful marriages

By Roxanne Missingham and Lorena Kanellopoulos, Australian National University

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University libraries and university presses are key components of the scholarly communication process. Over the past decade there have been huge changes in scholarly publishing, reading and the relationship between presses and libraries.

Many factors have influenced the change in scholarly communication and institutional responses reflect experiences within individual situations. The new digital environment and open access movement are two of the most significant changes that have led to radical rethinking and changes in roles and services.

Over a decade ago the concept of scholarly communication was broadly defined as connecting academics and students with the information environment:

By scholarly communication we mean the study of how scholars in any field (e.g. physical, biological, social, and behavioural sciences, humanities, technology) use and disseminate information through formal and informal channels. The study of scholarly communication includes the growth of scholarly information, the relationships among research areas and disciplines, the information needs and uses of individual user groups, and the relationships among formal and informal methods of communication. (Borgman, 1990 p. 13-4)

Libraries had a role in this space – one that was perceived as vital “Libraries are and will remain central to the management of scholarly communication for the foreseeable future” (Cummings et al, 1992 p. xv).

The role of libraries in creating digital libraries was seen as an extension of the work traditionally undertaken by libraries – “where resources are selected, collected, organised, preserved, and accessed in support of a user community” (Borgman et al., 1996). Discussion focused on the role of libraries in terms of purchasing of publications, serving as gateways to information, participating in discussion of policy issues such as copyright, working with academics to produce new scholarly outputs and working with publishers on new models of scholarly outputs (Okerson 1995, Okerson 1994). Publishers published, libraries purchased with relatively separate roles.

By 2014 the role of libraries in publishing had changed significantly. Steps were small but significant. By 2008 US research libraries were seen as offering digital services in the publishing space with very limited outputs, professionalism and skills. Libraries publishing scholarly outputs were embryonic “numbers of titles research libraries are publishing represent a very thin slice of the scholarly publishing pie” (Hahn, 2008 p. 5), The ARL study found the “modesty of the approach was Library publishing services have few pretensions to the production of elaborate publications and libraries pursue a different economics from those of traditional publishers” (Hahn, 2008 p. 6).
A 2012 roundtable (Coalition for Networked Information, 2012) found that the contribution of university libraries to publishing included monograph and journal publishing. Models included running a university press within a library as well as hosting digital publications through platforms, most commonly Open Journal Systems. A very rapid period of change had thus occurred.

Some have seen the move into publishing tentatively “librarians will also be called on to take a greater role in producing all types of content: publications, applications, and intellectual output” (Association of College and Research Libraries Research Planning and Review Committee 2013, p. 8). Others see it as a natural step or a natural scenario (Walters, 2012). The Library Publishing Coalition’s extensive membership list attests to the fact that it is an idea whose time has come (Library Publishing Coalition, 2013)

Undoubtedly the most common discussion thread is that digital repositories have given libraries a foot in the door for publishing. Amherst College aspiration to publish 15 journals (Jaschik, S. 2012) is further evidence of adoption of a role in publishing.

In Australia, five universities have established their presses in the libraries over the past decade. These developments fundamentally change the role of the library and integrate services in new ways. But all is not smooth sailing.

Controversy erupts
Outrageous is possibly the simplest word to describe the reaction of some traditional publishers to the development of presses within university libraries.

While running digital repositories was not seen as controversial, the move into new digital services with the taking over presses has provoked hot debate over the past two years. Louise Adler, head of Melbourne University Press took a stance criticising university libraries as publishers and open access (Adler, 2013). She commented “some university libraries have established in-house e-publishing initiatives for academics who fail to garner the interest of commercial publishers in highly specialised research for a limited audience”.

Suggestions that these presses produce only works that no one could want brought an immediate reaction. University Librarians running presses noted that “In Australia library-based presses publish high-quality peer-reviewed scholarship, invariably in both print and electronic formats, relatively quickly, and open access where possible, appealing to authors precisely because this enables the maximum visibility of and reach for their research” (Booth et al, 2013).

Australian open access university presses operating under libraries have indeed been great innovators. New technologies are also at the core of e-book production. Innovation using new media has been a characteristic. Books published by university presses run by libraries have won national awards - Peter Fitzpatrick’s book The two Frank Thrings published by Monash University Press won the National Biography Award 2013.
In the scholarly kitchen Joseph Esposito (Esposito, 2013) also took a position that criticised libraries as too narrowly skilled to run a press. He provoked debate with the comment “Does a library even have to know what a receivable is?” The view that both enterprises should “stick to the knitting” of their respective roles failed to acknowledge the collaborative possibilities of a close structural relationship.

