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Reassembling Scholarly Communications: An Evaluation of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Monograph Initiative

Final Report

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Part 1: Context and Background

This report is a consideration of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's 2014–2015 scholarly communications initiative, which focused on helping to develop new capacity in the monograph-publishing ecosystem.

This report looks at thirteen projects funded through the initiative in 2014 and 2015. The proposals came from different stakeholders in the monograph ecosystem: university presses, libraries, faculty, and one consulting organization. They include studies of the economics of monograph publishing; plans to develop new faculty or staff competencies; the development of new software systems to support the production or publication of scholarly works; and the development of new operation and business models that aim to streamline and find efficiencies in the infrastructure for producing and distributing scholarly works.

The range of the funded projects is very broad. This appears to be a result of the open-ended way the Mellon Foundation invited proposals; innovation in digital publishing is an experimental process requiring imagination, an open mind and relative freedom from preexisting drivers and operational assumptions. The Foundation's approach seems to have been to seek out interesting projects and ideas in a variety of places, and to look for opportunities to help move these ideas forward, without being overly directive about particular outcomes. This, we believe, is appropriate to the task of advancing a very complex tradition of scholarly communication, especially in an apparent time of crisis.

Monographs and Monograph Publishing

The scholarly monograph is a form – and a *genre* – of singular importance in the humanities and beyond. Its formal characteristics are easy enough to enumerate: a monograph is a *book* – that is, an extended narrative treatment, usually of not less than two hundred pages – on a single topic or issue of scholarly interest. It is typically (though not exclusively) written by a single author, for reasons that may have more to do with processes of establishing scholarly “patrimony” and marking recognition and status than with the monograph's structure or modes of rhetoric – though these could be said to be generic. Monographs are typically – again, not exclusively – produced by a university press via a process very much like that of trade book publisher's but with the important addition of an institutional review stage in acquisitions, which involves a formal peer-review assessment.

The post-publication life of a scholarly monograph is also key to its definition, especially as a genre. Monographs are, generally speaking, marketed and sold to university libraries, as opposed to individual readers. This means that the market for most monographs is very limited. The library sales market is not a *popular* market, shaped by bestsellers and trends; rather, libraries serve an important mission

to collect and preserve the scholarly record. The link between acquisition by a research library and actual circulation and readership behaviour is indirect at best. And so it should be; a research library's mandate is to collect the scholarly record as comprehensively as it can, not to follow popular trends. More importantly, any piece of scholarship may turn out at a later date to have been critical to the larger scholarly enterprise, and the coherence of the scholarly record depends on the best judgment of inclusiveness that editors, peer reviewers, and librarians can manage. But, as resources are finite, this presents particular challenges.

The number of libraries that can afford to acquire and maintain such collections is small; the number of publishers who can sustainably serve this kind of market is also small. And so monograph publishing mostly operates at limited scale. It has been said by many that monographs are, fundamentally, books that cannot make their own way in the market, but which are worth publishing anyway. By extension, university presses are the publishers who produce such books. That they are able to do so sustainably is a no small feat – and is a service of enormous value to the scholarly community.

The role of long-form, interpretive argument in the humanities, as opposed to the reporting of data-intensive research results in the sciences, forms another axis that may be useful in considering what is unique and essential to monograph publishing. This axis is no doubt also related to *patterns of authorship* across disciplines, with single-authored work still being the norm in humanities scholarship, while multi-authored articles (often the work of the entire staff of a laboratory) being common in the natural sciences. And, evidently, the relative importance of *speed to publication* is wrapped up in this disciplinary axis as well; there is the sense that a monograph represents the culmination of a long process of sustained thought and reflection. The timely communication of experimental results is a very different pattern, requiring different forms, and likely driving different kinds of innovation.

It is apparent that the major thrust of innovation in scholarly communication over the past few decades has been in journal publishing. With Stephan Harnad's early admonitions to move scholarly discourse online, at the "speed of thought,"¹ and the subsequent effort to promote open-access publishing as a response to the "serials crisis,"² journal publishing has experienced a broad movement toward online publication, impacting everything from subscription models and distribution infrastructure to peer review mechanics and even the aggregative structures of journals themselves. This movement, while not affecting all disciplines alike, has broadly disrupted traditional journal publishing.

1 Harnad, Stevan. "Scholarly Skywriting and the Prepublication Continuum of Scientific Inquiry." *Psychological Science* 1, no. 6 (1990): 342–44. <http://users.ecs.soton.ac.uk/harnad/Papers/Harnad/harnad90.skywriting.html>

2 Greco, Albert N., and Robert Michael Wharton. "Should University Presses Adopt an Open Access [Electronic Publishing] Business Model for All of Their Scholarly Books?" In *ELPUB*, 149–64, 2008. http://elpub.scix.net/data/works/att/149_elpub2008.content.pdf

Monograph publishing has, by comparison, remained very conservative over the same period of time. We still, by and large, think of monographs as print products, despite their appearance (and indeed uptake by library buyers and distributors) as ebooks. Certainly nothing fundamental has been changed by the appearance of monographs as PDFs and EPubs – save for the way in which they are distributed to libraries, and perhaps the amount of shelf space they require once there. In this report, we do not consider the ebook as a significant innovation in monograph publishing, as it largely repeats traditional patterns of production and sales, and more importantly has no great effect on the writing or reading of monographs. Our position here is that, as of 2016 at least, the ebook is effectively an electronic proxy for the printed book.

The Monograph in Crisis

Is there a monograph crisis? There is enough buzz about this online to convince all but the most sanguine that the scholarly monograph is in dire straits. More temperate voices,³ however, suggest that the monograph has always been in some state of crisis, or at least that the current hysteria is, in historical perspective, somewhat overstated. That said, the sustainability of monograph publishing does seem to be in a challenging position on a number of levels; with this in mind, we propose that there is no singular ‘monograph crisis,’ but there are at least *three* more specific ‘crises’ that, in combination, make it hard to picture exactly how monograph publishing will move forward in the 21st century:

1. An Economic Crisis

The economic crisis that plagues monograph publishing is not new – it is represented in a trend that apparently goes back to at least the 1990s. John B Thompson tells of once-golden age of monograph publishing in the 1970s, at which time “academic publishers would commonly print between 2,000 and 3,000 hardback copies of a scholarly monograph.”⁴ Given the economics of offset printing, print runs of that size are reasonably healthy (indeed, a good deal of the entire Canadian trade publishing industry operates at this kind of scale), resulting in unit costs low enough that investment can be redeemed with margin left over – assuming the print run sold through. But Thompson goes on to point out that, beginning in the 1980s, unit sales began to decline, and that the most important factor in this decline being “found in the financial pressures faced by research libraries at the major

3 See, for example Fisher, Richard. “Guest Post: Richard Fisher on The Monograph: Keep On Keepin’ On, *Part One*.” *The Scholarly Kitchen*,* November 10, 2015. <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2015/11/10/guest-post-richard-fisher-on-the-monograph-keep-on-keepin-on-part-one/>; Crossick, Geoffrey. “Monographs and Open Access.” *HEFCE*, January 2015. <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2015/monographs/>

4 Thompson, John B. *Books in the Digital Age: The Transformation of Academic and Higher Education Publishing in Britain and the United States*. Polity, 2005. 93ff.

universities,”⁵ and especially what Thompson called the “periodicals squeeze” and others have seen as a “serials pricing crisis.”⁶ Here, the disproportionate rise in the subscription costs of many scholarly journals (exacerbated by the overall increase in research output and therefore number of journals published) has had to be met by library acquisition budgets that have little or no capacity for growth.

The result, clearly enough, is a reduced appetite for monograph acquisitions. And indeed, print runs (and subsequent sales) have apparently declined significantly over the past three decades. Thompson, writing before 2005, reports common monograph press runs as 400–500; today we hear 300 as a common number, and anecdotally, as low as 200 copies. Those are not healthy numbers if monographs are to be printed offset, as unit costs are very high at that scale. The advent of digital short run printing has helped this situation somewhat, as it allows economical production of small quantities, but sunk development costs are not amortized easily over so few sales. The drive to release monographs as ebooks might be a potential help, though there is apparently little love among faculty for ebook versions of monographs,⁷ while the current market structure for ebooks seems to attempt to mimic print publishing as closely as possible. With no technological solution at hand, the overall result is that university presses are more reliant than ever on institutional subsidies.

The economic situation is stark; on the face of it, monograph publishing is indeed in crisis. And yet the decline has been gradual, and presses continue to publish scholarly books in considerable quantity. Richard Fisher joked that no one has “actually run out of scholarly things to read.”⁸ More blackly, Kathleen Fitzpatrick waxed poetic about the “zombie logic” of scholarly publishing, in which the apparently dead continue to walk and indeed to fill a crucial role in the scholarly world.⁹

2. A ‘First-book’ Crisis

The so-called ‘first-book’ crisis is one outcome of the economic crisis. Many disciplines, especially in the humanities,¹⁰ see the publication of a monograph by a faculty member as a significant marker of achievement; indeed, a monograph is

5 Ibid., 98.

6 See Greco, “Should University Presses”; Lorimer, Rowland. “Libraries, Scholars and Publishers in Digital Journal and Monograph Publishing.” *Scholarly and Research Communication* 4 (2012): 1–18. <http://src-online.ca/index.php/src/article/view/43/118>

7 Wolff, Christine, Alisa B. Rod, and Roger C. Schonfeld. “Ithaka S+R US Faculty Survey 2015.” *Ithaka S+R*, April 4, 2016. <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/ithaka-sr-us-faculty-survey-2015/>

8 Fisher, “Guest Post.”

9 Fitzpatrick, Kathleen. *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy*. NYU Press, 2011. 4.

10 Harley, Diane, Sophia Krzys Acord, Sarah Earl-Novell, Shannon Lawrence, and C. Judson King. “Assessing the Future Landscape of Scholarly Communication: An Exploration of Faculty Values and Needs in Seven Disciplines - Executive Summary.” UC Berkeley: Center for Studies in Higher Education, 2010. <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/okr8s78v>

often required by a tenure and promotion committee. So, in a concrete operational sense, the *book* is the marker of scholarly achievement; the monograph serves a crucial role in the career development of faculty members. Thus, scholars – and particularly junior scholars seeking tenure – need books and publication opportunities, not strictly because of their content, but because of the symbolic capital that publication of a monograph conveys.

If library budgets are squeezed, monographs are purchased at declining rates, and publishers are challenged to make the economics of monograph publishing work, then there is at least a potential problem of a declining number of opportunities to publish. If tenure and promotion committees require a book, and books are in decline, then junior scholars feel the pinch.

The scenario is easy enough to picture, but more difficult to pinpoint exactly. Geoffrey Crossick's 2015 report for the UK's HEFCE downplayed this crisis, noting that monograph supply and production were healthy, and that "libraries are still buying books, even if their purchasing and access models are changing."¹¹ Janneke Adema took issue with Crossick's framing, arguing that

the monograph crisis does not in first instance refer to the amount of titles that are being published; it refers to the kinds of scholarly books that are (increasingly not) being published, e.g. specialised, alternative, experimental and 'first' monographs.¹²

The Association of American Universities and Association of American Libraries (AAU-ARL) have taken the first-book problem seriously, in a 2012 White Paper and 2014 Prospectus for an Institutionally Funded First-Book Subvention, both prepared by Raym Crow:

While this description [of the first-book problem] is broadly true, it camouflages the inherent cause of the market failure: that a primary external benefit of monographs – their use for professional credentialing – is not captured by a monograph's price.¹³

Whether or not the 'first-book' crisis can be demonstrated quantitatively, the scenario and the AAU-ARL's response to it helpfully highlights the career-development function of the monograph-publishing system.

¹¹ Crossick, "Monographs and Open Access," 25.

¹² Adema, Janneke. "The Monograph Crisis Revisited." *Open Reflections*, January 29, 2015. <https://openreflections.wordpress.com/2015/01/29/the-monograph-crisis-revisited/>

¹³ Crow, Raym. "A Rational System for Funding Scholarly Monographs." White Paper. AAU-ARL Task Force on Scholarly Communications, 2012. 4. <http://www.arl.org/storage/documents/publications/aau-arl-white-paper-rational-system-for-funding-scholarly-monographs-2012.pdf>. See also Crow, Raym. "AAU-ARL Prospectus for an Institutionally Funded First-Book Subvention." AAU-ARL Task Force on Scholarly Communications, 2014. <http://www.arl.org/publications-resources/3280-aau-arl-prospectus-for-an-institutionally-funded-first-book-subvention#.VcJNoue1Uo8>

3. An Innovation Crisis

A third ‘crisis’ in the monograph publishing space is less about sustainability than innovation. In a world in which digital, networked media has transformed nearly every part of our lives, the monograph remains stubbornly rooted in a 20th-century print paradigm. By comparison, scholarly journal production and consumption have moved rapidly to digital formats over the past two decades, and innovation in the form, presentation, distribution, and economics of journal publishing continues to change in response to a digital world.

Is the printed monograph such a perfect form that digital media has little to offer it? Or is that the patterns and structures of the monograph publishing system have little capacity for change?

This is an issue that Donald J Waters of the Mellon Foundation specifically addressed in a “State of Humanities Scholarship” presentation to Jisc and CNI in 2014.¹⁴ Waters noted one of the key points from a Roundtable of Humanities Deans was the disconnect between students’ media practices (mainly digital) and the forms in which scholarship is presented. In focusing on debates about open access policies and publishing crises, Waters worried if we might be “missing the point of the Deans’ worries that higher education needs to reach its audiences in the media they are naturally using?” One of the Mellon Foundation’s objectives would therefore be to “incorporate modern digital practices into the publication of scholarship in the humanities and ensure its dissemination to the widest possible audience.”

