

CRISES AND OPPORTUNITIES:  
THE FUTURES OF SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1958, the American Council of Learned Societies sponsored a study to determine whether or not scholarly manuscripts face difficulties extrinsic to their merit in attaining publication. The study concluded that “in most branches of the humanities and social sciences, at the present time, the uncomplicated scholarly manuscript of good quality can usually count upon reasonably rapid publication at no expense to the author.” This happy state of affairs was traced back to a major Ford Foundation program supporting university presses. Unfortunately, the past is indeed another country, and we can’t get there from here.

Almost fifty years later, the system of scholarly publishing is strained. A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* begins: “Academic publishing is where developments in scholarship meet the bottom line. And lately, it hasn’t been a happy meeting place.”<sup>1</sup> In many fields, the published monograph is the primary currency of academic prominence and promotion. Yet fiscal pressures have caused many university presses to restrict their publication of scholarly monographs. Will this reduction deflate that currency and warp established practices of peer review and tenuring? “[J]unior faculty members... find themselves in a maddening double-bind,” wrote Stephen Greenblatt to the members of the Modern Language Association.<sup>2</sup> “They face a challenge—under inflexible time constraints and with very high stakes—that many of them may be unable to meet successfully, no matter how strong or serious their

scholarly achievement, because academic presses simply cannot afford to publish their books.”

Some in the university press community question whether it is their role to certify the path of scholarly careers. “[O]ver the last thirty years literature departments learned how to outsource a key component of the tenure-granting process to university presses, and now, having become dependent on the habit, they see no way to change it,” writes Lindsay Waters, executive editor for the humanities at Harvard University Press.<sup>3</sup> “To a considerable degree people in departments stopped assessing for themselves the value of a candidate as a scholar and started waiting for the presses to decide.” Perhaps too many monographs are published. Some books could be better as articles, it is suggested, and articles should be sufficient credentials for tenure.

While newer forms of scholarly communication such as electronic publishing may provide new means of disseminating scholarship, it remains uncertain how the scholarly community at large will value them. The “crisis” of the scholarly monograph, then, is not merely a crisis in the economics of scholarly publishing, but also in the processes of peer review and academic self-governance, prompting reflection on practices of scholarly evaluation that we have simply taken for granted.

At the 2003 ACLS Annual Meeting, four speakers approached this topic from different standpoints: as leaders of learned societies, as senior university officials, from the point of view of a university press, and from the digital frontier. Each panelist spoke for approximately fifteen minutes, after which the panelists addressed questions from the floor.

The speakers were:

**CARLOS J. ALONSO** is the Edwin B. and Leonore R. Williams Professor and Chair of the Department of Romance Languages at the University of Pennsylvania. He has taught previously at Wesleyan University and at Emory University. His research focuses on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Latin American intellectual history and cultural production, and modern literary theory.

Professor Alonso is the author of *Modernity and Autochthony: The Spanish American Regional Novel* and *The Burden of Modernity: The Rhetoric of Cultural Discourse in Spanish America*, and is the editor of *Julio Cortázar: New Readings*. He was also editor of *PMLA*, the scholarly journal of the Modern Language Association of America, for the period 2000-03. His "Editor's Column" in the March 2003 issue was entitled "Having a Spine: Facing the Crisis of Scholarly Publishing." He is also a member of the editorial boards of *Comparative Literature* and *Revista Iberoamericana*.

**CATHY DAVIDSON** is Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies at Duke University, where she is also the Ruth F. DeVarney Professor of English and Director of the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute. As Vice Provost for Interdisciplinary Studies, she provides leadership in promoting interdisciplinary exchange across the University's eight schools, has oversight of approximately sixty interdisciplinary research centers and institutes, and works to promote innovative research and teaching across disciplinary boundaries. She oversees the Common Fund, the University Scholars Program, the Institute of the Arts, and the program in Information Science and Information Studies.

Cathy Davidson has published numerous books, including *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*; *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*; *The Book of Love: Writers and Their Love Letters*; *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji: On Finding Myself in Japan*; and, with Linda Wagner-Martin, *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States* and *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States*. In collaboration with photographer Bill Bamberger, she produced the book *Closing: The Life and Death of an American Factory*, winner of the 1998 Mayflower Cup Award for Nonfiction. Professor Davidson is general editor of the Oxford University Press Early American Women Writers series, past president of the American Studies Association, and past editor of *American Literature*. She is currently working on a novel.

LYNNE WITHEY was appointed Director of the University of California Press by the University of California Board of Regents in August 2002. She joined the Press in 1986 as an assistant director and became associate director in 1993, with responsibility for strategic planning and general operations. She has also played a major role in shaping editorial programs; in acquiring books in history, music, Asian and Middle Eastern studies, and public health; and in launching the Press's electronic publishing program.

A graduate of Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, Lynne Withey majored in American Studies and later earned a Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Berkeley. She was an assistant professor of history at the University of Iowa from 1974 to 1979 and a visiting assistant professor at Boston University from 1977 to 1978. In 1980, Dr. Withey joined the staff of the Vice President for Academic Affairs in the University of California's Office of the President. She simultaneously lectured in history at Berkeley from 1980 to 1988.

Lynne Withey is the author of four books, including the recently reissued *Dearest Friend, A Life of Abigail Adams*, and *Voyages of Discovery: Captain Cook and British Exploration of the Pacific*. Dr. Withey now serves on the Board of Directors for the American Association of University Presses

**JOHN M. UNSWORTH** is currently Dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, with appointments as professor at that school and in the department of English. From 1993 to 2003, he was director of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities and associate professor of English at the University of Virginia.

John Unsworth graduated from Amherst College in 1981. He received a Master's degree in English from Boston University in 1982 and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Virginia in 1988. Following a one-year faculty appointment at the University of Virginia, Dean Unsworth joined the English department at North Carolina State University, where (in 1990) he co-founded and began co-editing *Postmodern Culture*, the Internet's first peer-reviewed scholarly journal. In 1993, he returned to the University of Virginia

as director of the newly formed Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities and as a professor in the department of English. He has taught hypertext theory, literary theory, postmodernism, popular fiction, publishing technologies, and American literature. As the Institute's director, he has overseen research projects across the disciplines in the humanities, published widely on the topic of electronic scholarship, and supervised the Institute's software development program.

Dean Unsworth also serves as chairman of the Board of Directors of the Text Encoding Initiative Consortium, president of the Associations for Computers and the Humanities, and co-chair of the Modern Language Association's Committee on Scholarly Editions. He was also the principal designer and acting director of a new Master's degree in digital humanities at the University of Virginia.

**MARSHALL COHEN**, Professor *Emeritus* of Philosophy and Law at the University of Southern California, and Vice Chair of the ACLS Board of Directors, served as moderator.

## Notes

1. Scott McLemee, "University Presses Take Different Approaches to Making Cuts," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sept. 20, 2002, A12.
2. Stephen Greenblatt, "Call for Action on Problems in Scholarly Book Publishing: A Special Letter from Stephen Greenblatt." Modern Language Association. May 28, 2002 <[http://www.mla.org/resources/documents/rep\\_scholarly\\_pub/scholarly\\_pub](http://www.mla.org/resources/documents/rep_scholarly_pub/scholarly_pub)>.
3. Lindsay Waters. "A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Books of the Members of the MLA from Being a Burden to Their Authors, Publishers, or Audiences," *PMLA* 115 (2000): 316. [Also see Lindsay Waters, *Enemies of Promise: Publishing, Perishing, and the Eclipse of Scholarship* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004).—ed.]



## Remarks by

**CARLOS J. ALONSO**

*Edwin B. and Leonore R. Williams  
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There is, you must know by now, a crisis in publishing in the humanities.<sup>1</sup> Some of the evidence advanced by the various players involved in the situation might be summarized as follows:

- A difficulty in placing scholarly books with university presses—especially by younger scholars attempting to place a first book with a publisher
- The increase in the number of institutions that require the publication of a book as a necessary, if not entirely sufficient, achievement for a successful tenure bid
- The related complaint by publishers that *their* decisions to publish a book or not are determining to a large extent the tenure chances of younger scholars
- The shrinking of publication lists in the humanities in general
- The closing of monograph series in the humanities by university presses
- The perceived preference by publishers for books that are interdisciplinary in scope, based on the assumption that such books will have an increased chance of recovering a larger percentage of the costs of publication

- The perceived preference by publishers for books that they believe stand a better chance of being adopted for courses
- The complaint by university libraries that the increased costs of journal subscriptions in the sciences is forcing them to reduce their acquisitions budget in the humanities and the social sciences.

Some of these “facts” have been created by the accumulation of anecdotal information; others are substantiated by hard data that, while verifiable, do not offer a broad enough picture of the current situation. In any event, there is the perception of a crisis in scholarly publishing, and in response, a certain lexicon and a certain rhetoric have been mobilized to describe the predicament. Irrespective of the concrete phenomena behind the crisis, because it is regarded as a crisis a number of “solutions” have been advanced to resolve it. In my most recent column as editor of *PMLA*,<sup>2</sup> I examined the ramifications of what are perhaps the two most significant such solutions. I have chosen to present to you a condensed version of that overview, hoping that it may serve as a background for the discussion that will ensue among the panelists today.

