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Session Two: Consortia Enterprises, Alliances and Partnerships

Moderator: Tommaso Giordano, Deputy Director, EUI (European University Institute)

A Case Study in Partnering and Working Together

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1:50 p.m. - 2:20 p.m.

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A Case Study in partnering and Working Together

By: Maureen Pastine and Lois Patton, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 19122

I want to begin with a quotation from Ogden Nash that I have used often and still love: "Change is wonderful but it has gone on too long." Lois Patton and I - the Temple University Press and the Temple University Libraries have felt this every day for the last few years.

In November of 2000, the Temple University Press and the Temple University Libraries became partners and collaborators. The Temple University Press reporting line was transferred from the Office of the Provost to the University Libraries. The challenge was to develop the two as equal partners and collaborators. That remains a crucial and challenging point in our alliance. The University Librarian and the Director of the University Press began employment at approximately the same time, both new in our positions at Temple University, at a time when the University had become more concerned about historic University Press deficits, especially ours. The new Press Director inherited a fifteen-year University Press deficit, covered to some extent each year by the Libraries. It is expected, with the Libraries' help, to resolve this problem and to build a stronger reputation for both.

The changeover in reporting structures and collaborative relationships was initiated with a Review Committee established by the Provost at the President's request. Another financial audit showed that the deficit had existed and grown over a period of at least fifteen years. With the appointment of a new Press Director, it was determined that these problems had to be addressed. The new Press Director was not appointed to the Review Committee, in order that the Committee could be objective in its review process and in its recommendations for the future. The Press Director attended a meeting at the beginning of the process in order to define her accomplishments in addressing inherited problems, her vision for the future, and her leadership directions. The Executive Director of the American Association of University Presses attended one meeting as a paid consultant.

The charge to the Review Committee covered several major questions, e.g.:

- 1) Should the University Press be eliminated, its work reduced or increased, sold to another publisher, or become totally revenue producing with no university subsidy?
- 2) How and why had the deficit grown to such huge proportions over the previous fifteen years with no action taken to assist in resolution of this problem?

- 3) What management and leadership problems existed among staff and their relations with the budget office, the auditing personnel, each other, faculty, administrators, and outside affiliations and relationships?
- 4) In comparison with other large university presses, how did the budget subsidy compare? How did the reputation of the Press compare to other similar presses?
- 5) Were there other University Presses that had a reporting line from the Press to the Library?
- 6) Could the shaky problems related to warehousing and invoicing, as well as use of the Management System, and the bad debts be handled?
- 7) Should the University Press become more technologically oriented in production?
- 8) Could the University Press become more visible in marketing and increase sales and revenue?
- 9) Was the University Press Editorial Board effective and did it work well with Press personnel?
- 10) What recommendations would the Review Committee make to the Provost to take to the President?

Could the final report be completed within six weeks?

Lois and I had been working on the establishment of a University Libraries/University Press Executive Board for joint development and fundraising, to increase our funds and bring in needed revenue. A major goal was to increase Press revenue and allow more funds for the Libraries to purchase, once again, more scholarly University Press publications. The Libraries' ability to purchase scholarly monographs has been detrimentally affected by many issues including the spiraling inflationary costs of serials. A third point related to the apparent decreasing University Press publications of poetry, literary criticism, and, generally, fewer scholarly books. Some scholarly books, it appeared, were being replaced, in order to not incur greater deficits, by more popular regional and trade books. A few university presses were actually themselves eliminated or sold, sometimes due to continuing deficits. We did not want this to happen to our university press.

There is, then, a real loss in scholarly works acquired by academic libraries. We felt then, and now, that "the future for serious scholarship itself is at stake...and that the smaller publishers and not-for-profit publishers [including many university presses] are being forced out of the scholarly publishing business entirely. Other presses are being forced to reduce their scholarly publishing output, to replace some of it with more popular works that do not meet the demands of faculty, students, scholars and

researchers – i.e. the users' needs." There has, in fact, been a significant shift away from purchases of scholarly books by libraries, and on the percentage of university press publications dedicated to scholarship. There is a growing demand at university presses for fewer scholarly publications in favor of the more popular, trade, and regional material, partially due to changing reading interests, but primarily due to the need to avoid press deficits and continue quality scholarly publications.