Given the marginal economics of monograph publishing, particularly at university presses, it is hard to imagine digital innovation on a significant scale in such a constrained context. Publishers are more likely to be eclipsed by non-publishers and new players when it comes to innovation, as noted by the University of California Press’ Neil Christensen at a 2015 AAUP panel discussion. Fellow panelist Stacey Konkiel noted that most publishers don’t have the financial resources to take risks: “Aversion to failure is a barrier to innovation. To truly innovate, you need ... to be willing to fail until you succeed.”¹⁵ Mellon’s initiative so far seems to have been an attempt to open up some experimental space.

An Open-access Imperative?

The advent of the e-book may have seemed, on the face of it, as the solution to the monograph’s problems: production costs, short print runs, uneven demand, all seemed to be issues which would go away if publishers simply adopted electronic formats instead of print. The reality turns out to be considerably more complex. In

¹⁴ Waters, Donald J. “Scholarly Publishing.” presented at the *Jisc and CNI conference 2014*, Bristol. <http://www.slideshare.net/JISC/donald-waters>

¹⁵ Christensen, Neil, Stacy Konkiel, Martin Paul Eve, Joshua Nicholson, and Lenny Teytelman. “When Publishers Aren’t Getting It Done.” *The Winnower*, July 9, 2015. <https://thewinnower.com/papers/1468-when-publishers-aren-t-getting-it-done>

a similar way, the rise of open-access publishing appears to some to present a way out of various crises: if only we could forget the broken market system for monographs and simply make them directly available to the scholars who want them. But the reality, again, is much more complex.

There seems to be no end of pressure for scholarship to embrace open-access (OA) models. The argument for OA has been made on both moral and economic foundations.¹⁶ In light of the vast profits made by huge academic publishers like Elsevier, many believe that science and scholarship should rid itself of “parasitical” publishers: cutting out the middleman would be better for everyone. More forcefully, the argument that research underwritten by public funds should be freely available by the public, and funding bodies’ open-access mandates and policies seem to be becoming the norm.

In the journal-publishing world, OA publishing seems less a question of whether it’s the right move to make than of just how will it be arranged. The inevitability of OA in the journal space is almost a non-issue for many; it only remains to work out the details of a fair and sustainable system. But journal publishing is vastly more varied, fast-moving, and risk-tolerant than book publishing. At a bare minimum, given a dozen scholars and a website, a peer-reviewed journal can be launched and probably sustained, given the sweat equity of a group of people who continue to care about it.

Books, on the other hand, are harder work. Book publishing requires a considerably larger intellectual investment on the part of authors, editors, production and marketing people. It requires much more time, and it is far less amenable to parallelization of tasks than journal publishing. The emerging picture of the costs of monograph publication reveals a complex system of acquisitions, development, and marketing that isn’t easily broken into functional tasks. The notion of funding monograph publication from the front end rather than the tail (or market) is a daunting one, especially given the evolved risk-management strategies of publishers. The risk management that book publishers do is inextricably linked with the operational logic of publication. One does not simply switch from a demand-side model to a supply-side one.

The challenge presented by the OA movement is thus part of the innovation dilemma faced by monograph publishers. How, given the tight constraints of marginal economics and risk aversion, can the monograph respond to these larger agendas of scholarly communication? And more broadly, can the economic contexts of the monograph be shifted without threatening the integrity of the monograph, form & genre?

¹⁶ Willinsky, John. *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship*. MIT Press, 2006.

The Rise of Digital Scholarship

The larger opportunities presented by networked digital media have so far made little impact on the authorship or production of monographs, nor the speed of their route to publication, nor their reception and use by audiences. Institutional inertia – on one hand in the economics that govern university presses, and on the other, the role of the monograph in traditional tenure and promotion processes – has served to effectively resist such forces that may have promised to move the monograph into the “digital age.”

However, the emergence over the past few decades of the *digital humanities* as a major source of scholarly energy, new research, and a focus for funding puts a particular kind of pressure on scholarly communications, and on publishing in particular. When research activities are conceived, conducted, shared, reviewed, and assessed online – either involving substantial digital data analysis and tool integration or operating as “open social scholarship” – the practice of scholarship necessarily departs from the centuries-old model of print-based communication. It is not merely that the *dissemination of results* requires something more than print, but rather that newer modes of rhetoric and argumentation, born of digital media, may outstrip the ability of the printed record to accurately capture or represent them. Something important is lost, for example, in a research project which actively engages audiences online, or which makes central use of interactive data visualization, if it must then be boiled down to a print-model journal article or, indeed, a traditional monograph.

Furthermore, digital scholarship conducted online is always/already ‘published,’ by the very nature of the Internet. If scholarship is online and accessible, and is capable of gathering an interested audience and indeed commentary and review, then its relationship to traditional publishing is fundamentally different. In a 2014 report for the OCLC, Lavoie and colleagues suggest that, given digital media, the *entire process* of scholarly research can be captured, and not just the final written summary.¹⁷

Potentially, the very existence of digital scholarship may prove to be a disruptive influence to traditional patterns of scholarly communication. It is still unclear to what extent incumbents and traditional forms can absorb and adapt to new ways of conducting research and scholarly activity. What seems clear is that digital scholarship is a major source of new energy and thinking about scholarly communication and publishing. And indeed, in recent years statements the assessment of digital scholarship have been released by the Modern Languages Association, the American Historical Association, College Art Association and Society of Architectur-

¹⁷ Lavoie, Brian, Eric Childress, Ricky Erway, Ixchel Faniel, Constance Malpas, and Titia Van der Werf. “The Evolving Scholarly Record.” Dublin, Ohio: OLCL Research, 2014. <http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2014/oclcsearch-evolving-scholarly-record-2014-overview.html>

al Historians, and a range of institutions. That a substantial work of online, digital scholarship may be accepted as ‘equivalent to’ a monograph on the CV of a scholar seeking tenure is not just hypothetical anymore.

The present Mellon Foundation funding initiative indeed seems to have taken such issues seriously. Donald J Waters’ 2014 presentation to Jisc asked how scholarly communications can “connect to students ... immersed in the interactive Web of multimedia.” Waters identified one of Mellon’s objectives as the incorporation of “modern digital practices into the publication of scholarship in the humanities.”¹⁸

Examining Mellon’s Initiative

The thirteen projects considered here address all of these issues and more. No two projects are truly alike – though there are numerous interesting alignments. Such a broad range of activity presents challenges for analysis and evaluation of the initiative as a whole. There is little opportunity to simply categorize or compare, or to draw straightforward conclusions about one proposal versus another. The proposals considered here are not just *apples and oranges*, but thirteen distinct types of fruit.

Our approach in the present evaluation, in the absence of a preexisting typology or explicit criteria, has been first to attend to the details and individual characteristics of the proposals, but then to take a step backward in an effort to discern the larger contextual themes: the defining discourses, significant prior examples, and shared assumptions that underpin the current set of projects. Our goal has been to identify the points of interconnection, congruence, and tension among these proposals, with the hope of providing perspective on both the individual projects, and the Foundation’s initiative itself.

We began in the summer of 2015 by gathering and assessing the current literature on the future of scholarly communications and the monograph, especially as it informed the project proposals, and then by trying to draw out the larger patterns in this literature, especially as they intersect with the proposals at hand. We examined the thirteen proposals received by the Mellon Foundation (these were made available after the Foundation had made decisions to fund). We then began a consultation process in late 2015 and early 2016, involving meetings and conversations with representatives of most of these projects.¹⁹

These consultations had three goals: First, they served to gather information about the projects in situ and how goals and aspirations had evolved from the

¹⁸ Waters, “Scholarly Publishing.”

¹⁹ We would like express our sincere thanks to the following people for taking the time to talk to us and share their wisdom: Harriette Hemmasi, Kevin McLaughlin, & Liz Glass at Brown University; David Millman & Monica McCormick at New York University; Doug Armato at Minnesota & Matthew Gold at CUNY; Patricia Fidler at Yale University Press; Alan Harvey & Frederike Sundaram at Stanford University Press; Alison Mudditt, Catherine Mitchell, & Erich van Rijn at University of California Press; Charles Watkinson at the University of Michigan; John Sherer at University of North Carolina Press; and Aaron McCullough, John Wilkin, & Maria Bonn at UIUC.

proposal stage. Second, they opened up the discourse to a higher-level reflection on the monograph and scholarly communication ecosystem than exists in any single project proposal. Third, they facilitated a certain amount of information sharing between projects underway – grantees had often read announcements or heard conference presentations about the other projects, but had often had little ongoing contact with the other projects underway.

In the fall of 2015 and early 2016, reports from the projects themselves began to emerge and we were able to incorporate these reflections into our conversations with grantees as well. The present report draws as much from these conversations as it does from the formal documentation surrounding the projects.

The second chapter of this report provides a high-level overview on the projects themselves, broadly categorized into capacity-building projects – for both presses and for university libraries and faculty – and studies on the economics and operation of the monograph ecosystem. Our analysis focuses more on the variety and difference among these projects as it does on their common features, as the range of approaches in this set of projects illustrates the often-underestimated complexity of the monograph and its place in the scholarly world.

The final chapter of this report retreats from the projects themselves and turns instead to a number of open questions that are either unanswered (or unasked) in the proposals, or which linger despite the ideas proposed. Here, we are concerned with the assumptions, both spoken and unspoken, which underpin the larger discourse, and which the both the Mellon Foundation initiative and the grantees' projects either rely upon or resist.

The thirteen Mellon-funded projects considered in this report include:

Ithaca S+R, *A Study of the Costs of Publishing Monographs*

Indiana University + University of Michigan, *A Study of Direct Author Subvention for Publishing Humanities Books at Two Universities*

Emory University, *Monograph Publication in a Digital Era*

University of North Carolina Press, *Collaborative Services Platform for University Presses*

Yale University Press, *Art e² Architecture Books Electronic Portal*

University of Michigan Press, *Building a Hosted Platform for Managing Monographic Source Materials*

New York University Libraries, *Creating the Architecture for Enhanced Networked Monographs*

Brown University, *Changing Structures, Changing Cultures – The Role of the University in Scholarly Communication*

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, *Understanding the Needs of Scholars in a Contemporary Publishing Environment*

University of Connecticut, *The Scholarly Communications Design Studio*

Stanford University Press, *Twenty-first-century Publishing: Interactive Scholarly Works in the Humanities and Social Sciences*

University of California Press & California Digital Library, *Web-based Content Management System*

University of Minnesota Press, *Developing the Iterative Scholarly Monograph*

Part 2: Grants and Projects

Between the Fall of 2014 and the Winter of 2015, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation made thirteen grants, worth nearly ten million dollars in total, to institutions in the United States for the purpose of studying and/or building capacity in monograph and related long-form digital publications. This chapter provides a high-level overview of these thirteen grants and projects themselves, which we have grouped into four broad categories:

1. Studies of monograph publishing processes and economics;
2. Projects that enhance monograph publishing at university presses;
3. Projects that develop digital publication capacity for faculty; and
4. Projects that develop digital capacity at university presses.

Our intent in this report is not to focus on the individual projects *per se*; rather, it is to examine the larger patterns, contexts, and assumptions that have led to these grants and which shape the larger discourse and community of practice which the Mellon Foundation and its grantees operate within. We are less concerned here with the variety and differences among these projects than we are with their commonalities and alignments.

We will consider each of the four categories above in turn.

1. Studies of Monograph Publishing Processes and Economics

In the spring of 2014, two important reports were released, focusing attention on the economics of monograph publishing, especially in the United States. Rebecca Kennison and Lisa Norberg's White Paper, *A Scalable and Sustainable Approach to Open Access Publishing and Archiving for Humanities and Social Sciences*,²⁰ outlined a model for open-access (OA) publishing across "the entire scholarly communication ecosystem" by calling for a universal institutional contribution which would fund scholarly publications up front. Shortly after, Raym Crow's *Prospectus for an Institutionally Funded First-book Subvention*,²¹ prepared for the Association of American Universities (AAU) and Association of Research Libraries (ARL) presented the result of the AAU-ARL task force looking into the economic challenges facing scholarly monograph publishing. Both the Kennison-Norberg paper and the AAU-ARL prospectus were oriented to the desirability of up-front institutional funding of monographs, as an alternative to the traditional market orientation of most university presses. An up-front grant or subvention would allow the costs of monograph publication to be covered, while the resulting book could be released as an open-access publication.

²⁰ Rebecca Kennison and Lisa Norberg, "A Scalable and Sustainable Approach to Open Access Publishing and Archiving for Humanities and Social Sciences: Draft White Paper," White Paper (New York, NY: KN Consultants, 2014), http://knconsultants.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/OA_Proposal_White_Paper_Final.pdf

²¹ Crow, *Prospectus*.

Furthermore, a broad agreement among universities would ideally spread the costs of publishing more fairly across a wider range of institutions, rather than being borne more heavily by those universities which have an active Press.

The Mellon funding initiative emerged in the midst of this discourse. Donald Waters' presentation at the ARL meeting in June 2014 made reference to both Kennison-Norberg's and Crow's reports, and suggested that the Mellon Foundation could provide "seed funds" to universities and colleges to fund faculty members' monographs. However, the idea of institutionally subvented publications raises a host of questions: how much funding would be required in order to cover the costs of publication? Who would be eligible for the subvention and how would this be managed by faculties and university committees? How would university presses be selected as publication partners? How many publications could result?

These questions and many more were to be addressed in three grants made by the Mellon Foundation in 2014 – to **Ithaca S+R**, to study the full costs of monograph publication; to **Indiana University and the University of Michigan**, to study how an institutional subvention could be rolled out at two large public universities having university presses; and to **Emory University**, to study the feasibility of a "pay-to-publish" model at a smaller, private university without a press of its own.

The **Indiana-Michigan** Study, which reported out in September 2015,²² was prepared by Carolyn Walters, Executive Director of Indiana's Office of Scholarly Publications, and James Hilton, Michigan's University Librarian and Vice-provost for Digital Education and Innovation. It is probably the most thorough consideration of the subvention idea thus far, consisting of extensive consultation with faculty and senior administrators at both universities.