Of the many suggestions that have been advanced to deal with the crisis in scholarly publishing, two have been received with particular enthusiasm because of their seeming viability. The first is that universities move away from “the book” as the unit of measure in tenure and promotion cases and that the candidate produce instead a collection of articles as the corpus to be evaluated. The second is that universities establish for humanities departments a publication subvention attached to every junior professor’s line, much like—but requiring far less funding than—the start-up capital that faculty positions in the sciences are endowed with as a matter of course.

The members of the MLA had an opportunity to consider the first of these ideas in two opinion pieces by Lindsay Waters in *PMLA* and in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.<sup>3</sup> In his two articles, Waters argued cogently for the end of what he terms the “tyranny of the

monograph,” the dependence on the book as the principal unit of scholarship in the humanities: “... I think the members of the MLA should rise up and insist that these expectations be demolished and that other, more modest expectations be erected in their place” (“Modest Proposal” 315). Waters goes on to propose a collection of significant articles as the alternative to the monograph in tenure reviews: “The best way to end the current system is to initiate a renaissance of the scholarly article—the article is an endangered species—and to have the publication of two or three high-impact essays count in most cases for tenure” (317).

Two recent documents build on Waters’s proposal by including a wider consideration of the problem and addressing recommendations specifically to the several constituencies involved: departments, librarians, publishers, and university administrators. The first is a compelling “special letter” sent to all members of the MLA by Stephen Greenblatt, the association’s president for 2002.<sup>4</sup> Titled “Call for Action on Problems in Scholarly Book Publishing,” Greenblatt’s missive entreats faculty members to reconsider with their colleagues, promotion committees, and deans whether “the book” should continue being the *sine qua non* for tenure and promotion. Coming as they do from an intellectually unimpeachable source, Greenblatt’s recommendations have commanded a great deal of attention, a fact shown by the intense correspondence to MLA headquarters that the letter has generated as well as by anecdotal accounts of recent promotion dossiers being forwarded to extradepartmental tenure committees with a copy of Greenblatt’s letter in tow. The second document echoing Waters’s proposal is a report by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing printed in *Profession* 2002, which is also destined to have a sustained impact because of the thoroughness of its analysis and the comprehensiveness of its recommendations.<sup>5</sup> The report should be required reading and the subject of immediate discussion in departments and among the various constituencies to which its recommendations are directed. If departments wait until they confront a tenure or promotion decision to discuss the professional issues the report raises, they will not be able to address its implications fully and dispassionately.<sup>6</sup>

The proposal of publication subvention for junior professors was advanced most notably in a call for discussion issued by an ad hoc subcommittee of the MLA Executive Council in the association's fall 2002 newsletter:

Should all tenure-track positions in language and literature be accompanied by a \$5,000-\$7,000 book subvention? Although a subvention of this amount would not cover all costs of publication, it would be of major assistance to scholars at the beginning of their careers. New appointees might receive a letter of commitment that they could submit to a publisher along with a manuscript. The subvention would be provided only after a book manuscript had gone through the normal scholarly review process and been accepted for publication. The funds might be restricted to a book subvention and not be made available for other purposes: unused funds would thus eventually be recycled for use by new appointees. We note in this context that such a subvention represents but a small fraction of the salary and benefits devoted to tenure-track faculty members. It also represents much less than start-up costs in the laboratory sciences.... Although there is special need to provide such funds where a book is expected for tenure, there is good reason to provide this option to all humanities faculty members. (Chow et al.)

Both proposed solutions for offsetting the crisis in scholarly publishing have clear merits and owe most of their appeal to their straightforward positioning with respect to "the book." The first (considering a collection of articles in lieu of a book in promotion and tenure cases) proposes redefining the acceptable corpus to be evaluated and, therefore, abandoning the noxious terrain on which the current system is built. The problem of finding a publication venue would thus be resolved through the ingenious strategy of changing the rules of the game, yet awarding the same prize in the end (tenure). The second proposal (publication subvention) accepts the

status quo and its rules (the book as primary criterion for promotion and tenure) but seeks to infuse it with increased funds, a move that goes straight to the economic roots of the problem. The first demands that we have the courage to revise our standards and challenge our prejudices about the value of articles relative to books (not an inconsiderable undertaking), but in the end it is cost-free and up to us, as long as we can persuade our extradepartmental colleagues and administrators to agree to its terms. The second requires that new funds be obtained, makes equal demands on us to challenge our prejudices—this time about the role of money in the publication of scholarship—and asks us to depend on the kindness of quasi strangers (administrators).

Both these possibilities will encounter varying degrees of resistance in several quarters for compelling reasons. The proposal that candidates be allowed to present a collection of articles for tenure review is suspect because it is almost invariably accompanied by a denigration of “the book” as an object of scholarly achievement: the academic book has been fetishized; it has been overproduced; it lacks a market; it is too expensive; and so on. Yet it appears that we only awoke to this reality after circumstances beyond our control made it convenient for us to devalue the book, and so we look as if we were now placing expediency before intellectual and professional principle. As a result, we are liable to be seen as pragmatic but also inconstant in our values and requirements. Our foremost concern must always be how to preserve the integrity of our scholarly contributions, not how to beat the system merely because it now constrains us. Furthermore, in a perceptive and nuanced rejoinder to Waters’s articles, Philip Lewis has sounded a skeptical note about the move toward articles as the new corpus for tenure consideration.<sup>7</sup> The plight of humanities journals, he argues,

is all too similar to that of academic book publishing: we have too many, few of them are thriving, many older journals have lost their sense of identity and mission, many newer ones suffer from a dearth of institutional subscriptions and from inadequate support for beleaguered editors, and all are caught up in the same

system of producing and disseminating knowledge that generates too many books for too few readers. Don't we, then, face an eventual shakedown in the spheres of both book and journal publication? (1223-24)

In other words, might we be embracing as our putative deliverer an instrument as compromised as the one we are forswearing?

Another consideration is that as long as university presses continue to publish some manuscripts (even if fewer than previously), moving the publishing expectations for tenure away from “the book” will remain a choice, one not likely to be exercised by institutions that interpret publication of a book manuscript by a university press, even more so now than in the past, as a sign of the highest quality of scholarship. The probable result will be an unfortunate exacerbation of the elite/other divide among United States academic institutions. Any proposal that aims to deal with the publishing crisis should attempt to alleviate such a divide, not reinforce it. In suggesting that the academy comprehensively review its practices, Lewis wonders “how a vast and diverse system with little central regulation can be restructured so as to induce colleges and universities to adopt appropriate, institution-specific criteria for granting tenure and for understanding the obligations of tenured faculty members” (1224). But the translation of this perspective into real terms—a sliding scale of tenure and promotion standards—could lead to an even more entrenched system of university rankings than the present one. It would also leave unaddressed the vast institutional expanse along that scale, and more precisely the middle territory in which an institution's reward for enhancing its standing is most seductive.

The proposal that universities create a publication subvention for junior faculty members on the tenure track shows an inventiveness to which we should all aspire when dealing with the institutional problems that afflict us. It has in its favor a bold claim to university resources on a par with those allocated to the sciences and a strength that derives from trying to make the existing system work as well as it seemed to in the past. Appropriately, then, the call for discussion by the ad hoc subcommittee of the Executive Council begins with a paean to the book:

While electronic publishing and publishing on demand will no doubt prove viable outlets for some publications, like many of you we believe the traditional scholarly book is well worth preserving. Neither its convenience nor its cultural impact has been supplanted. Indeed it is ironic that the academic book—not just in English and foreign languages but also in anthropology, art history, education, and many other fields—is being economically threatened at the very moment when recovered works of literature are receiving their first detailed scholarly analysis and new methodologies are offering fresh insights into our traditional canons. (Chow et al.)

Indeed, the current system evolved because it offers distinct advantages to all concerned, not least the candidate for promotion. Having the manuscript evaluated by a third party (the press) ostensibly ensures that the process is handled impartially, that the referees can count on the protection of their anonymity and so can be as searching as possible in their assessment and critique of the work, and that if the study is judged significant enough, the press will add it to the published list. If “the book” has become the principal piece of scholarly evidence introduced by candidates for their tenure cases, it is not necessarily because it is fetishized but rather because built into the writing and publication of a book are safeguards that purport to ensure the quality of the final product (though they may not always do so in fact). Now that this avowedly impartial process is no longer available to a sufficiently large number of our colleagues, our discipline faces a crisis of legitimation that the two proposals delineated above attempt to address.

The weakness of the subvention model lies precisely in its courageous attempt to address frontally the economic underpinnings of the publishing crisis. For the publishing-subvention idea derives its force from the fact that it leaves the existing system untouched, yet its intention to attach funds universally to junior faculty lines conspires against the avowed qualities of impartiality and disinterestedness that made the process what it is. The ad hoc subcommittee argues that the “subvention would be provided only

after a book manuscript had gone through the normal scholarly review process and been accepted for publication” (Chow et al.). But the promise of a subvention would make it impossible to claim that a manuscript had indeed undergone the normal review process, inasmuch as that process was predicated on the intrinsic merits of the manuscript. One cannot remedy a crisis of legitimation by introducing into the system under pressure an element that creates legitimation problems of a different kind. True, one might argue that if every book project carried with it a subvention, the advantage the subvention represents would be shared by everyone and would therefore not undermine the impartiality of the review process. But one can also imagine that the universal availability of subventions might lead to the sort of overpublication decried as one of the principal factors that brought us to the present pass. Furthermore, the availability of publishing subventions in general would be compromised by the severe fiscal crisis now faced by public institutions, a development that would reinforce the inequities that such universities already experience with respect to private institutions.