Many university presses have virtually ceased publishing in the fields for which there is the least demand and are publishing more popular, less scholarly materials in order to stay in the business. There is also a growing potential for the increasingly popular electronic, pay-per-view book, or print-on-demand journal article, and an increasing digital divide of those who cannot afford to access information. This lessens the potential ability of access to low demand, less popular, more scholarly works - the very works that libraries have, for much of our past and present, relied heavily on University Press publications to produce.

So, the Review Committee began its analyses. I was assigned the task of completing an external review of the literature on University Presses, on reporting on University Libraries/University Press collaborations, and on presses with their reporting lines linked to the university library. I was also asked to attempt to compile a list of the most successful presses, those who were not subsidized but were totally revenue producing, and, as well, those presses that had been sold to commercial vendors or publishers, or whose universities had eliminated them totally. The literature was revealing, but by no means provided answers to the questions that the Committee was to address in the review process. There was much on the decreasing subsidies, as well as on presses that had been eliminated or sold, university library/press collaborations in the digital era, and the most successful/reputable presses, along with a number of recommendations for presses in trouble financially. The literature review demonstrated that there was

- 1) The necessity for developing niche publishing where there would be few competitors in the marketplace.
- 2) The necessity to expand into the popular regional and trade book publishing business in order to stay afloat and to command new markets.
- 3) The necessity to have cutting edge technology and technological staff expertise, to move into the e-book or digital imaging publication business.

- 4) There was encouragement for university presses to enrich and expand their marketing and sales efforts to become more revenue producing and less reliant on subsidies.
- 5) There was a need to improve marketing and selling with links to the AAUP web site; with consortial university press web sites; and to develop our own web site for marketing and sales.
- 6) Recommendations included consideration for consortial inventory/warehousing; invoicing and selling; and collection of unpaid debts.
- 7) There was a need for greater reliance on back lists of successful titles to tide one over in revenue production, and a greater focus on marketing the front list more akin to the commercial publishing giant.

The review committee's work and contact with the Press Director quickly alerted the group to the fact that the Director was mired in day-to-day crises, particularly without a permanent business manager. And there were personnel and bureaucratic problems related to the inability to gain approval for filling of a number of staff vacancies. The Review Committee became far more appreciative of the leadership and vision of the new director and for new technology and technical staffing support. They were made aware of the need for enhanced facilities. The quarters in which the Press was housed were cramped, disorganized, and the carpeting and painting had not been re-done in over twenty years. The environment was unpleasant and not a place to attract quality authors as the Press tried to increase its number and types of publication.

The final report and recommendations of the Review Committee were far more favorable than initially expected. Two of the most crucial recommendations were to continue the subsidy and increase it if possible, and to allow the Press Director to hire a new financial officer/business manager immediately, a position vacant due to the current person out on extended medical leave. A third crucial recommendation was that a five-year business plan was to be completed within three to six weeks. For most people this might be an almost impossible task, but with the new Business Manager, and assistance from the University Libraries and University Budget Officers and Auditors, it was accomplished in record time. Much of what was detailed in that plan has now been completed. The warehousing operation, a most costly one, was outsourced, along with

Customer Service, to the University of Chicago Press consortium, and at a much reduced cost.

Several internal positions were eliminated because of this. A few of these were revised for new, urgently needed help for the Press. Marketing and sales efforts, as well as public relations visibility, was heightened. This has been successful, particularly in the niche market, but also with one regional trade book published about Philadelphia by a CBS anchorman, Larry Kane. In the shortest period of time (since October of 2000) this book has outsold most titles ever published by the press. It is now going into its third printing. Larry Kane himself took on much in the way of marketing and book signing events. He has praised Temple University Press in many public ways. He has agreed to serve on the Library/Press Executive Fundraising Board where he has a great deal of experience and expertise, along with a wealth of potential donor contacts within and outside of Philadelphia.

Lois Patton and I have learned a great deal from each other, although there was some initial fear and paranoia that the Press would become a printing agent for library brochures and publications, and that the Libraries would lose more of its budget covering potential Press deficits. We are now partners who need and respect each other. The Press Director and I, our business administrators and our staff systems personnel, meet on a regular basis.