As the report's Summary notes, "While the contributors present a strong argument for implementing such an 'author subvention' system, they describe a number of challenges and potential unintended consequences."⁽¹⁾ The study investigated how exactly a subvention system could be managed by a home institution; to whom and under what conditions would funds be made available to faculty authors; where the greatest opportunities for supporting faculty could be found; how would partner presses be selected, and how would quality standards be maintained? The contributors to the study were broadly positive about the prospect of a direct subvention system, recommending a program that would be available to faculty of all ranks, possibly offered through a faculty start-up package, that would necessarily be paid for – at first at least – by special funding sources, and that AAUP member presses could form the initial pool of eligible partners.

This much could be expected, and perhaps is unsurprising, given the work already done on the subvention idea by the AAU-ARL task force and others. But the

22 Carolyn Walters and James Hilton, "A Study of Direct Author Subvention for Publishing Humanities Books at Two Universities: A Report to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation by Indiana University and University of Michigan". September 2015. <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/113671>

Indiana and Michigan consultations raised other concerns as well: that the relationship between university faculty and university presses would be need to be shifted in such a system, from “commercial entities focused on sales” to “mission-driven academic units.”⁽¹¹⁾ Further, there were concerns raised about quality control in a paid-for digital publishing system. “A number of faculty participants brought up the concept of ‘vanity publishing,’ and the possibility that works receiving a subvention could be perceived as somehow less legitimate or rigorous.”⁽¹³⁾ To some extent, the insistence on traditional peer review mechanisms served to allay these fears, but does not itself address the issue of press independence from its parent institution. Relatedly, concerns were raised (14ff) regarding the threat of increased inequality in a system where some institutions have greater resources to provide for publications than others; in order to be successful, some level of oversight across the entire scholarly landscape may be required.

Within the home institution, too, concerns were raised: faculty worried about the spectre of additional bureaucratic layers and committees required to administer the system, especially given that the so-called “first-book crisis” was not widely felt to be an issue at either university (4) – nor was there a sense reported that faculty had difficulty publishing their work. There was, however, a concern expressed about “the fetishization of the long-form monograph and the lack of heterogeneity in the modes of scholarly communication supported by presses”.⁽¹¹⁾ Indeed once the economic infrastructure for a direct faculty subvention were set up, would this further entrench the traditional monograph form?

It is important to note that given that the subvention model translates most easily into a model for supporting publication of the traditional long-form book, there may be a mismatch between the economic modeling of per-book costs and the faculty move into the more expensive and complicated objects that are either born digital or located in different forms of materiality.⁽²⁰⁾

Emory University’s study was published by Executive Associate Dean Michael Elliott in the Fall 2015 issue of the *Journal of Electronic Publishing*. “The Future of the Monograph in the Digital Era: A Report to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation” sought to

consider whether a model of university-funded monograph publication could improve the publishing landscape for scholars in the humanities and facilitate the “digital transition” that [AAUP Executive Director Peter] Berkery foresees.²³

²³ Michael A. Elliott, “The Future of the Monograph in the Digital Era: A Report to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation,” *Journal of Electronic Publishing* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0018.407>

The Emory study was based on a working group of faculty and administrators who looked into similar themes to the Indiana-Michigan study: Under what conditions would authors participate? What would be the financial impact on the institution? How would policy and procedure need to change to support such a model? Emory's study went farther than Indiana-Michigan in its consideration of digital publishing opportunities, perhaps due to the involvement of the Emory Center for Digital Scholarship. As such, the study proposed "a continuum from the print monograph as it exists today to digital-only publications that could not be reproduced in print from," and noted that support for digital scholarship and publication may be "distinct [...] from that of a university press, which has expertise in the selection, development, editing, curating, and distribution of long-form scholarship that digital scholarship centers are still acquiring." (2)

"We have concerns about preservation and discoverability," noted the report, and further, that "We believe that any program of this kind will require education and socialization." Emory's working group acknowledged the difficulty of estimating costs – partly because of the lack of a university press (data from Indiana University Press and the University of Michigan Press had directly informed the Indiana-Michigan study), but partly too because the proposed 'continuum' between traditional print to digital-only publications invokes vastly more scope. The report notes the challenges that digital scholarship poses for traditional conceptions of marketing, design, licensing, sustainability, and preservation – as well as the potential for annotation and networking. The report ends with a call for evaluation and assessment structures for digital publications that take into consideration their quality, review, author experience, readership, and reach.

Emory's study – and the report that followed – did not go into nearly the operational detail of the Indiana-Michigan project, and its concrete findings are not surprisingly much more general. But the Emory working group broke a good deal of new ground in considering how an institution and its faculty could begin thinking about the opportunities of digital scholarship and digital publications as the near-term evolution of the monograph.

The Emory study considered the cost of monograph production based on a very few data points, and considered a cost structure totaling somewhere in the range of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per title. The Indiana-Michigan study took a much more detailed approach to costing, delving into both university's presses to offer a much more detailed, data-driven estimate "around the \$25,000 mark" per title. Even here, however, the numbers are presented in a qualified way, as the data is incomplete and context is limited.

The **Ithaka S+R** study, "The Costs of Publishing Monographs: Toward a Transparent Methodology" by Nancy Maron and colleagues,²⁴ was released in early

24 Nancy Maron et al. "The Costs of Publishing Monographs: Toward a Transparent Methodology" (Ithaka S+R, February 5, 2016), http://www.sr.ithaka.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SR_Report_Costs_Publishing_Monographs020516.pdf

2016, and presented not just data but a detailed model for reckoning monograph production costs – one far more sophisticated than had been available before. Maron’s method was to visit twenty AAUP member presses, chosen to represent each of the Association’s four size categories, and gather production cost data for nearly four hundred monographs published in 2014. The figures presented are not merely totals, though; Maron’s analysis breaks down the costs allocated to acquisitions, editorial, design, production, and marketing, as well as calculation of internal overheads and in-kind contributions (for example, from authors or from the press’ parent institution).

The monograph production costs reported in the Ithaca study are considerably higher than numbers reported elsewhere. The range is great, from a low of \$15,000 to a high of \$129,000, but significantly, the averages – across the AAUP’s four size categories – are high: between \$30,000 and \$50,000 including direct costs and overheads but excluding in-kind contributions. Maron notes with some surprise that the relationship between the size of the firm and the average cost of production is not at all clear; the expectation of an ‘economy of scale’ relation was not borne out by the data. Similarly, the expectation that ‘first book’ projects would be more costly was not supported by the data, nor was an expected relationship between total costs and whether a press paid rent to its parent institution.

The upshot is that monograph production is complex; it is difficult to reduce cost structures to regular patterns or structural constraints. By far the largest component of costs is staff time, and within that category, the cost of acquisitions is easily the largest share:

The largest cost item for university presses is staff time, specifically the time related to activities of acquisitions, the area most closely tied to the character and reputation of the press. This activity is least likely to be outsourced, and considered to be closely tied to its financial success: acquisitions editors being the ones with the skill, subject expertise, and relationships needed to attract the most promising authors and topics to the press.⁽⁵⁾

Acquisitions is where a press – like any publisher – builds its list, the activity by which a press shapes its identity and its reputation, and where it places its economic bets on the marketability of its titles. In a university press setting, acquisitions also incorporates the stewardship of peer review: identifying appropriate reviewers, managing the review process, and interpreting the reviews as they relate to acquisition decisions – it is important to note that a significant allocation of press time and energy goes to the evaluation of manuscripts which are *ultimately not published*. Such is the business of quality control, which is widely held to be a one of university presses’ most valuable contributions to scholarly communications.

The Ithaca report concludes with a number of open questions about how the

cost data can be interpreted – by university presses considering how to plan for OA titles, by libraries considering their role in dissemination, discovery, and indeed publishing activities, and by all who contemplate the evolution of the monograph in the larger context of scholarly communication. The notion of the university press serving the functions of production and dissemination of scholarly work may fit with some proposed OA schemes. But Maron warns that this is not the whole picture:

If, however, there is real value in publishing as an act of curation, selection and author development, then most of the activities included in this report must continue to be supported. The value of creating not just one book, but a sustained contribution to the development of a discipline through developing works that advance the field is something editors feel is a mainstay of their work.(42)

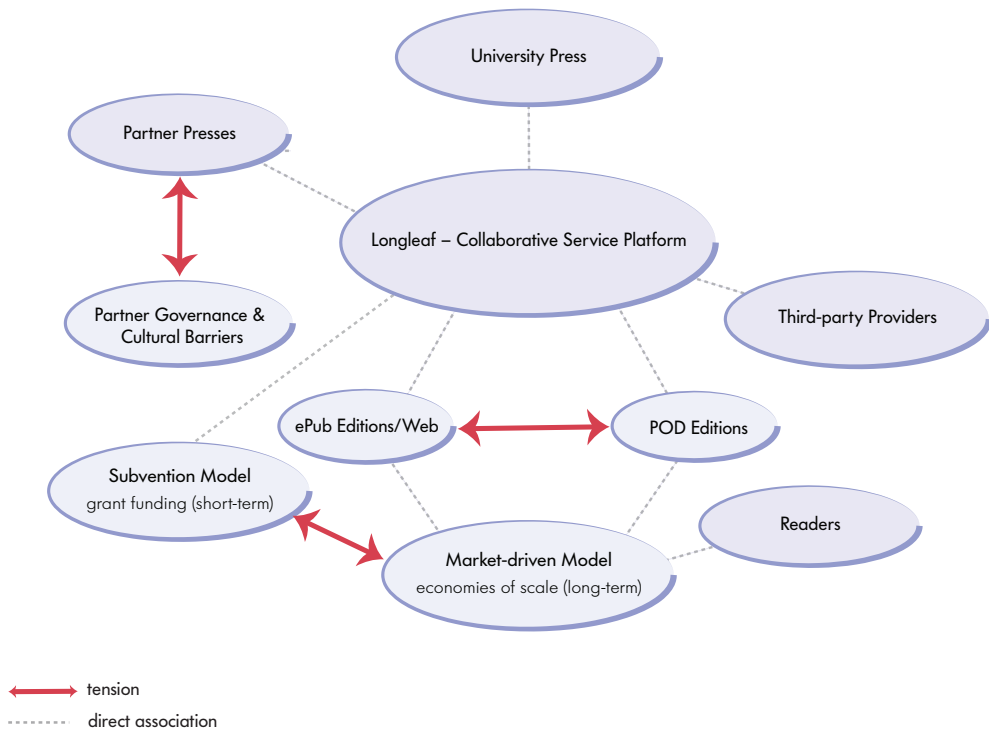
These three studies of monograph economic models approach the issues from disparate points of view: the Indiana-Michigan project sought to understand the concrete implications of a subvention-driven publishing program; Emory looks at the openings to a digital future in an OA/subvented system; and the Ithaca S+R study focuses on the cost of monograph production in the present – indeed, the implications of the Ithaca study for an OA or institutional subvention program are not clear from the report itself, as so much of the existing ecology of the university press system bears upon the report’s findings.

2. Projects that Enhance Monograph Publishing at University Presses

The next grouping we consider are four projects that seek to enhance the scope or efficiency of traditional monograph publishing. These were **University of North Carolina Press’** plan to build a “Collaborative Services Platform;” **Yale University Press’** proposal to create an “Art and Architecture Books Electronic Portal;” **University of Michigan’s** creation of a “Hosted Platform for Managing Monographic Source Materials;” **New York University’s** “Architecture for Enhanced Networked Monographs.”

UNC Press

Collaborative Services Platform for University Presses



The **University of North Carolina Press** project focuses on the development of the Press' distribution affiliate, Longleaf Services, into a full-service provider for editorial, production, distribution, and marketing services for a number of university presses. This would centralize and scale up production and provide operational efficiencies for the University of North Carolina Press and other client presses on the hard production cost of books, thereby leaving presses more time and resources to focus on acquisitions themselves. According to UNC Press Director John Sherer, the arrangement would "allow individual press leaders to shift their focus away from day-to-day operational concerns and toward more significant priorities such as... navigating new trends in scholarly communication."²⁵

Longleaf Services would take over several key functions of the press, providing editorial, design, and production functions including copy editing, composition, and file preparation, digital asset management, royalty accounting, subsidiary rights, digital business management, and inventory management. Marketing would cover a wide range of activities including sales representation, advertising, and awards submissions. Serving a larger number of client presses (as of this writing, nine presses are listed on Longleaf's website), Longleaf is in a better position also to negotiate service agreements with third parties, as a "scaled hub for heterogeneous

²⁵ University of North Carolina Press, "Collaborative Services Platform for University Presses." Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Sept 2014. 15.

services”²⁶ such as with Ingram’s CoreSource Digital Asset Management system; EDI and e-commerce functions, website and digital production, and online/social media marketing. Longleaf is able to produce monographs as printed books as well as ebooks in PDF and EPUB formats.

The business model expands upon the fundamental premise under which Longleaf currently operates, which is that the cost of almost every publishing activity benefits from economies of scale... (UNC, 4)

The cost-savings and faster turnarounds that Sherer reports as a result of Longleaf’s scaling also imply a degree of “normalization” of traditional monograph form and scope. Editorial, design, and production functions are the same for almost all books coming through Longleaf Services. Indeed, Sherer noted that the problem Longleaf is trying to solve has little to do with new, complex forms of digital scholarship; rather, it has to do with publishing monographs by offering a service with a trusted partner and at a lower cost. This relate to a number of key discourses: the challenges of making ‘first book’ publication opportunities available to junior faculty, and the feasibility of publishing subvented, open-access publications.

UNC Press Director John Sherer interestingly noted that Open-Access “does not solve an economic problem; it solves a cultural and social problem by (ideally) maximizing the dissemination of knowledge.”²⁷ Sherer went on to suggest a possible scenario in which a manuscript is conferred the status of “publication” by a press earlier in the process – when it is available in an open, online discovery platform before the composition stage is completed and prior to the creation of physical formats.