Nevertheless, the subvention initiative importantly recognizes the singular value of the academic book. Anyone who has written a manuscript, submitted it for consideration to a press, and seen it through to publication can attest to the intense and compelling intellectual experience that the entire affair represents: the choice of texts, the marshaling of sources and evidence, the construction of an argument that spans several chapters, the bibliographic research, the engagement with the readers’ reports, the reading of proofs, the choice of journals for review, and so on. It is, as I expressed in sincere bewilderment in the prologue to one of my books, “a protracted and somewhat enigmatic process to which many people contribute, sometimes unbeknownst to them.”<sup>8</sup> Writing a series of articles—irrespective of the taut links that may connect them—does not measure up in the aggregate to the experience of conceiving and writing a book. The reader of a book also receives its argument in a condensed and organic manner that a series of related articles published seriatim can never hope to match. Hence, before we counsel our younger colleagues to give up on writing a book and direct their efforts exclusively to the publishing of articles, we should

exhaust all other options available. For instance, why not continue the practice, where applicable, of considering the book manuscript of a candidate for promotion or tenure but uncouple the manuscript's worth as determined by internal and external reviewers (and therefore its author's tenure prospects) from its fortunes in search of a publisher? Under this arrangement, a candidate's attempts to place a manuscript with a press would not be bound by the frantic deadlines imposed by tenure consideration, and the author would have time to make any requested revisions. Moving away from "the book" and toward a series of articles as the minimum corpus for a tenure review presumes that scholars may as well not even write books but should concentrate instead on producing what has the greater chance of seeing the light of day, even at the price of sacrificing an intellectually molding experience. Thus, the moment we wish to place ourselves professionally outside the reach of market forces by retreating from the economic imperatives that determine book publishing nowadays, we allow our standards and scholarly practices be determined by those very forces.

Can we collectively devise ways of defending "the book" that also signal our desire not to be dictated to by what publishers think will sell but to be guided instead by the intellectual work that needs doing in our various fields? One is compelled to agree with Lewis when he summarizes the distorting effect that the current situation has had on our disciplines:

Since the early seventies, graduate students in literature and history have faced increasing pressure to choose their special area and dissertation project on the basis of what they and their mentors know about the constricted job market. More recently this pressure has been compounded by the propensity of university presses, besieged by rising costs and falling markets, to favor books of modest length in modern periods or on broad topics. These forces in the academic book market aggravate the shaping of the disciplines to the advantage of larger fields and cross-disciplinary trends and at the expense of collectively elaborated long-term programs of scholarly inquiry. (1223)

We all know of projects in our respective fields that need to be undertaken, some of which could revise received knowledge, but that nevertheless would not be considered for publication by university presses in the current market-driven, economically strapped publishing environment. A project of this kind can find its just valorization only in its particular field, and having it endorsed by a group of well-respected scholars in the discipline is the best way of legitimating it. We need to find ways to have a manuscript vetted by specialists in its field other than solely through evaluation by university presses.

Again, the appeal of publication subvention is that it upholds “the book” and the intellectual project that book authorship represents; its drawback stems from the coupling of subvention funds with faculty lines, which potentially creates the perception that the promise of those funds influences publication decisions. The solution is to have the award of a subvention itself express the manuscript’s intrinsic worth. Universities could create interdisciplinary committees for the specific purpose of awarding subventions to book manuscripts that have been accepted for publication by a press. The potential inequity in the subventions available to junior scholars in private institutions as opposed to public ones could be avoided if subventions were awarded competitively instead of being attached to all junior faculty lines as a matter of course. The funding advantage enjoyed by most private institutions would thereby be attenuated. Such committees would need the validation provided specialist readers associated with presses. But professional associations for the modern languages and literatures (American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, American Association of Teachers of French, National Council of Teachers of English, etc.) should also consider creating publication endowment funds, as well as committees that competitively award subventions expressly to manuscripts not yet evaluated by a university press. This system would ensure that manuscripts judged important by a panel of specialists in a field (especially a small field) and yet with little chance of being published by a university press had maximum chances of being reviewed for publication. Subventions of this kind, awarded competitively by extradepartmental university committees and by national professional

organizations, would have an instantaneous prestige and a probity that would allay any suspicions that the acceptance of a supported manuscript had been mediated by its concession.

One can also envision ways in which the MLA, as the national professional organization for all the modern languages and literatures, might play a role in subvention. Divisional executive committees of the MLA, each composed of five scholars elected by the constituencies of its field, might be tapped in the future to adjudicate on the subvention of scholarly work deemed important to each disciplinary cohort. For example, the MLA could create a publication subvention fund available only to scholars endeavoring to place a first book with a press. Each member of the MLA would contribute a small amount to this fund as part of the yearly dues; the association would also strive to enrich this endowment through aggressive fundraising. Each divisional executive committee would recommend a given number of book projects for publication subvention from the MLA. The committee's deliberation process would not differ significantly from the one the various MLA book and article prize committees already use each year to determine winners.<sup>9</sup>

Alternatively, the association could become the electronic repository of manuscripts recommended by divisional executive committees, thereby contributing to the dissemination of research judged significant by some of the best scholars in every field. Indeed, the MLA is already a publishing powerhouse, with a long and impressive list of titles that has increasingly diversified over the last few years. Successful online publishing ventures like the National Academy, <<http://www.nap.edu/>>, which offers its entire holdings free of charge on the Internet while turning a profit, could be models for this initiative.

Admittedly, the details of such a proposal remain to be articulated. But all the national professional associations related to our fields should carefully examine their presuppositions and operations to determine if they can ameliorate the predicament in scholarly publishing. The line that separates boldness from recklessness is at times hard to draw, but the younger members of our profession are looking to established scholars with increased expectations for concrete action that must not go unfulfilled. The MLA and other

professional organizations will secure the steadfast loyalty of their members if they act responsibly—and decisively—in this matter.

## Notes

1. A version of this talk was originally published as “Having a Spine: Facing the Crisis in Scholarly Publishing,” *PMLA* 118.2 (2003): 217-23. Reprinted by permission of the Modern Language Association.

2. “Having a Spine: Facing the Crisis in Scholarly Publishing.”

3. Lindsay Waters, “A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Books of the Members of the MLA from Being a Burden to Their Authors.” *PMLA* 115 (2000): 315-17; and “Rescue Tenure from the Tyranny of the Monograph.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* April 20, 2001: B7-9. One of the first significant salvos in this regard was the publication of “Principles for Emerging Systems of Scholarly Publishing,” a report on a meeting sponsored by the Association of American Universities, the Association of Research Libraries, and the Merrill Advanced Studies Center of the University of Kansas, held in May 2000 “to facilitate discussion among the various academic stakeholders in the scholarly publishing process and to build consensus on a set of principles that could guide the transformation of the scholarly publishing system.” See Shirley K. Baker et al., “Principles for Emerging Systems of Scholarly Publishing.” May 10, 2000. Association of Research Libraries. June 6, 2000. *Association of Research Libraries*. Jan. 17, 2003 <<http://www.arl.org/scomm/tempe.html>>.

4. Stephen Greenblatt, “Call for Action on Problems in Scholarly Book Publishing: A Special Letter from Stephen Greenblatt.” Modern Language Association. May 28, 2002 <[http://www.mla.org/resources/documents/rep\\_scholarly\\_pub/scholarly\\_pub](http://www.mla.org/resources/documents/rep_scholarly_pub/scholarly_pub)>.

5. Judith Ryan et al, “The Future of Scholarly Publishing.” *Profession* 2002. New York: MLA, 2002. 172-86.

6. Both documents underscore that conditions are particularly dismal for scholars in the foreign languages and literatures. Greenblatt states, “The situation is difficult for those in English and even more

difficult for those in foreign languages.” The MLA ad hoc committee reports, in fact, that “[t]he suggestion that scholarly presses are publishing fewer specialized studies appears to be true only in the foreign language fields” (Ryan et al. 172-73). Likewise, an ad hoc subcommittee of the Executive Council of the MLA notes, “Among the MLA’s disciplines, this crisis is perhaps most severe in some foreign language departments, but it affects scholarship in literature and language as a whole, especially for those seeking to publish a first book.” See Rey Chow et al. “Developing Recommendations on Scholarly Publishing.” *MLA Newsletter* Fall 2002:17.

7. Philip Lewis, “Is Monographic Tyranny the Problem?” *PMLA* 117 (2002): 1222-24.

8. Carlos J. Alonso, *The Burden of Modernity: The Rhetoric of Cultural Discourse in Spanish America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

9. Currently, there are eighty-four divisional executive committees, but the overlapping of periods, genres, etc., in the list would allow that number to be reduced to a manageable size.



Remarks by

CATHY N. DAVIDSON

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Director, John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute, and  
Ruth F. DeVarney Professor of English,  
Duke University*

“When people expect to get something for nothing,  
they are sure to be cheated.”

P. T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs*

I will return to that quote by P. T. Barnum later in this paper.<sup>1</sup> To begin, however, I’d like to thank ACLS for organizing this panel on “Crises and Opportunities: The Future(s) of Scholarly Publishing.” Those multiple plurals—the emphasis on crises and opportunities, *and* that injunction to imagine our “futures”—signals that we are finally beyond the panic-response to “*the* crisis in scholarly publishing.” Not that the crisis is over. If anything, it has intensified. However, we now know more than we did in the past, there is less hysteria, and we have an opportunity to make some decisions that could reshape, and potentially save, the best aspects of academic publishing—which means, the best academic research.