The emergence of complex relationships of university libraries with presses, including at Purdue University where the press is part of the library and BioOne’s partnering with the libraries of Dartmouth University to produce a new journal, Elementa, suggest exploration of publishing models including libraries is an active area of work (Chant, 2013).

An Australian case study: ANU
In Australia, five universities (Adelaide, Australian National University, Monash, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney) have significant scholarly publishing enterprises located within the university library.

The ANU Press provides a model which has operated for more than a 10 year period, achieving more than 500 titles and more than a million downloads a year.

The Press, originally launched as the ANU E press delivered the university’s vision of a world class academic publishing taking advantage of new information and communication technologies. It was a major development for the university. To a degree it replaced a traditional print publishing operation, which in 1984 ceased operation because of financial viability issues.

Discussions on forming an electronically based national university press began in 2001. In 2002, Mr Colin Steele, University Librarian and Professor James Fox approached Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Chubb to urge the establishment of an ANU E Press. This led to an initial draft of a ‘scoping’ document by Colin Steele in August 2002, the paper was developed, in the course of the year. It became a formal proposal supported both by Professor Robin Stanton (Pro Vice Chancellor) and Professor Malcolm Gillies (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Education). The proposal was accepted by Professor Ian Chubb and he agreed to provide funding for $1.2 million for three years under the condition that the Division of Information provide funding to support the press as a long-term program.

This establishment phase was based on a high degree of advocacy and collaboration between the research community and the Library and leadership in a time of turbulent change in scholarly communication. A major factor in the current success of the press is the continued close collaboration with academics.

The success of the program was recognised immediately and it has become embedded in the universities research infrastructure within the library.

The business model
The business model has been refined over a number of years. It is based on principles of rigorous peer, close engagement with the academic community through editorial
committees (22 committees covering all subject disciplines), strategic leadership through an advisory committee with representatives from all faculties (colleges) and a range of schemes that provide financial assistance.

All works are made available as open access books and journals in a range of formats that will support easy used through computers and mobile devices. Currently works are published in Portable Document Format (PDF), ePUB and MOBI. Print copies are available through a Print on Demand service, with modest charges – most works are available for less than $AUD30.

The Press is run by a very small team of 4.5 staff. Developing technical skills and communication skills to work closely with academics have been priorities. The university provides modest funding (approximately $530,000 per annum) to underpin the production of titles by the press.

Traditional run university presses in Australia require considerably higher subsidies. Melbourne University Press, for example, reported a loss of over $2 million in 2011 and received $2 million in additional funding from the university in 2012. $1 million was for a direct subsidy and $1 million for a forgiven loan (Green, 2013). At the University of Queensland the Vice Chancellor reported that the press funding included a direct cash injection of $300,000 plus the opportunity to run businesses on the campus which generates another $400-$500,000 for the press. In years where the press runs a deficit the university absorbs a deficit (Macklin, 2013).

These figures suggest that ANU Press in producing over 60 titles a year with a budget of around $500,000 is a very low cost and efficient operation.

Insight into the perceived needs of academics from presses can be found in the recent Ithaca S+R study of faculty. The report found that the most important factors selecting journals to publish in were:
  - The current issues of the journal are circulated widely, and are well read by scholars in your field
  - The journal has a high impact factor
  - The journal’s area of coverage is close to my immediate area of research (Housewright, R., Schonfeld, R.C., Wulfson, K. 2013, p 59)

For monographs the most important roles of publishers based on options which were rated by all years at over 60%, were:
  - Managing the peer review process to provide high-quality feedback to vet and improve your work
  - Associating your work with a reputable brand that signals its quality
  - Placing your article in a high-visibility publication or channel (Housewright, R., Schonfeld, R.C., Wulfson, K. 2013, p 61)

At the university, authors and readers report that the high quality, peer reviewed process is one of the most important characteristics of the press. The Press is recognised under the governments Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) scheme which comprises of research income
and research publications data submitted by universities each year (Australia. Department of Innovation, 2013).

The most significant criticism of open access publishing has been that peer review is not rigorous and poor quality publications have been published. A recent study by Bohannon (Bohannon 2013) based on submitting a bogus scientific article to open access journals has a terrifying result with acceptance by 157 journals and rejection by only 98. This is not the case at ANU Press.

ANU Press insists on 2 external reviewers undertaking a blind review for Press titles, with eView titles having generally internal reviewers (that is reviewers working at the university).

The Press has 3 imprints – ANU Press for fully externally reviewed publications, eView for publications which may have internal reviewers (such as the student journals) and eText which will enable publication of text books for use in courses and MOOCs.