The *first book* is a challenge that maybe OA can solve. Maybe the thing is to free them... what if we just stopped, after editing, and just put the text online for free? [...] straight to HTML, discoverable online; how much would it cost to do only that and could there be pre-funding to help presses get to that stage? Then we would watch them for 24–36 months, and decide at that point whether to exercise an option to self-fund a traditional publication (i.e. create physical copies and distribute into the market) based on usage during this initial stage. The chances of cost recovery at this point are so much better since we would only be making investments in physical dissemination for books where there’s already a tested market. And the turnaround could be as little as 4 months. These physical publications could even have extra material, incorporating some of the early reaction to the online publication.²⁸

²⁶ John Sherer, telephone interview, April 8, 2016.

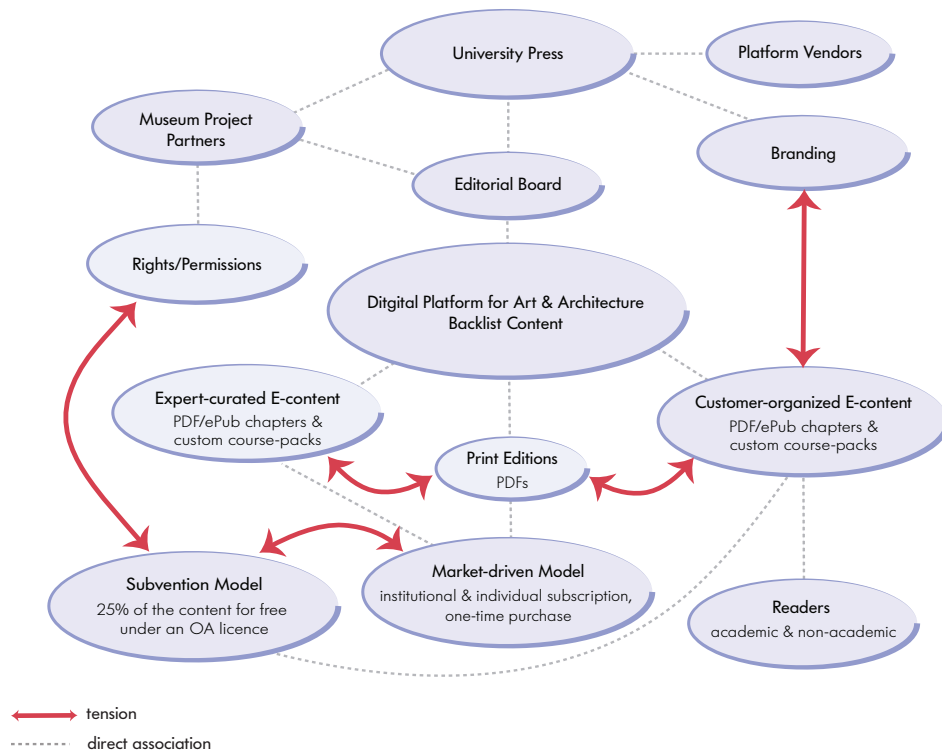
²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

While the UNC proposal was written well in advance of Ithaka S+R’s study on monograph costs, the insights are similar: that acquisitions is a special and irreducible part of university press publishing, and that efficiencies may be found downstream from the acquisitions process.

Yale UP

Art & Architecture Books Electronic Portal



Yale University Press proposed a different approach to finding new opportunities in the traditional publishing process. Yale sought to create a new online “portal” to their well-known Art & Architecture line – in making available and/or selling individual chapters or components of its backlist titles as PDF and EPub downloads. Yale Art & Architecture Publisher Patricia Fidler wrote that the portal would “enable a consumer to ‘mix and match’ the e-content described above, creating course packs.”²⁹

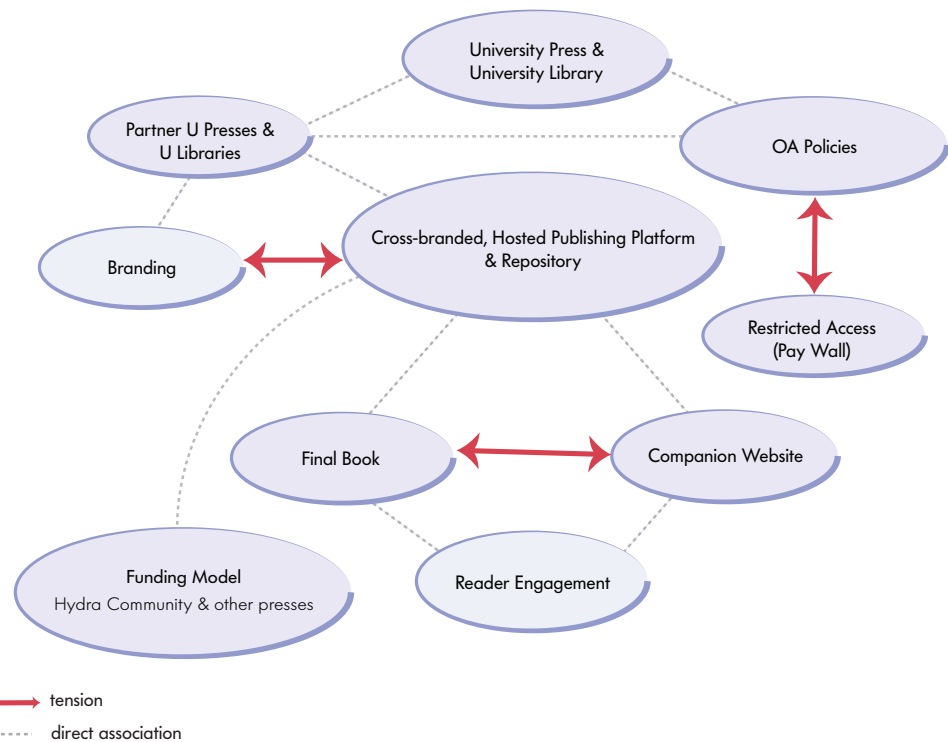
Yale would offer its products under both OA and closed access models. According to the grant’s proposal, several titles will be available for free download, while the rest will be behind a paywall. As Yale University Press does not hold full rights to all the images in their art and architecture books – and indeed much of the list comes from Yale University Press’ many museum and gallery partners – the interesting challenge in creating an online portal to these works is in rights clearance.

²⁹ Yale University Press, “Art & Architecture Books Electronic Portal.” Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Sept 2014. 7.

Yale’s goal is to sell affordable materials to readers and institutions, “thereby enabling a self-sustaining business model that will allow presses and museums to support the necessary staff, conversion, and permissions costs to continue these digitization efforts going forward.”⁽⁴⁾ Patricia Fidler also noted the “network effects” that could come from a platform that spans many individual collections and indeed audiences.³⁰

Michigan Publishing

Building a Hosted Platform for Managing Monographic Source Materials



The **University of Michigan** project seeks to provide an online platform to support the traditional monograph, by facilitating easy and reliable access to source materials in the form of media assets and/or data. In the project proposal, University of Michigan Press Director Charles Watkinson notes, “while there currently is some disciplinary resistance in the humanities to the presentation of entirely digital publications, we view the ‘companion website’ concept as a culturally acceptable stepping stone to achieving such integrated presentations of narrative and data.”³¹

At the core of the Michigan project is the collaboratively developed, open-source Hydra digital repository platform, to which Michigan will contribute a number of *heads* – that is, “fully-featured digital asset management applications

³⁰ Patricia Fidler, interview, New York City, Nov 2, 2015.

³¹ University of Michigan, “Building a Hosted Platform for Managing Monographic Source Materials.” Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Jan 5, 2015.

and tailored workflows”³² – to enable the “long-term sustainability and access of associated data sets and media content” that support monographs. Charles Watkinson described a vision of the monograph as an “overlay on data sources,”³³ that is optimized for a particular kind of use and manipulation. The notion of data sets is broadly inclusive: granular data, textual corpora, media objects, and so on which form the research basis of a monograph. Traditionally, these data could only be referred to within a monograph; Michigan’s project makes them available, addressable, and archiveable.

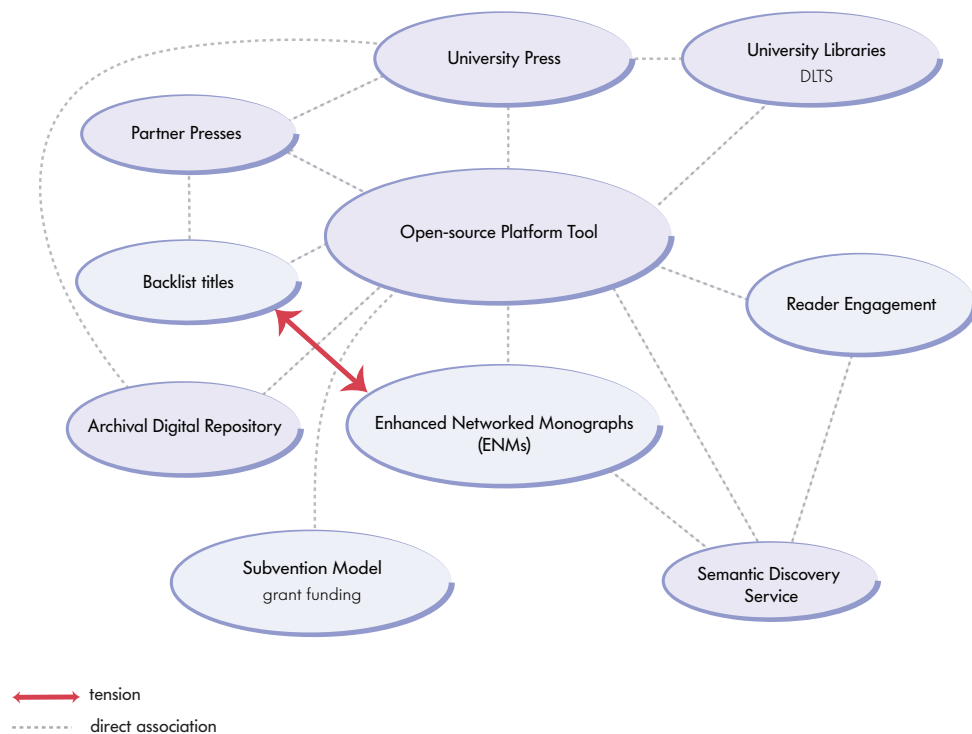
Furthermore, the Michigan project merges the traditional functions of university press and university library – something Michigan is in a good position to do, as Press and Library there are structurally connected. Beyond the University of Michigan, the project also provides a hub for other presses or library publishers. The Hydra development work is of course open source, but Michigan’s project will also provide a hosted platform for other institutions. Watkinson described the project as sustainable infrastructure for scholarly publishing in the 21st century, and that much more cultural work would hopefully follow, as presses and libraries work through the implications of offering full access to source materials.

³² Hydra Project website, <https://projecthydra.org/>.

³³ Charles Watkinson, telephone interview, Feb 15, 2016.

NYU

Creating the Architecture for Enhanced Networked Monographs



The project from **New York University (NYU)** is related to Michigan's in that it takes the traditional monograph as its starting place, but moves in a different direction. NYU Library proposes to create "Enhanced Networked Monographs" (ENMs) – a way of creating a database overlay on a monograph via semantic tagging and linking within the text, using the monograph's existing index as a core structure. This will allow monographs to be read and navigated in new ways. David Millman of NYU Library writes in the proposal that "books in this corpus will become not only works to be read, but also streams of data that interact with each other and, potentially, with the vast network of data on the web—enabling new kinds of engagement, new products, and broader audiences."³⁴

The opportunity here is on one hand in facilitating new possibilities in reading and consumption, but on the other hand in discoverability and in outward-facing connections to other texts and indeed, the open web. The project underway seeks to process over 100 books, mostly from the NYU Press backlist, but also from the University of Michigan and University of Minnesota Presses. The resulting books will be made available as enhanced network monographs within the Radium EPub browser.

The Michigan and NYU projects are notable in that they aim for significant

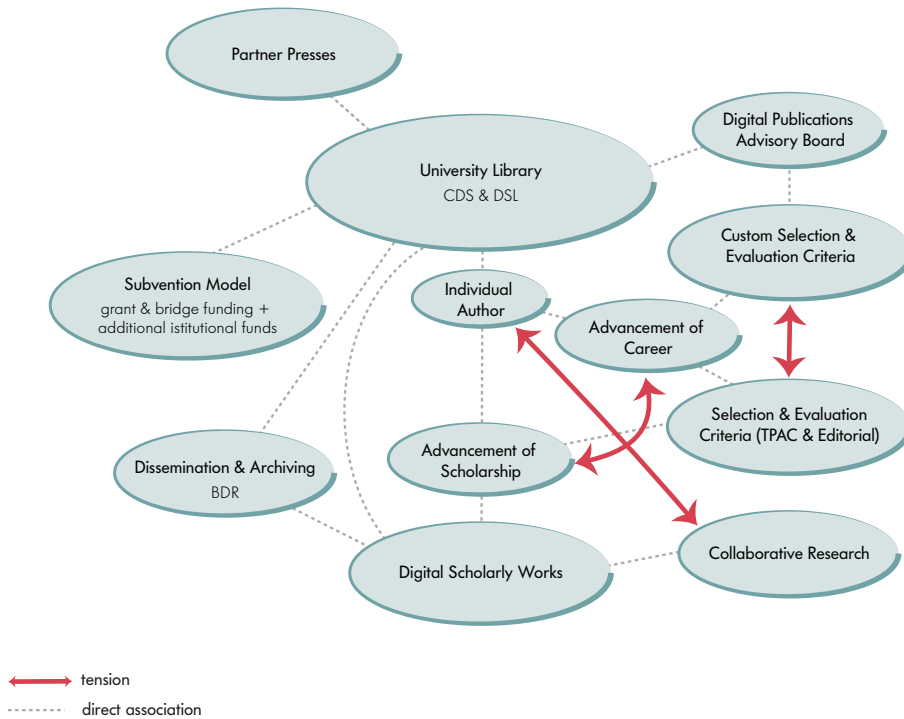
³⁴ New York University, "Creating the Architecture for Enhanced Networked Monographs." Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Dec 12, 2014. 3.

digital enhancement of the monograph form – enhancements which may well go on to change how authors, presses, and libraries think about new monograph publications – but treat the traditional, print-based monograph as the starting point. Both projects require an ebook version of a monograph in order to facilitate linking within the text, but in principle, both Michigan’s repository for source materials and NYU’s semantic mapping of the text should be usable alongside even a print edition. These projects do not draw from “digital scholarship” as such, but still make strides toward evolving the form to take better advantages of the opportunities of the digital age.