A key aspect of academic publishing is that it touches on so many aspects of our academic lives since it is the chief evaluating and credentialing mechanism upon which the reward system of academe is based. University press publishing has many portals and, as individuals, we enter variously as students, scholars, teachers, mentors, editors, and administrators. Institutionally, we also have different relationships to scholarly publishing—as professional

organizations, private universities, public universities, libraries, electronic publishers, and a range of different presses. It is important to have all of these—individually and institutionally—represented in our discussion because it forecloses the possibility of thinking there is some utopian “elsewhere” where there is no problem. There is a problem, and we are all part of it. Kate Torrey, director of the University of North Carolina Press, likes to say “we all breathe the same air.” The “we” in that sentence is not just those in the world of university press publishing, but all who, in multiple ways, have been rewarded in our professional lives because of work that has been supported by underpaid, understaffed, and overworked scholarly publishers. If we are part of the problem, we all must *collectively and more equitably* contribute to the solution.

At the risk of belaboring the obvious, I am going to linger on this notion of collective responsibility, inclusive decision-making, and profession-wide resolutions. I believe we are at a turning point where many of us want to find systemic and strategic solutions and move beyond hand-wringing, finger-pointing, and blame-pinning. Pinning the blame is a shell game which constantly diverts our attention away from the ever-traveling pea, leaving us baffled, guessing, and typically looking in one place when the “real problem” resides elsewhere.

A sampling of the essays written on this topic over the last three or four years makes it abundantly clear that we do not need more diagnoses of *the* problem. We’ve had plenty of those: The problem is that we have tied tenure to the publication of a scholarly book. No, others say: uncoupling tenure from books cannot solve the problem because journals are in trouble, too. Others suggest that the problem is the scholarly monograph itself, or that the problem is curtailed library spending on humanities books. The problem is price-gauging by commercial publishers of science journals, necessitating that libraries spend less money on humanities and social science publications. The problem is chain bookstores, the dwindling number of independent bookstores, and the increasing conservatism of those that remain. The problem is electronic booksellers like Amazon.com with their heavy discounting and selling of used books. The problem is that books cost too much to produce. The problem is that

electronic publishing is too expensive and doesn't work for monographs. The problem is shrinking subsidies to presses in the wake of cutbacks to higher education for state universities. The problem is shrinking subsidies to presses in light of dwindling returns on endowments and diminished philanthropy at private universities. The problem is that many universities that depend upon academic publications (books or journal articles) to award tenure don't have presses of their own—they are “mooching off” everyone else. The problem is the corporatizing of the university. The problem is the sciences. The problem is the changing demographics of higher education: there are fewer assistant professors and graduate students who are the primary book buyers (as well as the primary authors of articles in refereed journals). The problem is that the course pack has substituted for the assigned secondary classroom text. The problem is that the jargon of postmodern critical theory has shrunk the audience for the humanities. The problem is that the critical theory boom has ended, and no one is excitedly reading every new book any more. The problem is that, since 9/11, people are watching CNN and not buying books, trade or academic. The problem is that university press books are underpriced relative to their production costs. The problem is that university press books cost too much relative to the income of their target audience. The problem is too many books. The problem is too few books. The problem is too many books of one kind and too few of another. The problem is students don't know how to read any more.

*The* problem is that almost all of the above are *part* of the problem. Fixating on parts means that we never arrive at an overarching solution.

Furthermore, while those are some of the shifting problems, even the victims change in other arguments: It's the humanities. It's the humanities *and* the book-oriented social science fields. It's junior professors in literature. It's junior professors in foreign literatures or working on pre-modern topics. It's junior professors at non-elite institutions in foreign literatures who work on pre-modern topics. . . . Or maybe it's just the French!

If the insights of today's panel are to amount to anything, we must stop thinking of these problems and the sufferers as ever and always

elsewhere. After all, these are the most basic aspects of scholarship, the foundation of our profession. The bottom line is that scholarly publishing isn't financially feasible as a business model—never was, never was intended to be, and should not be. *If scholarship paid, we wouldn't need university presses.*

Members of this panel have been asked to reevaluate big issues such as the reward structures of our profession in light of new technologies, collaborative models of authorship, non-print forms of publication, and so forth. All of these are vitally important. My reservation, however, about having such a discussion is the timing. I am not in favor of uncoupling book publishing from tenure. But I do want to uncouple discussions of reevaluating tenure requirements from the current economic crisis in publishing. A university press book and several refereed articles has been the price of admission to tenure for a good four decades. It is impossible to change overnight the standard of excellence in a profession as hierarchical and decentralized as ours. But we need to stabilize the losses in the publishing business now. Separately, without the sense of economic ruin so near, we can engage in serious conversations about what kind of profession we want. Coupling an economic exigency with a philosophical reassessment is the proverbial apples and oranges, and will lead to bad business decisions and inequitable professional fixes.

In the remainder of this paper, I am going to propose a number of ways that the current costs of publishing can be distributed more equitably. Before I do, however, I want to make two personal declarations. The first has to do with being vice provost at a research university. When you are part of the provost's office that oversees not only all the costs of doing academic business but also the tenure process, it is impossible not to see to what degree the fate of publishing, libraries, and scholarship are intertwined. A provost trying to save money by asking her university press to bring in more revenue (making cost a major goal in book acquisition) is in an untenable position if she is also trying to maintain the same quality-based publishing standards for her faculty. At the same time, no university has enough money to fund everything and every university

wants to maintain its standards. So every provost is in an impossible and seemingly insoluble double-bind. One of my goals today is to provide practical solutions to help universities move beyond this impasse.

My second personal declaration is affective. I like the scholarly books I'm reading these days. I know it is more sophisticated to make jaded remarks about the decline in the quality of scholarship, but I don't believe there has been a decline. In fact, when Oxford University Press asked me to write a substantial new introduction to a reissue of *Revolution and the Word*, reframing its argument and content for a new generation of readers, I embarked on a two-year crash course in books and articles written on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American history and culture over the last fifteen years. As embarrassing as it may be, I will confess: reading scholarship as voraciously as any graduate student preparing for a prelim has been an exhilarating and even inspiring experience. The future of our profession is in good hands—if there is a future. I have been especially excited by the dozens of serious, scholarly first books I've read by junior scholars scrambling their way towards tenure. Then again, why would that be surprising? I myself was a junior scholar when I was researching and writing *Revolution and the Word*.

Because I am married to an editor and work in the provost's office, I am not allowed to have a connection to my own university press these days. However, simply being a scholar and an adviser of graduate students makes me intensely aware of the dire straits of scholarly publishing. Indeed, my recommendations have almost nothing to do with "saving" university press publishing. Quite frankly, I am not interested in propping up fragile university press publishing businesses if what they offer is simply a watered-down version of trade publishing. I've published several books with trade publishers; they do a good job getting those books out to a large, general readership. My motivation in being on this panel at the ACLS Annual Meeting is to find ways to save the kind of scholarship academics are trained to write and that is the basis of teaching and research at colleges and universities. At present, university press publishing provides the most careful, impartial, and efficient system of brokering, networking, evaluating, editing, publishing, and

distributing serious scholarship. It does this exceptionally well when its acquisition programs are not skewed by economic pressures. In the future, we may come up with better and more cost-efficient ways to publish books. At present, if we believe in the value of scholarship, then we who hold leadership roles in our profession must devise the best ways to support university press publishing and rally the support of the profession as a whole.

And we need to act now. The costs of scholarly publishing are rising along with all academic costs. The more serious, rigorous, and specialized our scholarship, the more likely that it will lose money. Beleaguered publishers should not have to bear the brunt of the lose-lose economics of scholarship. Nor should strapped universities be required to bail out university presses every year as the economics of scholarly publishing fall further and further from the possibility of breaking even.

What we need is acknowledgment that scholarly publishing costs more than we are spending on it. It requires substantial subsidies and new ideas about where those infusions of capital might come from and how costs might be dispersed more equitably among those who benefit most from scholarly publishing—namely, scholars themselves. I hope that we can leave here today with a mandate to push Carlos Alonso's recommendations further, create whatever task forces we need to create an action plan, and give ourselves a timeline by which to institute profession-wide change.

In that spirit, I'm going to throw out ten small, practical, and workable ideas for how to distribute the economic burden of scholarly publishing. Not all of these ideas are new; all need to be tested; some might be tried and then discarded if they prove untenable. I offer them less as solutions than as potential models for thinking about our collective responsibility. No one model will work. The point is to spark ideas, galvanize energies, and then sit down together and see what we can do.

