

Abstract
“The Future of University Presses and Other Institutional Publishers”
Michael A. Keller

The discourse concerning university presses in North America over the past couple of decades has been one focused, some might say, on the difficulties of declining support from host universities, declining purchases of university press books on a more or less automatic basis by university libraries, and by other examples of hand-wringing. Insistence on an entitlement position in our universities has not been successful, particularly among provosts and presidents. While the spectrum of sizes, publishing programs, business models, and support mechanisms for university presses is wide, it is difficult to find examples of presses that have re-engineered themselves out of the quandaries mentioned in these two sentences. One or two such examples of re-engineering with some success will be mentioned.

In considering the future of university presses, the future of books, of the roles of publishers in an age of “do-it-yourself open access-ism”, of libraries, of readers, and of authors deserve attention. From those possibilities and trends, university presses might see some possibilities. Certainly university presses, and for that matter other publishers marketing to intellectuals, need to assert the services they offer. Beyond such assertions, however, it would be heartening to see some attempts to exploit the possibilities of digital multi-media publishing, of social networking features applied to the “new narrative” post publication, of new sorts of collaboration, of swifter responsiveness to scholarly trends and methods, of crisp and clear decisions regarding failed or failing publishing programs, and some of the successes of scholarly journal publishing on the World Wide Web.