These four projects take a wide variety of perspectives. UNC’s project looks to make monograph production less expensive by consolidating portions of the university press ecosystem; Yale looks for opportunities to engage its readership by mining its backlist for digital assets. Michigan’s project would enhance the value of future monograph publishing by creating a digital adjunct platform; NYU’s project enhances already-published (and new) monographs by unveiling and linking the richness already in the text. All of these projects use digital technology to enhance publication, but no two see it similarly.

3. Projects that Develop Digital Publication Capacity for Faculty

While most of the Mellon-funded projects we examined focused on university presses, three projects significantly put the emphasis on faculty as author communities, seeking to build capacity for digital scholarship and publication within the university. **Brown University’s** project comes from the University Librarian and Dean of the Faculty. The **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s** project comes from the University Librarian with three academic co-investigators. The **University of Connecticut’s** project comes from a faculty member with support from the library. These three projects are less concerned about the state of the traditional monograph, instead seeking to nurture the development of large-scale digital scholarship that may or may not be realized in monograph form, but which as a larger trend in scholarly communication begins to occupy a space contiguous with the monograph.



The **Brown University** project, entitled *Changing Structures, Changing Cultures – The Role of the University in Scholarly Communication* was co-authored by University Librarian Harriette Hemmasi and Dean of the Faculty Kevin McLaughlin, and it clearly intended to have campus-wide scope. The project aims to build production and editorial capacity within the university, hiring a digital editor and production staff to help faculty develop born-digital scholarly works that could potentially be “brokered” to university presses.³⁵ But the project is not necessarily dependent on university presses or traditional forms of publication. It is rather addresses itself to the possibilities of digital media in a networked world.

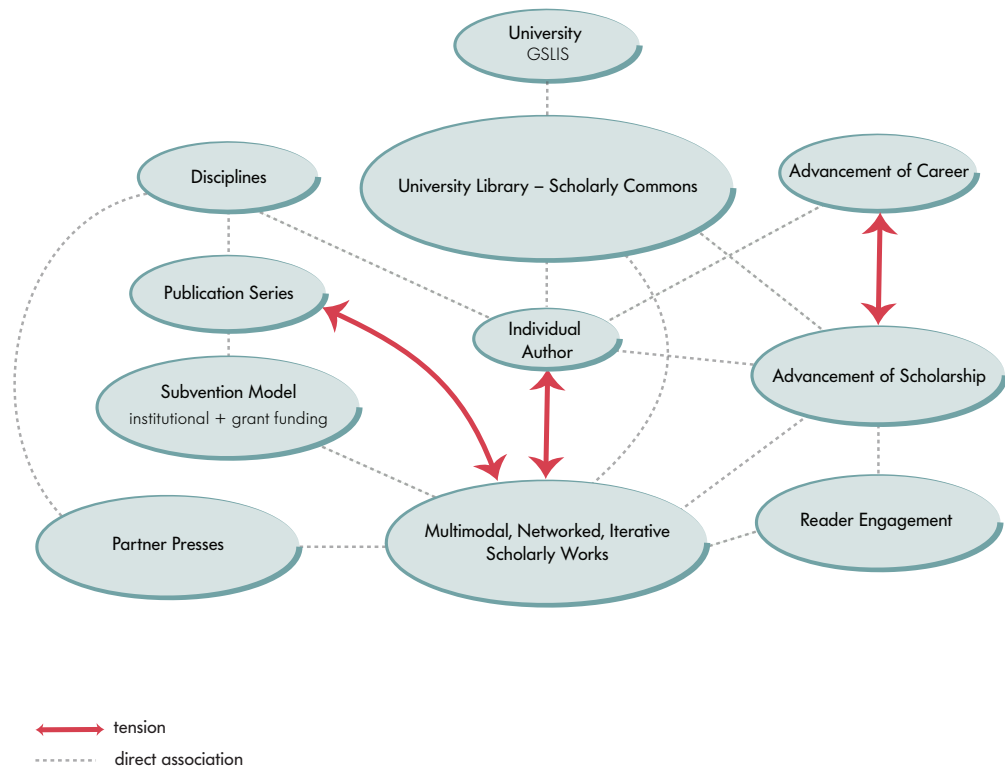
As the relationship between narrative and media (e.g., data or evidence) changes, it also becomes essential to rethink the rhetorical and presentational aspects of scholarly argument...(4)

Real-time communication connecting people and events around the world prompts an immediacy in scholarship that previously did not exist. This immediacy causes us to rethink the relationship between authors and audiences.(5)

35 Brown University, “Changing Structures, Changing Cultures - The Role of the University in Scholarly Communication.” Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Sept 25, 2014. 3.

What is most intriguing in Brown's project is the sense in which the relationship between faculty and presses may be re-drawn in the digital age. The university press is still a critical part of the scholarly communications system, but traditional functions – especially editorial, design, and production – will likely shift as we move from text-heavy print to interactive media. The exact division of labour between faculty authors, on-campus supports (e.g., a digital scholarship centre at the library), and university presses is something that will need to be renegotiated in the years ahead. For example, is the *interaction design* for a large-scale project something that will be handled at the author's end, or at the press, or somewhere in between?

Peer review, too, may be part of a re-negotiated constitution between scholars and presses. For its part, Brown's project includes a review of peer review criteria and practices in its departments. "Brown's approach will be to incorporate criteria for the assessment of digitally-mediated work into our standards for evaluating faculty scholarship, which will feed into our promotion, tenure, and salary review processes."⁽¹⁰⁾ This renewal does not make university press peer review any less important, but perhaps is a move to make faculty less dependent on one source of credentialing review. Relations between presses, libraries (indeed, there may be a trend today toward presses and libraries being structurally wedded together), and faculty may require re-calibration as digital scholarship grows in importance.



The **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign** proposal – *Understanding the Needs of Scholars in a Contemporary Publishing Environment* – covers ground somewhat similar to Brown’s. Here, the library, partnered with the Department of African American Studies, the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, and the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, seek to develop broad capacity within the university for digital scholarship organized along disciplinary lines – with particular attention to publication series in Humanities Without Walls’ Global Midwest initiative and African American Studies. University Librarian John Wilkin writes,

This project will bring together two large scholarly initiatives, library-based scholarly communication support, integrated research and assessment, and relationships with three university presses.³⁶

In this project, the library will operate as the central scholarly communications hub, providing tools and workflow support to academic research activities at UIUC and other institutions, production capacity, evaluation and assessment, and links to presses. The library would offer a range of publication resources to scholars, and

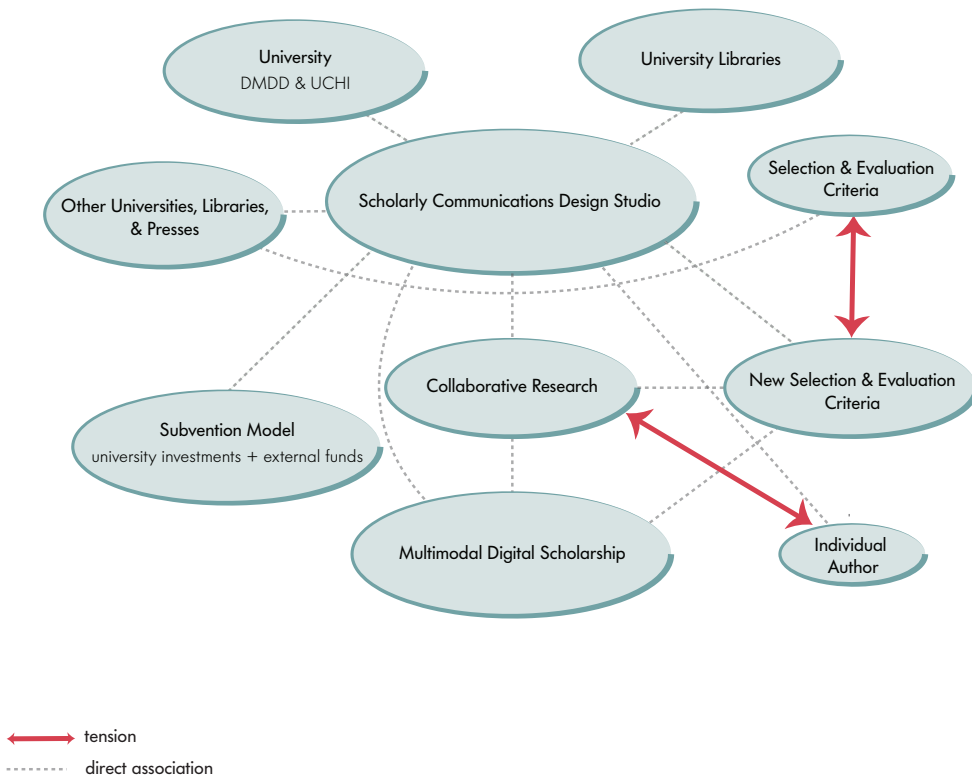
³⁶ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, “Understanding the Needs of Scholars in a Contemporary Publishing Environment.” Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Jun 15, 2015. 3.

in doing so develop a set of workflows and processes that can be broadly rolled out in a variety of contexts. As with Brown, the role of a university press is as a partner rather than an essential ingredient. The library could publish “interim phase work and multimedia products. These publications may be considered versions rather than final products.”(7) A certain format agnosticism allows the library to help “match scholars with the publishing method that most strongly supports their goals,” rather than prescribing a particular publication mode, traditional or otherwise.

That said, university presses are a key part of the proposed strategy. UIUC sees traditional presses as a possible outcome for some work – they are interested to “model how scholars’ online digital projects can transition to vetted, formal press publications,” and report that the partner presses (at this stage, Michigan, Minnesota, and Illinois) are enthusiastic about the project’s “potential to situate university libraries as a sort of pipeline to the presses.”(10)

Connecticut

The Scholarly Communications Design Studio



The **University of Connecticut** has proposed a somewhat different approach, which they call *The Scholarly Communications Design Studio*. Led by Tom Scheinfeldt, Associate Professor of Digital Media & Design and History, and with support from the university library and U Connecticut’s Humanities Institute, the proposed Studio would similarly act as a mediator between faculty and university presses.³⁷

The difference in the University of Connecticut’s approach is that the project has a particular approach to the nurturing and development of digital, multimodal scholarship by borrowing from the ‘design thinking’ found in firms such as California-based IDEO, and supported in the scholarly literature around design and design history.

There are, at present, no viable institutional models for producing the kind of multimodal scholarship that divergent thinking can engender. Models do exist in creative industries ... where design thinking approaches have been applied to solve problems of complexity and scale similar to those faced by scholarly publishing. We believe that similar problems in academic publishing can be addressed by a design-oriented approach

³⁷ University of Connecticut. “The Scholarly Communications Design Studio.” Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, June 15, 2015.

tailored to the needs of scholarly communications.(7)

Rather than seeing the individual faculty author as the centre of development, the Design Studio approach is deliberately collaborative from the outset. A press release on the project grant notes that the Studio will “bring scholars together with designers, developers, editors, and librarians to start new projects, not merely to finish them” (press release).

It is early to draw any conclusions, as this is a planning grant, but there is interesting potential here to disrupt the traditional pattern in the humanities to single-authored scholarly works; indeed, the Connecticut project seems to put collaborative teams in an authoring capacity rather than merely supporting the author. Indeed, commercial design firms produce work without the need for identifying a particular ‘author’ or creative force behind the work; the corporate credit is all that is required. The potential for scholarly work is very intriguing, though it raises questions of how the culture of tenure and promotion will respond, as well as the university’s tradition of intellectual freedom.

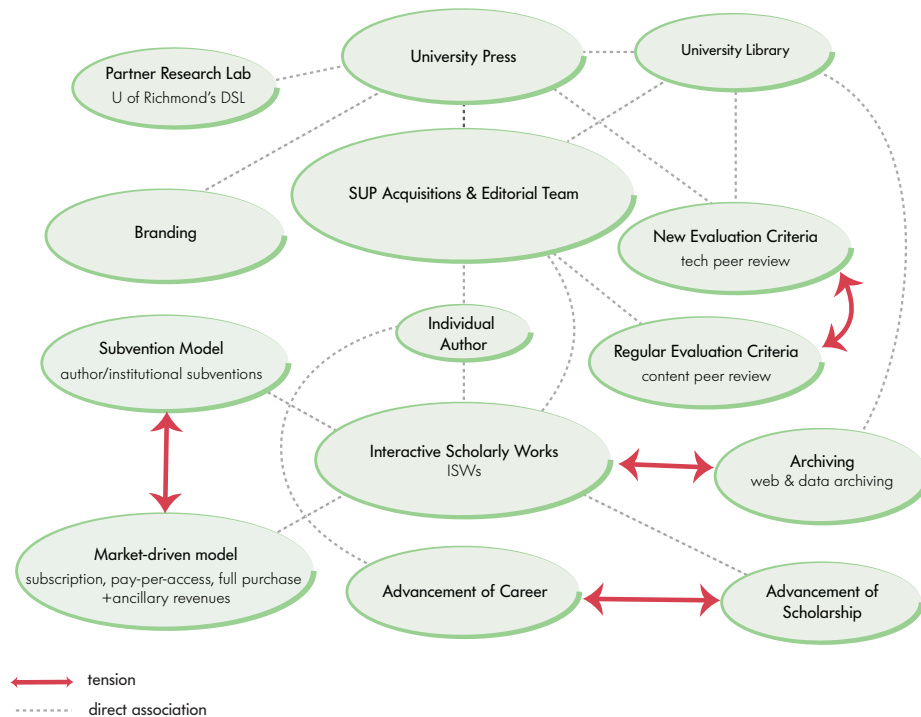
Of all the Mellon-funded projects we looked at, there is the most commonality between these three, which all look for ways to support faculty-based digital scholarship with publication in mind. All three have strong library supports, and all three take on-campus collaboration seriously.