1. *Paying our dues.* What if we involved all of our professional associations in a combined, considered, and well-publicized effort on behalf of scholarly publishing, emphasizing the responsibility of every individual and institutional member of the profession to the greater good that is academic research? AAU could, for example, pass

a recommendation that every member of the profession who is tenured or coming up for tenure should be a dues-paying member of at least one national ACLS-affiliate association plus one other interdisciplinary, subfield, or regional organization. This should be extended to the sciences, as well, since the outrageous costs of scientific journals are a key part of the problem. The dues should be sliding (as they generally are), based on salary. And a percentage of the total dues should be reserved for book subsidies that would be given to university presses, as should a portion of conference fees from any conference where a book prize is awarded. The details of how the subsidy would be implemented require working out. Carlos Alonso has already set forth some viable ideas in his *PMLA* “Editor’s Column” and talk today. Other fields may want to refine the process within their own structures. There might, for example, be book prizes in various subfields and interdisciplinary cross-fields and prize money could be awarded to all university presses entering the contest as well as shared between the winning author and the press. This is essentially a reverse entrance fee to subsidize publishing in the field in which the prize is awarded. Since publishers have lists in certain areas, this would be one way of supporting the kind of work the prize is designed to honor. While this could happen with manuscripts, pre-publication, that, it seems to me, duplicates work better done by publishers and doesn’t really address the larger issue. A title subsidy isn’t sufficient to support a whole list; you need a developed list in an area for all kinds of reasons studied by scholars in the field of history of the book—a network of reviewers, a reliable standard of peer evaluation, a target market to help in distribution (whether that be a booth at a conference or a mailing list). The reverse entrance fee allows for block or list subsidies, ensuring the health of the field and not simply of the winning entrant. It is a truism of publishers that those books that win the “best book” prizes in their fields often lose the most money. Making prize money available to publishers could help support those books that receive the most scholarly esteem without penalizing their publishers.

Of course, as with all of these suggestions, another professional organization represented here today—the American Association of University Presses—would also have to take a responsible leadership

role. If offering subsidies encourages publishers to see this as a boon (not a survival strategy) and as encouragement to expand their size, operations, and costs, then five years out we would be back in the same losing situation in which we find ourselves now, only more heavily taxed. Any profession-wide effort on behalf of scholarly publishing would have to come with equal assurances from AAUP's members that would also earnestly address the situation and work in a coordinated fashion to stabilize the economics of scholarly publishing. I imagine this would require agreements among university presses: a challenging prospect, since university press publishing's lack of a vigorous profit motive does not prevent it from being extremely competitive. And that's a good thing, since the competition among publishers is one way that we ensure quality, rigor, progress, and the promotion of cutting-edge thinking. It requires others more conversant with the business of academic publishing to figure out how to preserve competition, control expansion, and agree on methods for revenue-sharing. If the NCAA can figure that out, AAUP should be able to come up with something satisfactory.

2. *Publishing electronically.* We're learning, fast, that electronic publishing isn't easy and isn't cheap. It does not represent the entire alternative to conventional publishing and it will not solve the publishing crisis. Will it work in certain situations? Is it sometimes cost-effective? Yes. My colleague John Unsworth is in a far better position than I to comment on this subject, and so I'm going to defer to him but simply mark electronic publication as a solution that has been tried and found wanting—though I would want to try it again, under a different business model and with different expectations. Among the many worthy possibilities for electronic publishing right now I would include the creation and preservation of more machine-readable databases, multimedia data banks, genetic texts, and multilingual editions of texts. Printing-on-demand (POD) publishing ventures are promising ways of gaining access to books no longer in print and hold possibilities for the future in small fields that will never be able to “break even” under any financing models. There is also much work to be done with preservation of “born digital” materials, meta-standards for archiving and searching, collaborative multi-site and multi-national projects with open source access for

any who wish to contribute, and many exciting electronic publishing projects. None of these, at present, offers all that university presses do and most of these electronic projects require either volunteer labor or considerable subsidies of their own. They are thus a wonderful addition to the scholarly arsenal but are by no means a “solution” to the crisis in scholarly publishing.

3. *Start-up packages.* Several people have suggested book subsidies as part of start-up packages for junior faculty in book-publishing fields analogous to start-up packages in the sciences. I’d like to refine that model a bit, since, in my role as a vice provost overseeing interdisciplinary research centers across Duke’s eight schools, I’m always aware of escalating costs throughout the university and skeptical of plans that simply add costs to existing structures. Added costs in one area mean reduced expenditures in another. Add-on subsidies pit the university press against, for example, the new humanities center. Why make that bargain?

A strategic way of promoting the start-up package idea (without adding to already over-taxed budgets) is for ACLS or AAU to make a recommendation that universities take their 2004-05 salary levels—across the board, in all fields—and subtract \$500 in order to create a publishing subsidy pool. New as well as current (i.e., junior and senior) faculty members could be guaranteed a publishing subsidy drawn from this pool. I’d suggest \$10,000 per book in book-publishing fields and a field-specific sliding amount for journal publications to be awarded to a book that has already successfully completed the review process by a university press (rather than a commercial enterprise). Such a distributed cost works out about right given attrition rates of untenured faculty members, those who do not ever draw from the publishing-subsidy pool, and investment possibilities for the pool itself. Needless to say, I would prefer that faculty salaries continue to rise *and* there be a book-subsidy pool, but that is not realistic in the present economy.

This strategic reallocation of existing resources would be an excellent investment for the university as well as for the individual scholar. This year, one of my former students (an Americanist, by the way) received a dozen form rejections saying “we do not publish first books in literature.” He wasn’t able to find a press that would read

his manuscript. And if no one is publishing first books, how will he ever publish a second one? I'm sure everyone in this room has a similar story to tell. I know my student would have preferred a modest decline in his assistant professor salary if it would have given him a weapon in the battle to enter our profession. I see no reason why this arrangement could not be adapted to senior as well as junior faculty—and might even be an incentive for those struggling with that crucial post-promotion book. Some universities (Michigan, Cornell, and, to a lesser extent, Emory) provide subsidies to their faculty already. If this became a nation-wide policy, with costs distributed in a way similar to what I am suggesting, it could make an enormous difference. With a \$10,000 subsidy per book, 100 books a year would receive a \$1 million revenue infusion. That could go a long way toward ending the red ink for publishers and their universities.

4. *Scaled subsidies.* For those universities and colleges requiring scholarly books and journals for tenure and promotion but without university presses of their own, book subsidies should be twice as much: \$20,000 per book and perhaps \$1,000 per scholarly article. How they pay for it could be on the model suggested above or in other ways that suit their own institutional funding structures and resources. The point needs to be made, however, that we need to take collective responsibility for the good now provided to the entire profession by those universities that do subsidize scholarly publishing.

5. *Tax write-offs in lieu of royalties.* Many of us receive tiny checks every year from our publishers. One of my first books brings in somewhere between \$37 and \$50 a year. What if, instead of a check, university presses sent a royalty statement and gave authors an option: either request the check or send back the statement and ask that it be converted from income into a tax-deductible gift to help subsidize first books or books in a given field. The same could be done for advances. It's ridiculous how we currently make decisions on which publisher to go with over a \$500 advance on a book that will lose \$5,000. Or, again, instead of offering reviewers the choice between so many books or the whopping sum of \$150, why not provide the option of a tax-deductible contribution? Each book so subsidized would have an acknowledgment that indicated "A

subsidy for the publication of this book was made possible by generous authors committed to the survival of university press publishing.” Their gifts would be small tokens in a larger project of cultural change.

6. *Elimination of course paks.* University press books are often less expensive than course paks and entail less hassle than all the copyright issues of today’s course paks. Furthermore, it is good for everyone, including instructors, to read a whole book occasionally.

7. *Battling the commercial science publishers.* I’m not sure that, in the end, it would help university presses economically to take on commercial science publishers such as Elsevier, but it would be good on many levels if academic presses were publishing science journals and charging less than the current astronomical subscription rates. A library subscription to *Brain Research*, for example, costs approximately \$20,000 a year while *Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry Letters* runs closer to \$30,000. A “take-over” by university press publishing would (a) be a fairer and less costly system for scientists, thus helping to make scientists, too, appreciative of the role served by university presses; (b) help libraries put their expenses back in line; and (c) in so doing, help the bottom line of universities—again, a greater good.

8. *Using the university’s teaching and research mission to promote scholarly books.* Every university home page should have links to university press books that deal with topics of importance to courses, initiatives, conferences, invited speakers, and so forth. Click here and go to a centralized online bookstore comprising a consortium of university press publishers. If such a publishing venture were found to violate antitrust laws, then all university Websites could bypass Amazon.com (with its heavy discounting) and go directly to the University of Chicago’s legendary Seminary Co-Op Bookstore—surely one of the nation’s most valiant supporters of scholarly publishing.

9. *Data collecting.* In the current conversation about “the crisis,” book publishing is often presented by university administrators as if it were an add-on to the already expensive fields of the humanities and narrative social sciences—those fields considered to be “soft,” “weak sisters,” “incapable of supporting themselves.” I’m not so sure.

I want the data. What if all of our associations worked together to challenge our business schools to try to model the full economics of the modern university. How much do the book-publishing fields cost a university? If we are going to talk about the corporatizing of universities, let's see "the books"—and not an Arthur Andersen-style cooking of those books, but real costs, real expenses: buildings, M & O, salaries, start-up packages, labs, post-docs, staff, cost-sharing, ICRs, and all the apparatus of the science-and technology fields driven by "external funds." How much does that photonics or free electron lab really cost? How much tuition revenue is brought in by the sciences as opposed to liberal arts teaching in book-publishing fields? It may turn out English departments are cash cows—in which case it is only right and just that literary scholarship yield some rewards in the form of book subsidies for all its institutional heavy lifting. In the corporate rhetoric of the university, the liberal arts often seem like a pariah. We may in fact be the capitalists keeping the system afloat.