Two financial subsidy schemes are available from the Press, in addition to assistance from faculties and external bodies. A Publishing Subsidy grant scheme (http://anulib.anu.edu.au/about/library-committees/publications-subsidies-committee/) was introduced and is available for assistance for costs such as copyediting and indexing for authors of ANU publications. Subsidies are determined by the Publication Subsidy Committee and two rounds are offered throughout the year. Priorities for funding in 2013 were based on the following principles:

- author/s publishing with ANU E Press
- priority for emerging scholars
- non ANU E Press publishers must be recognized as quality scholarly publisher

The eText grant scheme (http://press.anu.edu.au/anuetext/) provides up to $10,000 funding for the development of an electronic text book published by the Press.

Both schemes offer the funding to covers items such as copy editing, indexing and copyright clearance costs of images.

Access to titles is convenient and easy. Readers come through Amazon CreateSpace, Google Books, Google Scholar, JSTOR, OAPEN and the Directory of Open Access Books as well as standard search engines. In additional access can be found through the University’s catalogue, the Australian National Bibliographic database and the National Library of Australia’s trove service. Opening up access through providing bibliographic records to libraries has increased the easy of finding titles by scholars.

Reports on downloads are run regularly and made available to authors. Overall use is reported to the Advisory Committee and Chairs of Editorial Boards.

**What has been the impact of the press within the university?**
Establishing a press delivering a substantial body of open access online publications has had a significant impact in increasing access to and the reputation of ANU research outputs. The ten years of successful publishing has built a body of work which is easy to access, well cited and well regarded.

In the impact assessment undertaken by the Australian Research Council, Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA), the press was one of the most significant publishers in monographs reported in the assessment. The extent of the publications and rigour of the peer review process have let to a strong reputation for research quality.

In Australia, the major government funders, the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council have committed to open access policies (Australian Research Council, 2013 and National Health and Medical Research Council, 2012). Because all works published by the press are open access, not only was compliance for these research outputs possible immediately, but the knowledge gained from open access publishing could be shared and applied to other forms of publication.

**What has been the impact of the press within the library?**

The Press has developed very close relationships with academics in all faculties on issues of publishing and open access. They have also developed deep knowledge of publishing as a part of the scholarly communication process, including an understanding of innovations in publishing and the production cycle.

Library staff have benefited from the knowledge through the sharing of information and discussion on issues through presentations to staff and participation by the Manager of the Press in senior management meetings.

Recognising the link of the press to academics and publishing, the institutional repository is joining the press team. The move is designed to provide for integrated communication with academics and to enable close coordination through a project which will provide a single infrastructure for open access research outputs of all kinds.

It has given press and library staff the opportunity to work closes together on issues of resource discovery support through the production of MARC records. Policy issues such as open access, metadata and copyright are areas of communality between the library and press. Close collaboration and knowledge sharing has been assisted by the structural relationship.

There are areas where further development to support knowledge transfer and support is required. There is a need for skill development in the Library to enable staff to provide greater support for the repository and increase their skills. The Library has not yet achieved a single integrated promotion program to academics and higher degree students on scholarly publishing.

Planning for 2014 and future years will provide an opportunity to further consider integrating service delivery, providing different forms of support and technology projects.

**Where are we heading?**
A new set of challenges are facing scholarly publishing and the ANU Press. The development of a new publishing stream of e-textbooks using new technology in areas such as languages has only just commenced. This requires the development of new skills in the publishing area and a new relationship with teaching staff to understand how online learning can be supported by the press. Exploring the need for other published resources to support education developments such as Massive open online courses (MOOCs) will no doubt create a need require rethinking about publishing new resources with richer and more complex content.

The rise of the scholarly short monograph suggests that new publishing opportunities need to be explored that will support more rapid dissemination of research and ideas.

Open access mandates also contribute to new thinking about access to research outputs from repositories and university publishing services in universities.

Conclusion
The controversy regarding location of university presses within university libraries will undoubtedly continue. Some universities have well established separate presses, such as Oxford and Cambridge, which provide successful models for large research universities. In others, such as five Australian universities, locating the press in the library has proved to be a successful model.

The pressures for change will continue to occur within the scholarly communication paradigm. Financial pressures resulting in reduced budgets for library expenditure have eased but will not cease. The Open access movement is reaching maturity in terms of adoption by policy makers and universities. ANU Press has successfully adopted an open publishing model, but many different models such as crowdsourcing of funding for open publishing and library packages, such as OAPEN and Knowledge Unlatched, are in early stages of development.

New skills are required to meet these challenges, particular to understand technology, develop innovative solutions and create true collaboration with academics. Not only must models of presses within university libraries continue to be explored, but initiatives in developing new scholarly products, such as the collaborative approach at Edith Cowan University (Chan and Gross, 2013) with academics, will provide insights that will shape the development of new services to support research and teaching as it evolves in the networked century.

REFERENCES