4. Projects that Develop Digital Capacity at University Presses

This last category features three university presses that have undertaken projects to significantly develop digital innovation. The three presses have, however, moved in three very different directions. **Stanford University Press** has moved to encourage the acquisition of digital scholarship in addition to traditional monographs. The **University of California Press** and **California Digital Library** have undertaken to develop content management software to support digital and traditional monographs. The **University of Minnesota Press** in partnership with the Graduate Center at the **City University of New York** proposes a new system for iterative publications that can gather commentary and review as they evolve over time.

Stanford UP

Twenty-first-century Publishing: Interactive Scholarly Works in the Humanities and Social Sciences



The **Stanford University Press** proposal explicitly uses language that invokes the disruption of the monograph. Their proposal calls for “a digital publishing program for *post-monograph* scholarly arguments and products that is *incompatible* with the current book-based publishing paradigm,”³⁸ and positions the “Interactive Scholarly Work” (ISW) as an alternative to the scholarly monograph – albeit one which still is produced by a university press. Alan Harvey, the Press’ Director, writes, “Our goal with this initiative is to equate ISWs with the existing long-form publications of Stanford University Press.”(19) The proposal suggests that academics will accept ISWs as substitutes for monographs *if they are backed by a well-known press*.

Harvey notes that, in this project, Stanford is less interested in books *about* digital scholarship than actual digital scholarship as published by the Press. The first example of this is geographer Nicholas Bauch’s *Enchanting the Desert: A Pattern Language for the Production of Space*, which is an “interactive digital monograph” produced out of Stanford’s Spatial History Project with Stanford University Press as a co-developer:

Enchanting the Desert is a born-digital, peer-reviewed, monograph-heft project that offers spatial analysis and cultural-geographic interpretation

³⁸ Stanford University, “Twenty-first-century Publishing: Interactive Scholarly Works in the Humanities and Social Sciences.” Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Sept 23, 2014. 3.

of the 40-plus landscape photographs included in Henry G. Peabody's early-twentieth-century slideshow of the Grand Canyon.³⁹

While the fully interactive multimedia project emerged from the academic Center for Spatial and Textual Analysis – with a team of nearly thirty contributors credited – the Press was engaged on a regular review basis through the project's development, and the Press' full imprimatur is now a significant feature of the project. In a guest blog post on the Stanford University Press blog, Nicholas Bauch wrote,

Because of SUP's prescient digital publishing initiative, the gap between what DH scholars are making and the established pathways of traditional academic distribution and accreditation is now much, much smaller. Until now, this gap threatened the very survival of DH because there was no incentive for a group of researchers to spend their time building a digital platform to advance their arguments when there was always the looming pressure to do the "real work" of publishing.⁴⁰

The question of the Press' involvement in editorial, design, and production is germane here; these are functions traditionally handled in-house or at least managed directly by a press in publishing a monograph. With an Interactive Scholarly Work of the size and scope of Bauch's project, no university press has the in-house capacity to handle the production, and as such the press' role becomes more focused on review: scholarly peer review certainly, but also acting as a champion for the intended audience of the work: an editorial function not unlike what a project editor traditionally performs. This question of production responsibilities is echoed in the Brown, UIUC, and Connecticut proposals, in which significant design and production capacity is planned within the university, with a press in a role of acquisitions, review, and credentialing. Alan Harvey notes that this kind of relationship isn't new; scholarly press co-publications with museums or galleries would typically see the lion's share of design and production handled by the partner organization.

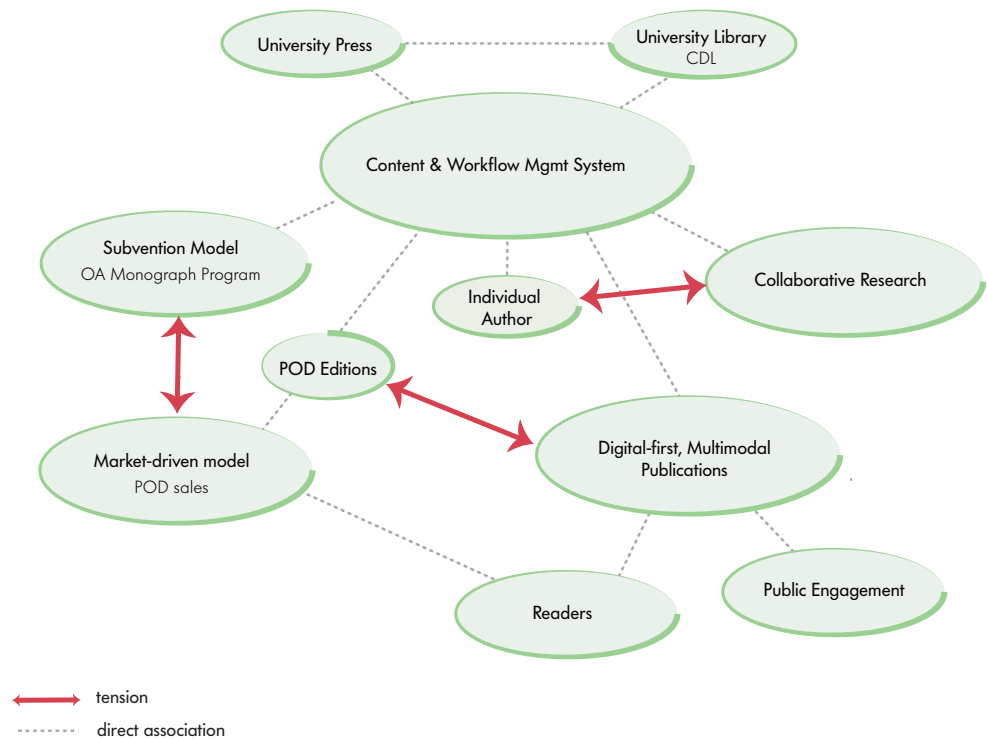
Considering the expectation of scholarly review and imprimatur noted in various other proposals, it would appear that Stanford's approach is a good one, positioning the Press as a likely partner for scholarly works incubated at Brown, or at one of the UIUC's scholarly partners.

³⁹ Nicholas Bauch, *Enchanting the Desert: A Pattern Language for the Production of Space*. Stanford University Press, 2016. <http://www.enchantingthedesert.com/home/>

⁴⁰ Nicholas Bauch, "The Digital Pilot - Stanford University Press Blog," Stanford University Press Blog, January 2015, <http://stanfordpress.typepad.com/blog/2015/01/the-digital-pilot.html>

UC Press

Web-Based Content Management system



The **University of California Press** and **California Digital Library (CDL)** take a very different approach, with different objectives. Rather than acquiring interactive scholarly works, California proposes to create infrastructure within its operation to allow monograph production to expand into the digital arena. The proposal, by the Press' Director of Operations Erich van Rijn and the CDL Director Catherine Mitchell, outlined the development of a *Web-based Content Management System (CMS)* that can support collaborative authoring and makes it easier for the press to manage peer review and production tasks. The platform will feature "collaborative authoring and editing environments in which long-form content can be developed as born-digital projects."⁴¹ Van Rijn and Mitchell note that "both 'digital' and 'open access' are a means to an end, not an end in itself. An efficient and cost-effective production system is essential for achieving these lofty goals, and thus where we have focused."⁽⁹⁾

In 2016, the Press and the CDL announced their partnership with the Collaborative Knowledge Foundation, a consortium-based project to create a suite of open-source editorial and content management tools for scholarly communica-

41 University of California, "Web-based Content Management System." Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Sept 30, 2014. 22.

tions.⁴² Thus, the software developed in the California project will be shared by and support other presses and publications. This appears to put the project on a solid footing in terms of its infrastructure development; we agree with the notion that collaboratively developed, open-source software is a good investment.

Interesting, though, this development is not the sole focus at the Press. At the same time, the Press has launched its Luminos open-access imprint, which is, at least in its early stages, largely hosted by Ubiquity Press.⁴³ Press Director Alison Mudditt noted that the new CMS could also support the Luminos imprint in the future, but the Press is still experimenting and examining how future development and delivery might be arranged.⁴⁴ So, California's project should be seen as a part in a larger orchestration of resources and outputs: some designed around outsourcing partners, some integrated into the Press' infrastructure.

Without targeting digital scholarship specifically, the California project will develop flexible resources that allow the Press to incorporate traditional monograph publication with digital works, and to nurture both OA and traditional publication modes.

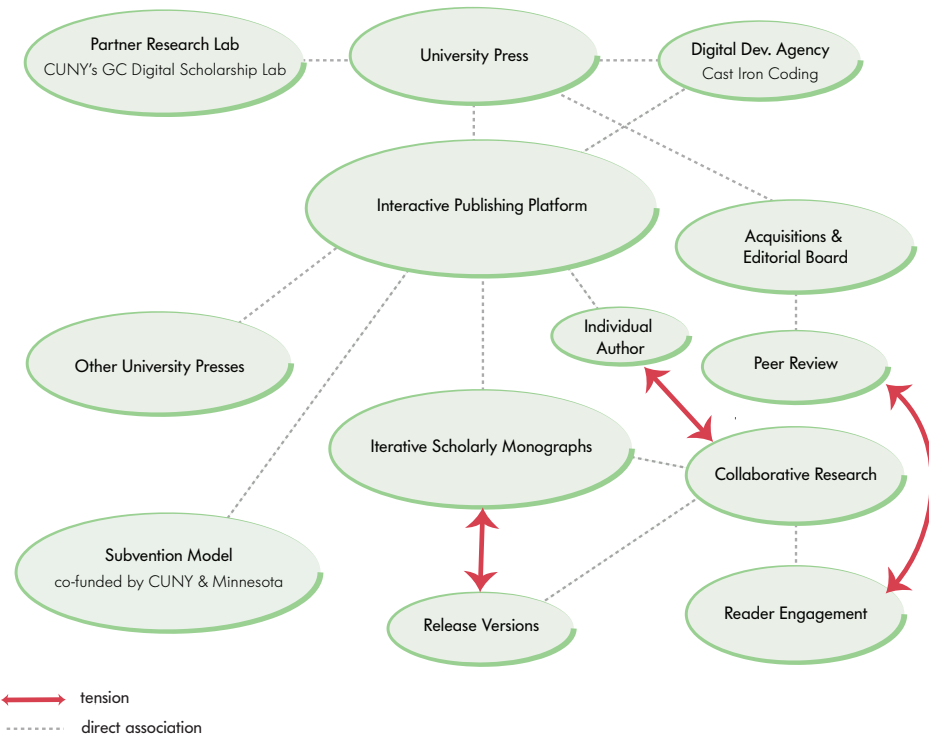
42 "University of California Press and California Digital Library to Partner with Collaborative Knowledge Foundation to Build Open Source Monograph Publishing Platform," *University of California Press Blog*, April 21, 2016, <http://www.ucpress.edu/blog/21039/university-of-california-press-and-california-digital-library-to-partner-with-collaborative-knowledge-foundation-to-build-open-source-monograph-publishing-platform/>

43 Richard Poynder, "The OA Interviews: Alison Mudditt, Director, University of California Press," *Open and Shut?*, March 8, 2015, <http://poynder.blogspot.ca/2015/03/the-oa-interviews-alison-mudditt.html>

44 Alison Mudditt, interview, Oakland CA, Dec 14, 2015.

U Minnesota Press

Developing the Iterative Scholarly Monograph



The **University of Minnesota Press**, along with the Digital Scholarship Lab at the CUNY Graduate Center, have proposed an ambitious project – *Developing the Iterative Scholarly Monograph* – to nurture and develop ongoing scholarship under the Press’ imprint.⁴⁵ Press Director Doug Armato wrote that the editor’s role is shifting towards “tracking scholarly ideas as they emerge and take shape; correlating them with other emerging concepts; seeing them shared or challenged; and monitoring them as they coalesce into tangible form.”⁴⁶ The editor, he adds, can have a sense of a work’s audience and reception while it is still in the “larval” stage of social media or the “chrysalis” stage of blog posts and conference papers.⁴⁷ The project proposal defines the “iterative monograph” as

a work published serially, as the research and writing is evolving, and culminating in a peer-reviewed Release Version. Authors will be encouraged in this model to publish their work as it progresses and, after the peer-

⁴⁵ University of Minnesota, “Developing the Iterative Scholarly Monograph.” Proposal to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Dec 17, 2014.

⁴⁶ Doug Armato, “From MLA 2013: Considering Serial Scholarship and the Future of Scholarly Publishing,” *University of Minnesota Press Blog*, January 7, 2013, <http://www.uminnpressblog.com/2013/01/from-mla-2013-considering-serial.html>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

reviewed Release Version is made available, to revisit the project as it gains reader comments and related research appears.(Minnesota, 9)

An early example of “iterative” publication is the series *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by Matthew K Gold, co-PI on the project. The *Debates* began life as a blog-based project at the CUNY Grad Center, and were developed into University of Minnesota Press publications through a combination of editorial review and software integration that allowed the online discourse to be turned into book production files. This process is itself iterative, and out of this project has come an open-source software development project – the lion’s share of the Mellon grant proposal – to create the platform necessary to sustain such publications over time. The platform, branded as *Manifold Scholarship* seeks to allow authors enhanced flexibility in bringing their work to a readership.