*10. Institutional branding and public relations.* I know at least one or two regional universities that became major national players through heavy investing in the humanities and social sciences. It's an easier and more cost-effective way to improve national rankings than by trying to raise the caliber of the sciences and engineering. It's also an efficient way to change a university's profile or "brand" because controversy is commonplace in the humanities and social sciences—and controversy is publicity. University presses sometimes "fill out" the offerings of their parent institutions. A great list in a specialty area often brands the university in areas where the university may not have faculty or research strengths. It costs far less to build a publishing reputation in a high-prestige area that doesn't have high student enrollment than it does to create a new department. How can university presses receive more credit for this?

Presses can also do more to be interwoven into the fiber of their universities: targeted alumni catalogues (with gift and naming opportunities, too); alumni book clubs and press discounts; university press books with handsome book plates as the routine prize for service (instead of the dorky five-year pin); gift certificates for the university press in the welcome baskets of incoming students;

graduate fellowships partly paid in scrip (say, \$500 a year) that could be used to buy university press books—perfect for the online university press co-op suggested above. Even simple kinds of in-house advertising could pay off. Bulletin boards with tear-sheets for current books in the field could be posted outside every department, offering graduate students heavy discounts on selected backlist books.

These seem like tiny gestures but all aid in making presses more visible to their own universities. They all help educate faculty in non-book publishing fields about the importance of the press. What is the over-all cost/benefit of the university press in terms of reputation and luster? Provosts should not only be seeing red when the university press is mentioned; they should be seeing an opportunity. I remember a visit by press directors to the provost's Academic Priorities Committee at Duke. They came with about twenty very handsome new books, slid them down the middle of the table, and said, "Here. They're free. Everybody take one!" And the scramble was on. It was not hard, after that, to make the case that scholarly publishing was important. Yet a good half of the faculty at the table admitted that, until that moment, they had had no idea what the university press really did. University presses need to make themselves far more visible to the universities that support them.

Will we, today, solve "the crisis in academic publishing?" No. If we go out and form task forces and action committees, if we manage to work together in a model of collective action, will we make the problem go away? I don't think so. *But we don't have to.* What I'm proposing is something far more modest and bold: That we put into effect adjustments that will *improve* the situation for the present. After that, we must persist in collective watchfulness to ensure that these adjustments are working, and that they are not having unanticipated negative results in one sector that will eventually hurt every sector.

Right now, we are putting far too much effort into analysis of the problem and not enough into change. We must learn from the plug-and-play model of business. We need to try one thing—and then try

another. We are not in an environment where long-range planning makes sense because all of the conditions are in flux at once: market conditions, tax structures, demographics, state spending, technology infrastructure, new methods of evaluating productivity, and so on. We must anticipate ways that the economics of publishing might change again (as they most assuredly will), and have the dexterity and the mandate to adapt accordingly.

Universities do not have unlimited resources; if they did, we wouldn't be holding this panel today. We can't keep shifting the blame, and we can't keep looking for individual fixes and then lament when another press loses its intellectual mission, lays off its literature editor, or curtails its monographs. We academics cannot continue to see ourselves as innocents in a process whose fate is decided by others. Innocence is not bliss—it is professional suicide. The problem of university press publishing is *our* problem, and we must solve it. I believe that professional associations, such as the collective body represented by ACLS, must take leadership roles. It undermines all we stand for as a profession if the only way scholarly presses can survive is by looking for books that sell. French history is less valuable than Latin American history because it doesn't sell as well? That's preposterous. Until we realize, as individuals and institutions, that we cannot expect something for nothing, the current situation will deteriorate even further. And then, as P. T. Barnum predicted, we shall all be cheated.

## Notes

1. A condensed version of this paper was published as “The Economic Burden of Scholarly Publishing” in *The Chronicle Review of The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 3, 2003, B7-B10. Cathy Davidson also served as a guest host for a “Colloquy Live” chat hosted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* called “In Search of Solutions for Scholarly Publishing.” The transcript of the chat can be accessed at <<http://chronicle.com/colloquylive/2003/10/publishing>>.

The author would like to thank Steve Cohn, Deborah Jakubs, Alice Kaplan, Peter Lange, and Ken Wissoker of Duke University for

their help (including energetic disagreement) in researching this essay.

2. Carlos J. Alonso, "Having a Spine: Facing the Crisis in Scholarly Publishing," *PMLA* 118.2 (2003): 217-23.



Remarks by

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In a paper given at Dartmouth College in November 2002, written in response to Stephen Greenblatt's letter to MLA members,<sup>1</sup> I stated:

If we can tackle large problems, with the resources of the computer, the network, and interdisciplinary collaboration, then stand-alone, single-author work on smaller problems is eventually going to seem . . . quaint.

I realize that this is a tendentious statement, and that my colleagues on this panel, and most people in the room, will consider my prediction outlandish. But I do believe that the detailed and thoughtful fretting that we have been doing over the fate of the humanities monograph will seem—from the perspective of a not-too-distant future—beside the point, along with all our carefully constructed responses to the crisis of scholarly publishing. In short, I believe we are, as the saying goes, preparing to fight the last war. I also believe that there is a way out of the present situation, though not without a leap of faith—or, to be more biblically precise, not without casting our bread on the waters.

I'll explain, but first let me say that my beliefs are born out of:

1. nearly twenty years of active research interest in publishing, and especially in scholarly publishing;

2. thirteen years of experience as founding co-editor and then editor *emeritus* of the Internet's first peer-reviewed electronic journal in the humanities, *Postmodern Culture*;
3. ten years of experience as the first director of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia;
4. eight years as member and then co-chair of the MLA's Committee on Scholarly Editions; and
5. three years as chair of the TEI Consortium, an interdisciplinary and international body of scholars and technical experts devoted to standards for the creation of machine-readable literary and linguistic texts.

I also speak to you as someone who was awarded tenure in a top-ranked English department without a book. My tenure was based, instead, on article-length pieces, many of which were published electronically, and on applied research (in electronic scholarly publishing). Furthermore, I was recently promoted to full professor and appointed dean (of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois, with a joint appointment as professor of English), still without a book.

The purpose of reciting this litany is not to impress you with my credentials—or to amaze you with my success in their absence—but rather to demonstrate that the ideas I ask you to consider are based on direct, extensive, and personal experience, as well as research and experimentation.

To begin with, then, I do accept that there is a crisis in scholarly publishing in the humanities, and I agree with Professor Greenblatt (and the Association of Research Libraries, among others) that this crisis is to a significant extent the result of rapidly increasing prices for science, technical, and medical journals from commercial publishers. I also agree with Professor Greenblatt that the most straightforward solution to the problem this crisis poses for tenure and promotion is to accept several scholarly articles in place of a book. This solution requires relatively little adjustment: we are already familiar with the genre of the scholarly article, and we already value publication in this form: we would simply need to value it more. From a business point

of view, scholarly journals are more viable than Philip Lewis claims in his *PMLA* article titled “Is Monographic Tyranny the Problem?”<sup>2</sup> Books sell once, while journals sell three or four times a year. Journals are a renewable resource, economically speaking, and journals often “carry” book publishing at the presses that do both.

Another more or less traditional form of scholarly output that could be an alternative to the monograph is the scholarly edition. If the profession were of a mind to broaden its definition of “tenurable” work, broadening it in this direction would accomplish several goals. First, it would reward the kind of work that is required, in each generation, to keep the cultural record up to date and in good repair. Second, it would promote this renewal at a time when great portions of that record are about to be transferred into electronic form: some of it carefully selected and edited, some of it not. A concerted effort to recognize and reward electronic scholarly editions might increase the odds in favor of the survival of the best, rather than the cheapest, texts.

Another proposal under discussion is subvention, and Professor Alonso has put forward the idea of MLA-sponsored subvention/prize committees, as a way of avoiding the appearance of departments buying publishing opportunities for their faculty. The problem with this idea is that even if every MLA member gave \$10 a year to this cause, there would be funding for only about 50 of these \$7,000 subventions. Even if aggressive fundraising on the part of the MLA were to double those numbers, 100 subventions a year would hardly make a dent in the situation, when university presses in the United States and Canada publish roughly 11,000 books a year.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, if the award is competitive, and there’s a chance of making a mistake by giving to someone unknown, you can be sure that those 50 or 100 subventions will go to people whose reputations are already established, unless they are specifically restricted to untenured scholars.

Perhaps we simply can’t afford to continue publishing as we have. In fact, perhaps the audience for humanities monographs is so small that this sort of book publishing can never be profitable. This assumption is at the core of Stevan Harnad’s 1994 “Subversive Proposal.”<sup>4</sup> Broadly speaking, Harnad claims that scholars are more

interested in having their work read and used than they are in making money from it; that scholars have hitherto signed their work over to publishers because, in the print world, that was the only way to disseminate their work so that it would be read and used; and that in the electronic world, authors don't need to make this "Faustian bargain." According to Harnard, when the audience for scholarship is small, there's really no way that a publisher can afford to publish a book anyway, and the reduced cost of electronic-only publishing for small audiences should be met in advance—by subsidies or through page charges. In a response to that article, in 1997, I said that all of this was right on the mark, but taking *Postmodern Culture* as an electronic-only example, nobody was offering to pay our costs up front, and we didn't imagine it would be good for our submissions if we were to become the only humanities journal with page charges. So often, there's a sort of "Mexican standoff" preventing the implementation of perfectly reasonable ideas about how to solve this crisis: one journal can't initiate page charges if no others do it; one department can't change its tenure requirements if no others do; one faculty member can't decide to skip the book. . . . Well, actually, one faculty member can, and did, but it was frankly a very risky thing to do, and I wouldn't recommend it. Still, perhaps these changes are more likely to come from the bottom up than from the top down; more likely to come from authors than from tenure committees, journals, or publishers.