Other achievements include:

- Revision of some vacant positions to take advantage of new demands, needs, and expectations to be better prepared for the future.
- The remaining deficit is now at a more manageable level and will be non-existent within a few years at the rate the Press is now moving.
- In addition to marketing Press books on the AAUP web site, the Press has its own web site, and is in the process of establishing its own server.
- The Press has begun alliances with e-book and print-on-demand vendors, including *NetLibrary*, *Questia*, and *Lightning Source*.
- 45% of sales now come from the front list, in addition to continuing sales of back listed high demand titles.

- The visibility of the Press on and off campus has skyrocketed considering where it was shortly before Lois Patton's arrival.
- The Press and the University Libraries have combined their annual Technology Plan; submitted for review to the University's Teaching/Learning/Technology Roundtable to increase our funding and to share needed staff technical support.
- On March 15, 2001, the Provost invited Lois Patton and I to lunch, where she praised our collaborative efforts, the increased visibility of the Press, the revenue and positive press from the Larry Kane publication, and the leadership and vision demonstrated thus far in our partnering work.

Much remains to be accomplished, including:

- The staffing levels of both organizations need some expansion, especially in Systems and Technology.
- For the future, it would be much easier to build effective staff relationships between the Libraries and the Press if we were not housed so far apart, or if we could share the same facilities.
- Overwhelming workloads, though, have made it difficult to spend as much time in planning and follow-through activities and events as we would like.
- Additional methods of sharing our staff and getting them more involved with each other is necessary for successful efforts and projects, but many have been accomplished.
- An increased technology budget for the Press is an absolute necessity to bring them to the mid-range of leading technology. They are far from that point at this time.
- We look forward to a time when we will have some critical and useful results from the outsourced warehouse, the increased marketing efforts, and other ventures such as e-book initiatives, potential audio book ventures, increased scholarly publications for the future, and additional consortial partnerships.
- We, like all other libraries, publishers, writers, and readers, look forward to less proprietary standards in hardware and software; improved resolution and ease of access to, and use of, digital resources and other electronic interactive multimedia.
- We now look forward to preparation of successful fundraising proposals and creative grant writing projects.

Seeing how relationships develop and change among publishers, writers, and libraries, as well as with vendors and others, in a new, more technologically-oriented environment is crucial. We anticipate that our efforts in working together will increase our understanding of each others' roles and responsibilities, bringing each of us closer to the writer and the reader/researcher, as well as to each other.

A key part of this is to produce a critical mass of print and scholarly digital content that readers need and want.

We must remove and risk breaking down the barriers still existing among libraries, publishers, and vendors, as well as with scholars, researchers, writers, and readers looking for common values, new directions and innovation, and increasing alliances. As Carol Hughes said in her presentation at the Oxford Retreat last year, (in *Obsolescence or Resurgence: the Monograph in the Academy*), “we must understand how people seek and acquire information...from the user’s point of view.”

The escalating costs of scholarly communication have not decreased in a digital environment. This needs more in-depth examination. A further issue is whether we are now incurring and passing along greater costs to our students and faculty, our writers, and our users.

Are we losing our “fair use” principles in changing copyright and intellectual property legislation? What can we all do to ensure that this primary benefit to education and scholarship remains?

How can we continue to respond to print and technological challenges and opportunities? All of us are stakeholders in new systems of scholarly communication. All of our professional associations are a part of this effort. I urge all of us to continue, though, to recognize that the most important stakeholders are not the publishers, the libraries, the vendors - but instead the faculty, the students, the scholars, the writers. Our dialogues will help us focus what we do, and where we go, on meeting the need to pass along critical scholarly information to future generations. Those who take our place in the future will create new knowledge and wisdom, based on past research and writing. We must ensure that they are able to do it at the least possible cost with the greatest possible ease of access for all. In a September 18, 2000 *Publishers Weekly* article it was said that transactions of e-books through business partners are growing at a rate five times faster than to libraries or single consumers. How will this shape our future and change new digital enterprises such as *Questia*’s market and our (press, library, commercial publishers) involvement in it?

Can we make the changes necessary to continuation of strong presses and libraries in the future, or even strong traditional university scholarship, or are we doomed? I think not. This retreat, with a focus on pulling together, is a model for the future. Improved scholarly publication requires collaboration amongst all of us. Can we make the right changes rapidly enough? That is one of the most important

issues to address. It is people working together that will make the difference – not newer and better technologies and more money, although that will help. Those are the easy issues. The difficult one is to set aside our differences, listen to our users, and build strong alliances between business and higher education. Change is key to this process.

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