Doug Armato commented on the opportunity in the Manifold platform, “Scholarship is changing... There’s a trend to libraries having had better conversations with scholars/faculty than presses. How do we make those conversations ‘interoperable’ with presses’ ways of thinking and doing?”⁴⁸ Manifold Scholarship is thus meant to be a hybrid, producing a book but also hosting the iterative discourse contextualizing the book. Marketing or publicity about the book begins almost as soon as there is activity on the platform; open review and commentary would be hosted over time, as will the iterative development of the book itself – both before the formal publication data and after.

While Manifold Scholarship appears to address an emerging need in scholarly communications – how to capture the ongoing discourse around a work – it is less clear how this fits with the business logic of a university press. Hosting and managing ongoing review, commentary, and revision will cost money or other resources, even within a capable software platform; it is hard to see how this might fit with the University of Minnesota’s operations, although Armato notes that Manifold allows the Press to serve and nurture its authors far better over time. Matt Gold further noted the emergent “network effects” in online scholarship, and the yet unknown but promising opportunities for a scholarly publisher.⁴⁹

Stanford, California, and Minnesota have pushed farther than any on digital scholarship and digital publication, and yet the three presses have framed this in very different ways. There is very little overlap between these three projects; even the software development at California and Minnesota are driven by very different objectives, and Stanford has expressed no interest in software in their framing of the issue. These three projects clearly push into the unknown in a variety of directions.

48 Doug Armato, telephone interview, Dec 21, 2015.

49 Matthew Gold, interview, New York City, Nov 3, 2015.

Part 3: Reflections and Open Questions

The thirteen projects display impressive range. There are as many approaches to the evolution of monograph publishing here as there are projects. This is, we feel, entirely appropriate, given the complexity of the ecosystem, the various points of view, and the stakes of the game. In all the Mellon Foundation is to be commended for inviting such a wide range of endeavour – rather than too soon deciding which is the correct path to follow.

For all the variation in this set of projects, though, a common set of assumptions underpin many of the initiatives – assumptions with shape and limit the discourse in some important ways. First among these is the notion that the university press is the central point of agency in monograph publishing. Even where the functional role of the press is in flux, from its original role in the editorial, production, and distribution of scholarship to the evaluation and credentialing role described in many of these projects, its centrality seems unquestioned. No matter how scholarly publishing changes – whether because of digital scholarship, open access, front-end funding, iterative publications, mass collaboration, or mass consolidation – there is an expectation that the university press will be there.

We do not take issue with that sensibility; indeed, the university press is a unique and multifaceted agent, one that regularly produces far more value than is easily accounted for in a strictly functional appraisal. The university press is not a simple entity; it is the product of many decades of evolution within the scholarly ecosystem, and the totality of its activities are not easily, nor often, captured. We would suggest that the common attempt to reduce the university press – and, by extension, monograph publishing – to a series or set of *functions* misses several critical aspects. So, in order to do better justice to the complex role(s) of the press, we need to elaborate a model which is more than just functional.

The Triple Role of the Monograph

What are monographs for? The monograph – that is, the book – has been so central to scholarship for such a long time, *almost literally forever*, that it's hard not to take it for granted.

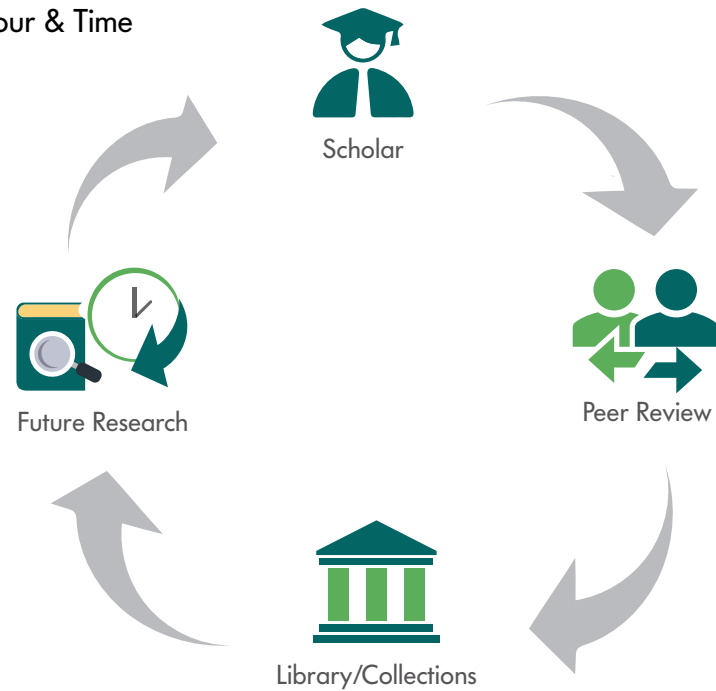
We see three levels on which the monograph operates: it serves a role in *scholarly communication*; it serves a role in scholarly status and *career advancement*; and, not least, it serves as the core object of a publishing paradigm that has been central to western culture since the 16th century.⁵⁰ In order to more easily appreciate and compare these three distinct realms, we like to illustrate them as *value cycles*.

⁵⁰ The Venetian scholar-printer Aldus Manutius, who pioneered the modern form of the book in the late 1490s and early 1500s, was interested to build a market for scholarly editions of classics and commentary. Aldus' press marks the beginning of both the scholarly edition, and the modern publisher.

Scholarly Communication Value Cycle

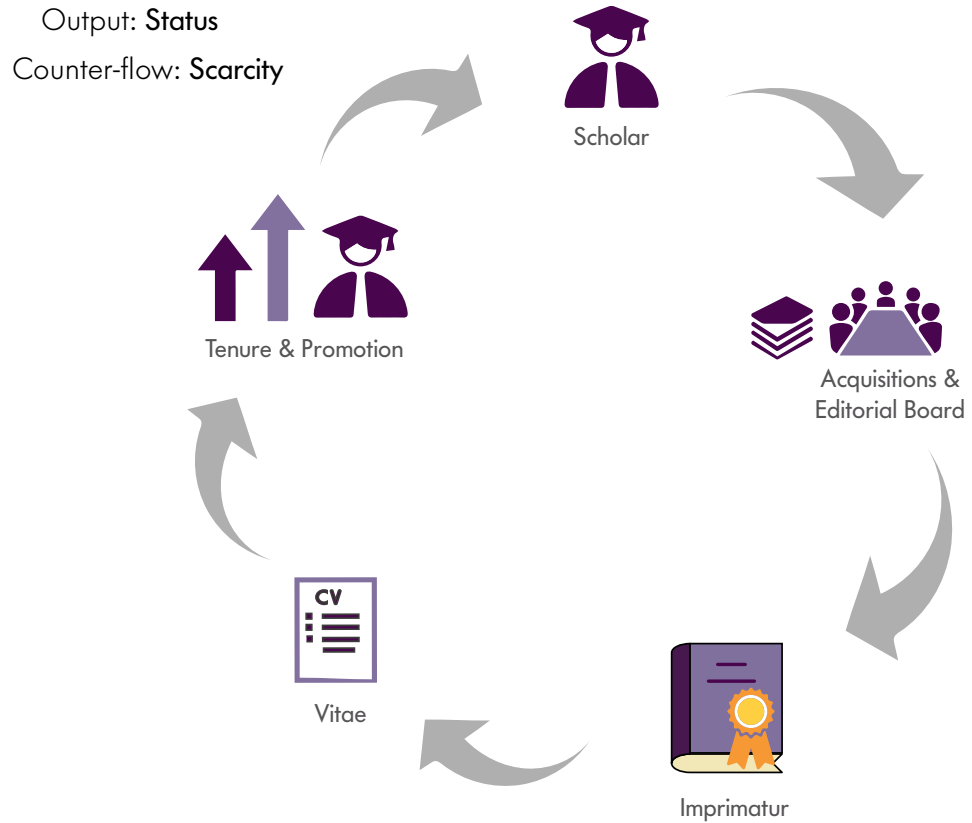
Output: Knowledge

Counter-flow: Labour & Time



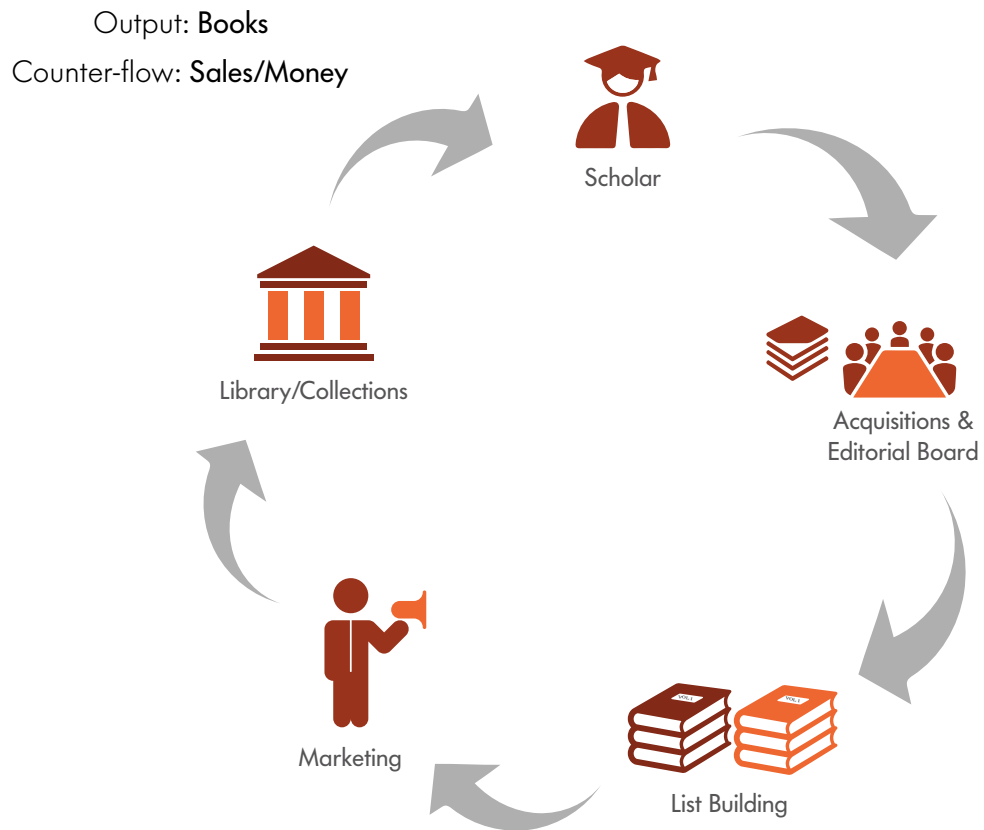
Here, *Scholars* produce knowledge which is *Peer Reviewed* before being collected by *Libraries*, thereby making high-quality scholarly work available for *Future Research* – which starts the process over again. The overall value created here is the ongoing scholarly record, and the cost of it is primarily in time and labour; the sustained existence of libraries is also necessary.

Career Advancement Value Cycle



In this cycle, *Scholars* produce works that are evaluated by a press' *Acquisitions* department and *Editorial Board* (peer review being a subcomponent of this process), the goal of which is the press' *Imprimatur* on the work. This imprimatur is of substantial value – as the carrier of symbolic capital – on the scholar's *Curriculum Vitae* and other instruments which can be evaluated by *Tenure & Promotion* committees, which formally confer status, rank, and remuneration to the scholar. This process repeats itself several times over a scholar's career. The overall value created here is career advancement, and its costs are relative to exclusivity and scarcity of opportunities (e.g., not everyone has a book published by Cambridge University Press).

Publishing Value Cycle



In the Publishing value cycle,⁵¹ *Scholars* produce works that are evaluated by press' *Acquisitions and Editorial Boards*, who are interested in *List Building* for the purpose of establishing or maintaining an identity and viable range of saleable products for the press (over time), which are then *Marketed* to those channels in which the press has established itself. With monographs, the primary sales channels lead to *Library* acquisitions (often through various intermediaries) and ultimately to readers. The overall value here is books in circulation, and the costs are reckoned in sales and money.

These three value cycles operate simultaneously, overlapping at some key points (clearly, scholars and libraries are essential to all three), but they are governed by very different logics. The *scholarly communication* value cycle, for instance,

51 By "publishing" we mean something more general than the university press. The logic of publishing has been a core industrial-capitalist activity since the early 16th century. In this logic, works are selected for industrial manufacturing, a capital-intensive mode requiring substantial investments in materials and labour. Classic economies of scale apply, in which unit costs are driven lower by larger print runs; profitability comes with the ability to sell through an entire print run. There are any number of evolved mechanisms for mitigating risk and managing cash-flow, from careful list building to maintenance of a backlist over time, and – for many university presses – activity in textbook and trade publishing as a way of diversifying markets.

seeks to maximize the amount of high-quality scholarship that is available; the more volume the better. The *career advancement* cycle, on the other hand, relies on relative scarcity and exclusivity of venues; maximizing volume here devalues the status effect. The *publishing* cycle seeks to maximize output, but only relative to market conditions. Relatedly, both the career advancement and publishing cycles rely on the filtering function of acquisitions and editorial boards, but for different reasons: one for exclusivity, the other for marketability. The scholarly communication cycle and the publishing cycle both seek to put books in libraries and ultimately in readers hands; the career advancement cycle is indifferent to readership.⁵²

To an important extent, the university press – as an evolved part of the larger ecosystem – serves to mediate between these three cycles and provides a sustainable working compromise between the three different kinds of logic at work. A university press serves the scholarly communication cycle by ensuring that high quality works are developed and delivered to libraries. It serves the career advancement cycle by providing a mechanism by which scholarly status can be conferred, one which importantly is independent of the departmental or even institutional context in which the scholar works. And, clearly, a university press operates according to the market-oriented publishing logic from which it was born.

A good part of the difficulty of articulating the so-called “monograph crises,” let alone possible solutions to them, is because of the entanglement of these three different cycles, and the intricate ways in which any sustainable university press must resolve and reconcile these differences in everyday practice. The relative opacity of even the finely-grained details revealed in the Ithaca S+R study on monograph costs speaks to this condition of multiple agendas. Why is acquisitions such a large component of the costs of monograph production? It is because here especially each of these three value cycles must be addressed, for the success of the work, the success of the author, and for the success of the the press itself.