If that's true, then I predict that the genre of scholarship that will replace the book will be the thematic research collection. This genre has been independently identified by at least two different people before me: Daniel Pitti, in a talk given in Ireland in 1999, and Carole Palmer, who has a chapter on the subject in *Blackwell's Companion to Digital Humanities* (scheduled for publication in autumn 2003). The genre encompasses most of what we produce at the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, and what other humanities researchers, often with less support, funding, and encouragement, are producing on university Web servers around the country and the globe. In a talk I gave at the University of Minnesota in 2001,<sup>5</sup> I defined thematic research collections as:

1. necessarily electronic (because of the cost of 2, 3, and 8);
2. constituted of heterogeneous datatypes (in other words, multimedia);
3. extensive but thematically coherent;
4. structured but open-ended;
5. designed to support research;
6. authored (usually involving multiple authors);
7. interdisciplinary; and
8. gathering digital primary resources (themselves second-generation digital resources).

Thematic research collections offer the author all the benefits Professor Alonso ascribes to the book, though sometimes in slightly different forms: “The choice of texts, the marshalling of sources and evidence, the construction of an argument that spans several chapters, the bibliographic research, the engagement with the readers’ reports, the reading of proofs, the choice of journals for review.”<sup>6</sup> I could provide examples of IATH projects that have traced each of these steps—the Blake Archive, the Rossetti Archive, the Whitman Archive, the Valley of the Shadow, and others. And I’m sure the faculty who have assembled, edited, annotated, and analyzed these thematic research collections would agree that they are the result of what Professor Alonso, in the case of the scholarly book, describes as a “protracted and somewhat enigmatic process to which many people contribute, sometimes unbeknownst to them.”

Now, I wouldn’t for a minute suggest that these thematic research collections are less expensive to produce than a scholarly book—far from it. Nor would I suggest that they are an easier nut to crack, from the point of view of the business of publishing. Still, in spite of both these points, I do think they may be more viable, because they have something that most scholarly books do not: namely, an audience. It’s hard to sell five hundred copies of most humanities monographs; even fewer sell in the thousands. And yet these Web-based projects, on relatively esoteric subjects, receive thousands of visitors each day, serve up gigabytes of their content to avid users each week, and reach readers of all ages, inside and outside academia, all around the world. The only problem is that they’re free.

Or maybe that's not such a problem. Let's take the case of *Postmodern Culture* again. *PMC* has always been a free electronic journal, but since the mid 1990s, it has also been a licensed electronic journal—you can get it for free, or you can pay for it. Most individuals get it for free. Most institutions buy it as part of Project Muse. You could argue that they're buying the package, not the title, and that may be perfectly true, but *PMC* is one of Project Muse's top ten most heavily used titles. Clearly, then, end-users, who could be using the journal on the free site, are choosing to use it as part of the licensed resource. Why? Better searching, for one thing, and searching in the context of a hundred other humanities journals.

More to the point, perhaps, given the "Mexican standoff" problem, why did Johns Hopkins agree to take us on, and allow us to continue distributing the journal for free at the same time they were licensing the journal? The answer is simple: we came to them with an established audience, and we had established that audience by being free. When we signed with Project Muse, we had 2,500 subscribers (to the e-mail list through which we announced new issues), and we were getting about a quarter of a million visits a year on the Web. By any standards, that's a large audience for a scholarly journal, especially for one publishing articles with titles like "Flogging a Dead Language: Identity Politics, Sex, and the Freak Reader in Acker's *Don Quixote*." In fact, I think that the solution to this crisis is, plain and simple, to reach a larger audience. We tend to condescend to the general reader, and we count her out when it comes to our mental construct of the audience for humanities scholarship. Believe it or not, though, this is an actual e-mail I received one day in the mid-1990s, from a reader of *PMC*:

Dear Mr. Unsworth:

I'm a union teamster living in rural Vermont so I don't have a lot of access to the sort of stuff you have in your journal and you provide access to from your Website. Our local library is swell, computerized too, but a computer search under postmodernism or poststructuralism or Derrida or Baudrillard or Jameson produces zero hits. Thank you.

Would this rusticated teamster buy up the latest book by Jameson? Maybe, if he could get his hands on it in Rutland, and maybe not—but he is clearly interested in the subject and looking for the content. Maybe we could enlarge the audience for humanities scholarship not by dumbing it down, but by making it more readily available. Maybe if we did that, scholars would find an audience first, and a publisher second, instead of the other way around. And maybe in that world, the risk to publishers would be diminished, because the demand would already be established. Could we peer review in this world? Of course—and then it might be perfectly clear why we should conduct peer review independent of a decision to publish. Could we give away and charge for the same thing, in different venues? Yes, if the benefits to paying customers were real. Could books still exist? Yes, but they might often be byproducts of other activity: for example, summaries or extracts of research conducted in the course of building thematic research collections. Could we collect and publish the collections themselves? Absolutely—the only clear business lesson that we have learned from electronic scholarly publishing to date is that size matters, size sells, and size is achieved by aggregation. Collections of collections, rationally organized and critically selected, would make perfect sense, and their individual components, freely available on the Web, wouldn't be “cannibalizing” the market, because they wouldn't have the same scale or reach.

Enough: I know that these ideas fly in the face of what we all know about the business of scholarly publishing, the audience for humanities research, and the forms that research naturally takes. But the simple truth is that the crisis we're discussing is the lack of an audience, and I know that the audience exists—we just need new genres, new business models, and the courage of our convictions as scholars and publishers to reach them.

## Notes

1. Stephen Greenblatt, “Call for Action on Problems in Scholarly Book Publishing: A Special Letter from Stephen Greenblatt.”

- Modern Language Association. May 28, 2002 <[http://www.mla.org/resources/documents/rep\\_scholarly\\_pub/scholarly\\_pub](http://www.mla.org/resources/documents/rep_scholarly_pub/scholarly_pub)>.
2. Philip Lewis, "Is Monographic Tyranny the Problem?" *PMLA* 117 (2002): 1222-24.
  3. Peter Givler, "University Press Publishing in the United States." *Scholarly Publishing: Books, Journals, Publishers and Libraries in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Richard E. Abel and Lyman W. Newman (New York: Wiley, 2002). <<http://aaupnet.org/resources/upusa.html>>
  4. June 27, 1994 <<http://www.arl.org/scomm/subversive/sub01.html>>.
  5. October 5, 2001 <<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/~jmu2m/UMN.01/>>.
  6. Carlos J. Alonso, "Having a Spine: Facing the Crisis in Scholarly Publishing," *PMLA* 118.2 (2003): 217-23.

## Remarks by

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As the lone historian on this panel of distinguished literary scholars, I feel compelled to point out that we historians are wary of terms like “crisis” when applied to contemporary events. But even with my historian’s caution about overinterpreting short-term trends, I think that scholarly publishing is in serious trouble, and that we’re seeing some major structural changes extending well beyond the problems of a weak economy. That said, I’m also an incurable optimist, and I think the other half of our panel’s title is apt: there really are opportunities born of crisis.

I’d like to do three things today: first, comment from a publisher’s point of view about why scholarly publishing is facing a crisis; second, consider briefly some of the solutions that have been proposed within the scholarly community over the past several months; and finally, offer some suggestions about how we might begin to work toward alternative solutions.

Why is scholarly publishing in crisis? The issues are complex, of course, and have been building up over many years. I’ve been at the University of California Press for seventeen years, and during that time, we’ve always struggled financially, as have most of the other presses with which I’m familiar. The progressive weakening of the library market, which goes back to the 1970s, is well known. The volatility of the market for textbooks, a more recent phenomenon, is also well known: a product of the growing popularity of course readers and changes in students’ book buying habits. These changes

have pushed university presses more and more into the retail marketplace, the most risky and volatile arena of publishing, which has been going through its own set of economic problems in recent years. Currently, about 50 percent of the UC Press's book sales are to the retail sector—that is, general bookstores and online companies, primarily Amazon.com. Textbook sales represent about 24 percent of our business; library sales, once the mainstay of university press revenues, are just 18 percent. Our figures are fairly typical of large university presses. For university presses in general, the percentage of retail and text sales are slightly lower, but the overall pattern is similar. (These figures come from statistics collected annually by the Association of American University Presses.) The charge often leveled at university presses—that we are becoming too commercial and departing from our traditional mission—is driven by changes in our markets and, of course, by the fact that most university presses receive at best minimal subsidies from their parent institutions. One of the major consequences of this shift in sales patterns is that scholarly book publishing has become increasingly subject to the vagaries of the marketplace and the business cycle.

Let me mention two other issues that contribute to our current situation. First, the supply of books is increasing faster than the demand from readers—or, perhaps I should say, faster than our capacity to absorb the quantity of information being disseminated. (This problem is not limited to books, of course.) A few more numbers: in 1960, there were 60 university presses operating in the United States. Today there are 96. There are, in addition, many other organizations publishing scholarly books and journals; the membership of the Association of American University Presses now stands at about 120, including, I might note, the MLA. In 1963, the first year for which AAUP data are available, university presses published, on average, 41 titles. By 1993, the figure had more than doubled, to 88, and has remained at about that level since then. I don't want to overstate this trend, because not all presses report their data every year, and university presses are not the total universe of scholarly publishers. Still, I think you get my general point. Finally, the price of books has not kept pace with inflation. I know this seems counterintuitive to all of us as consumers of books, but a recent study

of scholarly book pricing by the AAUP shows that prices of university press books increased 14 percent between 1989 and 2000, while books published by commercial scholarly presses increased 23 percent. In the same period, however, the consumer price index increased 39 percent.

To summarize, then, why are we in crisis? We have too many books chasing too few customers; our revenues aren't keeping pace with our costs; and the entire book market has become increasingly unpredictable.

Turning briefly to some of the potential solutions, two ideas have been much discussed of late. First, the radical notion that a book should not necessarily be required for tenure in the many disciplines where that is currently the case; and second, the idea that junior faculty in these same disciplines might be given a sum of money to subsidize publication of their first book. These proposals, with their pros and cons, are well presented by Carlos Alonso in his *PMLA* "Editors Column" and are summarized in his remarks. A third, often-discussed potential solution is electronic publication, which is usually dismissed as impractical for one or more of these reasons: resistance to reading more than a few paragraphs on screen; scholars' enduring love affair with the book as artifact; and the presumption that electronic publication won't "count" for tenure. I don't intend to rehash the arguments around these proposed solutions, but I would like to make some brief observations informed by the economics of publishing. The subsidies are a good idea—we publishers never turn down money—and electronic publication offers many opportunities. Neither idea by itself, though, addresses the supply problem, and neither resolves the cost problem. The proposal to substitute a group of articles for a book in tenure decisions tackles the supply problem for books but, as Professor Alonso rightly notes, has the potential to raise a similar problem for journals, and sidesteps the very important issue of how scholars in different disciplines work.

I'm not sanguine about being able to rein in the supply of books. Suggesting that scholars write less and publishers stop thinking that growth is the solution to their problems is easy to say but next to impossible to accomplish. Furthermore, one could argue that we shouldn't try to cut back on scholarly output—that intellectual

production should not be subject to marketplace considerations. I do think there are some realistic possible solutions to the cost issues. I'd like to make three points on that general subject. First, we must confront the high cost of the front end of the process: acquiring, peer reviewing, and editing manuscripts. Second, we must stop being obsessed with output, because format—print, electronic, article length, book length—is rapidly becoming a non-issue, for reasons I'll address shortly. And finally, since scholarly publishing is a system involving many players, it must be analyzed as a system. No one player can resolve this crisis alone.

Publishers agonize incessantly over the cost of producing books, but we don't very often think about how much it costs to acquire books in the first place. Acquisitions editors are among the highest paid people in publishing (though they're not highly paid in absolute terms). Acquisition editors earn those high salaries because the quality of every publisher's list depends on their work. But the work is labor-intensive; editors typically acquire about twenty to thirty books a year. The scholars we call on to review manuscripts are paid a pittance, but put enormous amounts of time into peer reviewing—a significant cost, albeit a hidden one. The production editors who copyedit and oversee books in production represent another significant cost.

Contrast the book publishing process with the world of journals. The steps in the editorial process are similar, but the acquiring is usually done by editors who are scholars—faculty on the university payrolls. Editorial management—trafficking manuscripts among authors, editors, reviewers, copyeditors, typesetters—typically handled by professional editors or editorial assistants in publishing houses, is done by graduate student assistants or the staff of scholarly societies. If a press is involved in publishing a journal, it usually comes in only at the back end: typesetting, printing, marketing, and distribution. All these functions cost money, no matter who carries them out. But, in the journals model, the up-front editorial costs are absorbed by universities and scholarly societies in the course of fulfilling their missions. In the book model, the costs are borne by the publisher (except for the universities' hidden subsidy of the peer-reviewing process). Those costs, therefore, must be recouped through the sale of books.

So why can't books be published more like journals? When I floated this idea at a meeting of publishers, librarians, and faculty a few years ago, I was trounced. Rather surprisingly, to me, librarians and many faculty members underscored the value of publishers making editorial decisions. They argued that professional editors have some distance from the fields they cover, and that scholarly publishing could become too inbred if it were left entirely to scholars themselves. Similarly, in the context of a discussion about journals vs. books as a requirement for tenure, one member of our faculty Editorial Committee recently told me that he thinks his books are far superior to his journal articles because of the long and intense editorial process that he went through in producing his books.

I would hardly downplay the editorial value offered by publishers. But I would like to argue that we need to think carefully about how, and in what circumstances, the editorial value of publishers is most effectively deployed. A colleague of mine, now retired, used to talk about “cranking up the machine,” by which he meant our long and cumbersome publishing process, usually in heated discussions about print runs for proposed books. He would pound his fist on the table and argue that it wasn't worth “cranking up the machine” unless we could sell at least 1,000 copies of a book. Feel free to substitute whatever number you like, but my point is that while we might believe that scholarship deserves to reach its audience no matter how small, it doesn't necessarily need to reach that audience being published by high-overhead book publishers.

So when is it worth “cranking up the machine”? I've come to agree with my critics of a few years ago. One of the most important qualities of professional acquisitions editors is their breadth of knowledge: their ability to evaluate potential books on the basis of their intellectual merit and of their potential significance for different audiences—those in the author's own discipline, those in related disciplines, students, and informed people outside the academy. We should allow professional editors to focus on books with that kind of broad appeal. Very specialized work, intended for an audience largely confined to the author's peers, can just as well be edited according to the journals model. I'll come back to this point, but first let me say a bit more about the format of books.

Arguments about the deficiencies of electronic publishing are becoming my biggest pet peeve. Electronic and print publishing are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the distinction will eventually become irrelevant. Publishers are now moving toward maintaining all their content, books as well as journals, in digital form. This opens up the possibility of publishing in multiple formats—on the Web, downloaded to a Palm Pilot, in print. The director of the California Digital Library (CDL) told me recently that he envisions buying books and journals in electronic form—one copy for the whole system—then making it possible for patrons to download files to their computers or PDAs (for a fee) or printing bound copies through a print-on-demand facility located in the library. This sort of statement generally makes publishers crazy, but my interlocutor wants to steal business from copy shops, not publishers. (Admittedly, in his next breath, he admits that he hasn't yet figured out the business model.) Barnes & Noble is planning something similar, placing print facilities in their stores. Publishers are already using print-on-demand technology to keep older books in print; it isn't much of a stretch to use it for new books. The University of Chicago Press is already creating a huge digital archive of its books and those of the twenty-odd presses it distributes, with a print-on-demand facility right in its warehouse. Other university presses, including California, are making similar plans. In this environment, the issue of whether electronic publication "counts" for tenure is irrelevant. Your department requires print? No problem. Just print a few copies.

Another important trend, being driven by scholarly societies in particular, is the creation of electronic portals to provide access to scholarship in a given field. The History Cooperative, a partnership involving the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the University of Illinois Press, and the National Academy Press, is one example. The American Anthropological Association has embarked upon a very ambitious project to publish its twenty-four journals, working papers, and (potentially) books under a single umbrella. This kind of publishing begins to blur the lines between article and book; indeed, it opens up the possibility of publishing works longer than 30 pages and less than 300. I might add that while this model doesn't cut down the supply

of information, it does help diminish information overload by giving scholars tools to find and search through information in a given field much more efficiently—one-stop shopping, as it were, right from the scholars' own desktops.

Returning to the problem of publishing specialized, book-length scholarship, I want to suggest that we combine elements of the journal publishing model with new technologies. As an example of what I have in mind, I would cite a new venture, the University of California International and Area Studies project (UCIAS), which brings together research units in international studies on the nine UC campuses, the CDL, and the Press. The project can be found at <http://repositories.cdlib.org/uciaspubs/>. The research units, many of which have their own small publishing programs, provide content. Peer review and general oversight of the project is handled by a managing editor based on the Berkeley campus, who reports to the dean of International and Area Studies at Berkeley. An existing position was redefined to create the managing editor position, so no additional costs were incurred. Technical infrastructure, including Website hosting, is provided by the CDL as part of its larger eScholarship repository program. The Press provides its imprint and will produce and distribute print editions of some materials from the collection. The project is intended primarily to publish articles and working papers, some of which will be gathered into thematic collections, but there is no reason why it can't be expanded to include books.

This example brings me to my final point, about the need for teamwork in finding solutions to the problems of scholarly publishing. Universities pay for the production and dissemination of scholarship in several ways: the salaries of faculty producing scholarship, the budgets of libraries purchasing the results, and (in some cases) subsidies for university presses. We need to take a hard look at the organization of the publishing process and its costs, and think about ways of managing those costs more effectively by leveraging what different groups within the scholarly community are already doing—or can do more efficiently than others. If faculty and scholarly societies are already managing the editorial process for journals, is it a great leap for them to extend their work to book series? (Some

societies, in fact, already publish books.) If digital libraries and university computing centers have already developed sophisticated technical infrastructures, can they extend their technical expertise to include providing electronic publishing services? Finally, in this mix of players and talents, what can publishers most usefully offer? In a collaborative model involving other partners, publishers can provide several kinds of services: brokering print, where our contracts with large vendors allow for lower costs; marketing, sales and distribution, functions in which publishers excel and where we can also achieve significant economies of scale. More generally, as I've already argued, publishers can play an important editorial role in specific circumstances: when the audience is broad enough to justify the costs involved, and the publications in question can benefit from the particular kinds of editorial, design, and marketing skills that are publishers' stock in trade.