We would also suggest that this three-part entanglement helps explain how monograph publishing has so far resisted the various threats and/or opportunities of the digital revolution. The monograph, along with the press which produces it, is suspended in a web of tensioned relations between these three value cycles. Most innovations – from the rise of digital scholarship and open-access publishing to the emergence of the ebook and the increasing role of intermediaries in sales channels – clearly serve one or other of these cycles of value, often at the expense of one of the other cycles. For example, a good deal of the discourse around digital, open access publication would serve to increase the volume of available scholarship. That result has perhaps an ambivalent relationship to publishing logic, but it more clearly threatens the exclusivity base of prestige and career advancement.

⁵² Rick Anderson, on *The Scholarly Kitchen*, pointed out that if authors really cared about maximizing readership, they would not publish in formal journals at all; they would put everything online with the most permissive license possible. <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2016/03/23/ask-the-chefs-what-is-the-biggest-misconception-people-have-about-scholarly-publishing/>

The implication of this, to our eyes, is that any innovation in monograph or monograph-like publication must be considered in terms of all three value cycles. Because of the balance of mutual, evolved tensions in the ecosystem, a move to enhance one function will likely introduce a destabilizing effect elsewhere in the system.

Opening Up Some Black Boxes

A functionalist approach to understanding monograph publishing is convenient, but, as we have argued, misses some of the more subtle relational aspects of the system. It is worth examining some of the usual functional categories in order to further illuminate the relational structures.

Acquisitions & Peer Review

The Ithaca S+R report on monograph costs revealed acquisitions as the largest single cost centre in monograph production. There are some straightforward reasons for this: acquisitions covers a lot of ground: from author outreach to assessment and evaluation – including peer review – to the foundations of author communications and support.

From the standpoint of the publishing value cycle, acquisitions is where the identity of a press is established – in terms of the disciplinary fields that a press engages with, the ‘invisible colleges’ that align and organize the scholars who will serve as both authors and readers, and the boundary work a press does between scholarly, trade, and textbook publishing. From a financial point of view, acquisitions is concerned with what books a press can reasonably expect to bring to market. In a context where popularity isn’t the driving force, fitness to brand and sales channels must be carefully assessed and constructed over time. A press specializing in regional history would likely have a difficult time bringing a book about Shakespeare to market.

Acquisitions is not reducible – contrary to what we sometimes hear – to the sifting of the good from the bad. It is a more active process of engagement with fields of scholarly inquiry; acquisitions editors often attend conferences in order to learn about and meet scholars who may become authors for the press; indeed, attending conferences may be of more value to author outreach than sales at the accompanying book fair. Further, the active identification of prospective authors and works isn’t merely about sourcing saleable books; it is also about the long-range nurturing of the press’ identity and brand value. Minnesota’s Doug Armato spoke about the value of *Manifold Scholarship* to the press’ brand. Similarly, when Stanford University Press seeks to acquire an *Interactive Scholarly Work* (for which the prospect of sales revenue is indirect at best), a good deal of the value is in the brand going forward. The Ithaca study quoted a press director as saying that the

work of acquisitions went on 24/7, even “in line at the grocery store.” This is not reducible to functional roles; it is the stewardship of the press’ identity and mission over time – something that produces considerable indirect value in terms of brand, prestige, and connectedness to currents in scholarship.

In light of this, peer review itself has relatively little directly to do with the prestige of a press. Peer review is a formal part of the process of publishing academic work. All university presses do it, and most do it in roughly the same ways. The mere fact of peer review does not equate to prestige of a press, nor the ‘quality’ of its output. Rather, these values come from the sustained – over years – engagement of press with scholarly communities and their work. The stewardship of peer review is part of that, especially in a press’ careful identification of appropriate reviewers within a given field, as well as the developmental interpretation of peer reviewers’ assessments. Peer review in a university press is not a binary publish/reject function; it is part of a much larger acquisitions and editorial process.

We have heard the suggestion that digital scholarly works can be treated just like traditional monographs, subjected to the “same” peer review processes as traditional publications, and will therefore gain the same prestige from the institutions from which they are issued. Yet this begs the question of the point of peer review, which plays different roles in the different value cycles. From the point of view of the scholarly communication cycle, it may be possible to think of the peer review of manuscripts and interactive prototypes interchangeably; it is harder to imagine this from the career advancement cycle; and much harder from the perspective of publishing logic.

The high cost of acquisitions as identified in the Ithaka report is not the cost of a publisher function; it is the cost of maintaining a complex ecological structure, across and amongst university presses and across and amongst scholarly communities.

Design and Production

The University of North Carolina Press has embarked on a project to consolidate a good deal of the production and distribution processes in monograph publishing in a centralized service provider. The rationale is that economies of scale apply, and savings can be achieved by aggregating volume. At the same time, the University of Connecticut proposes a “Design Studio” to create not just new capacity but a whole new process orientation to the role of design and user experience development for scholarly works.

Both projects make sense; both address recognized issues in the production of scholarly works. And yet these two projects – which we single out here not to critique but because they conveniently illustrate the point – move in opposite directions, and for completely different reasons. The lesson here, we think, is that there is no broad consensus on the role of design and production values in the

monograph space.

The notion that monographs can succeed with generic design templates – certainly a notion that is considered if not actively pursued at many university presses – relies on a further black box regarding the form and genre of the monograph. The assumption seems to be that within a certain narrow range, only the content matters. And yet, both the deep history of publishing⁵³ and the apparent future of digital interactive media suggest that the details of packaging, the semiotics of design and production, and the attention to user experience, are critically important.

Marketing

What does marketing mean in the context of monograph publishing – in a scenario where a few hundred sales of a book may well be the extent of its reach? In almost every project we looked at, there is some reference to the ‘marketing’ of a title, and this is often construed as a function that a university press will perform.

From a functional perspective, monograph marketing has at least two distinct components. One is a relatively mechanical process of ensuring that a book is properly represented in the digital data flows that constitute the book market. A publisher must prepare trade metadata in an appropriate format for easy exchange with wholesalers, distributors, libraries, retailers, Amazon, Google, and a host of other parties. A publisher typically goes further, too, actively tending these data flows to ensure that book metadata appears – correctly – in all the right places, and that it maintains its accurate presence there over time. Managing digital data exchange has overtaken to some extent the print-based marketing practices of the past: circulating publishers’ catalogues, purchasing display advertising in the few venues that reach the right audiences. Today, many use the term ‘discoverability’ as a catch-all for the practices of maintaining visibility, searchability, and availability on digital networks, especially within the library supply chain.

But in addition, marketing specialists at many university presses doggedly pursue the individuals and scholarly communities for whom a particular title has relevance. This ranges from tending the booth at a conference book fair to laboriously cultivating e-mail lists, online fora, social media and other sites of ongoing discourse, in order to more directly reach and raise the awareness of those individuals – be they scholars or librarians or influencers – who will help form a book’s ultimate audience.

The former is an essential, systemic part of engaging with the scholarly com-

⁵³ Michael Bhaskar’s book *The Content Machine: Toward a Theory of Publishing from the Printing Press to the Digital Network* (Anthem, 2013) argues for the dynamic of framing and amplification that is an essential part of publishing. The recent trend in bibliography, ever since D.F. McKenzie’s influential *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Oxford University Press, 1999), has similarly been concerned with the material and visual facets of meaning and reception. That the look and feel of certain genres have stabilized over time is not in itself surprising, but we should not mistake stability for unimportance.

munications ecosystem. The latter is an essential, entrepreneurial part of publisher logic, in which a title bound for publication is a capital risk which must be mitigated by driving attention and sales: ultimately selling the book in sufficient quantities to cover the publisher's investment. This aspect of marketing is actually contiguous with acquisitions, especially since the author and her scholarly community are also the likely audience for the book once published. The success of a publisher – whether a university press or an avant garde poetry publisher – depends on its ability to reach and articulate the value of its books to its audience and market.

If we imagine a publishing scenario in which there is no *market* as such, because the publication is paid for in advance, what becomes of this latter marketing process, which is constitutionally tied to the business and the identity of the press? How does one actively 'market' such a publication? It might be a institutionally subvented open-access ebook; or it might be a complex online work of interactive digital scholarship. If there is no 'market logic' motivating the employees of the press to drive sales, then what is the motivation – or, more critically, what is the budget justification – of spending the long hours tailoring email lists and driving publicity? For that matter, if there is no market logic driving acquisitions decision-making, what is the budget justification for the considerable sums spent in that area? Indeed, how much of the cost of producing monographs is tied up in the cost of doing business in the marketplace?

This is far from saying that the solution to the monograph's challenges is to remove it from the market – by embracing OA, or in lobbying for a system of institutional subventions that would pay for monographs up front? Doing so may address certain agendas in scholarly communication, but to the detriment of career advancement and the publishing logic that has so far kept the whole operation afloat.

Reckoning the Value of the Monograph

The difficulty of disentangling the monograph from market logic comes from the monograph's value being reckoned on at least three different planes:

- from the perspective of scholarly communications, the monograph is the slowest, best considered, longest lasting portion of the scholarly record;
- from the perspective of status and career advancement, the monograph is the most weighty and valuable expression of scholarly achievement;
- from the perspective of publishing, the monograph is the essential product of a university press, its great contribution to culture. Books endure.

Monograph publishing is not reducible to a production facility for research libraries, nor a service rendered to authors (nor their tenure committees), nor a (marginal) industrial activity. It is all of these simultaneously. Any attempt to address the evolution of the monograph will have effects that span all three.

And yet, so much of the perspective we have presented here is based on the

long-term evolved character of the monograph ecosystem. The close intertwining of scholarly communication, career advancement, and traditional publishing logic make for a powerful status quo that has, as noted, managed to resist both the opportunities of digital media and the challenges posed by various apparent crises. It may be that, within certain disciplines, the printed monograph has a long, stable future – its resilience will keep it current for many years to come.

At the same time, though, the world around the monograph changes. The scholarly monograph's heyday, according to scholars like John B Thompson, was in the decades following World-War II, when research outputs and investment in the academy were flourishing, and the printed book was the unchallenged medium of choice. We do not live in that world anymore. Budgets today reflect different priorities, and the rise of networked, digital media has utterly changed our information and communications landscape. The global call for open-access publishing is a strong one, and will likely only grow in the future, regardless how difficult it may be to convert book publishing to this mode. And clearly, online open social scholarship is on the rise, featuring work that may not be representable in print, nor require print in order to reach its audience.

If the world is changing, how will we balance the needs of scholarly communications, the careers of scholars, and the business logic that makes systems sustainable?

One approach seems to be to prototype systems at a small enough scale that they do not disrupt the larger, tensioned ecosystem. An interesting example of this is the University of California Press' open access imprint, Luminos – a project that does not seek to displace the press' traditional business, but allows it to explore the potential on the margins. The consortium-based Lever Press may operate similarly, allowing presses to explore the OA space without threatening their core business. Similarly, a digital acquisition agenda like the one at Stanford University Press fits with this model too; though Stanford will not see revenue directly from *Enchanting the Desert*, its association with such projects increases the press' scope and relevance with scholars. Doug Armato made a similar comment about the value of Manifold Scholarship to the University of Minnesota's profile with authors.

The opening, from Brown, UIUC, and Connecticut, to begin to re-inscribe the functional boundaries between the university and the press is encouraging too, and yet we wonder about the stability of a university press system if much of the editorial development and production happens before it reaches the press. What if the university press is primarily – functionally – a review agency or a curatorial filter on scholarship done elsewhere? While the service value provided by a press as an *intellectually independent* review agency is substantial, we wonder how university press budgets will be justifiable under such conditions?

The four projects which seek to enhance the traditional monograph, either by adding digital layers to it (Michigan, NYU), by unbundling it into components

(Yale), or by streamlining its production and distribution (UNC), seem to us likely to be influential, if only because the goals of these projects are so directly appealing, and achievable. And yet we wonder about the balance between the three value cycles we pointed out. These four projects all serve scholarly communications straightforwardly: either by enhancing the value and access points of existing publications, or by making it less expensive to get monographs into circulation. What then, to make of their contributions to career advancement or the business logic of publishers? Will an Enhanced Network Monograph be of more value on tenure-seeking scholar's CV? Perhaps. Will standardized, templated monographs ultimately express the same symbolic capital as bespoke designed editions with higher production budgets? Perhaps for junior scholars seeking a first book, this will be an attractive option.

Longer term, will the symbolic capital expressed by a monograph paid for by institutional subvention count on a CV the same as a book that had to 'stand on its own' in the market? Could a system of institutionally funded publications devolve to a second tier in the prestige economy of career development? Our hunch is that institutionally funded works of digital scholarship may fare better for career status, given the extra energy that seems to animate scholarly communities to think about how to properly assess them. But take that idea to its logical limit: if scholarly communities feel strongly enough about the career-making value of digital scholarship, will it ultimately matter whether a university press grants its imprimatur? Under what conditions would this make the critical difference to a piece of scholarship? The answer to that question has to take into consideration the values of a scholarly community, the policies and criteria of an institution, the value of intellectual freedom/independence, and more.

We wonder too, in the efforts to make the monograph more cost-effective, more timely, more accessible, and more interactive, whether there is a drive to make monograph publishing more like journal publishing – and by extension, to make monographs more like journals, or at least collections of journal articles. This is not an issue addressed directly by any of the thirteen proposals, but it seems to be an adjacent set of possibilities. In light of that, we ask what is the unique value of the bounded holism of a monograph, or indeed of a monograph-like digital work?

The book is a complex organism – indeed, it is a networked interactive object of the highest order, even before we apply electricity to it – and it seems to show remarkable resilience in the face of media and social innovation. The book is more than a container, more than a reading device, more than a unit of commerce, a collectable object, a professional representative, a hip home furnishing, a beloved friend, a line on a CV... it is, importantly, the sum of all these things, and their network effects besides.

About the Authors

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