

## Office of the President

### TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

#### DISCUSSION ITEM

*For Meeting of July 18, 2018*

### THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS AT 125

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, University of California Press is celebrating its 125th anniversary – 125 years of using its publishing expertise to shape public discourse, drive innovative thought, disseminate knowledge, and represent the University of California inside and outside the academy. Established in 1893 as a modest publisher of scientific monographs by UC faculty, the Press emerged as a world-class university press in the early 1950s. Today the Press is one of the six largest and most prestigious – and perhaps most adventurous – university publishers in the United States, and the only one of those six that is associated with a public institution. It publishes an estimated 180 new book titles each year and more than 30 journals across the humanities and social sciences. Additionally, the Press keeps more than 4000 titles in print; it has also pioneered open access publishing models that promise to help sustain scholarly publishing into the future.

As the nonprofit publishing arm of the University of California system, UC Press functions as a unit of the Office of the President and is not associated with any one campus. It is almost entirely self-supporting – that is, it relies on very little financial support from UCOP for its operations. In publishing scholarship of enduring value to diverse audiences, the Press supports the UC mission of research, teaching, and public service. The Press sells its products to individual customers through online retailers like Amazon and Barnes & Noble, independent bookstores, and through its own website; and to libraries and other institutions. Its presence is also felt in the classroom as many books are adopted by professors for classroom use. Additionally, the Press's book program has received significant accolades over the years across a range of disciplines.

#### BACKGROUND

##### *A History of Publishing Innovation*

On February 16, 1893, J. Harmon Bonté, secretary of the Board of Regents, sent a letter to Martin Kellogg, President of the University of California from 1890 to 1893, letting Kellogg know that the Regents had approved his motion to set aside \$1000 a year to support publications by UC faculty. The same letter established a committee of five faculty members, with Kellogg serving as *ex officio* chair, to oversee the approval and production of the publications.

The Press – insofar as it existed then as a distinct organization – was almost exclusively devoted to publishing what were then known as “scientific monographs,” book-length studies of various research topics in the sciences. Monographs described the research agenda of any given scholar: create a hypothesis, describe the research undertaken, and reveal whether the hypothesis was supported. This was, and still is, a fundamental part of the scientific method focused on the incremental advancement of knowledge at the heart of academia. The Press was a joint venture among the scientific faculty settling in at Berkeley, which provided the papers and monographs; the administration, which provided financial support; and the (then quite powerful) printing office, which handled everything from calendars and letterhead to the then-nascent press’s publications.

From its founding until the mid-1950s the Press expanded its monograph program through the addition of various series (some of which the Press still publishes – notably the Sather Lecture in Classics); most monographs were still written by members of the expanding UC faculty. The Press’s history is also the story of fights with the printing office (to which the Press reported) about costs and priorities, and budget requests to the president to enlarge the program. This lasted until the professionalization of the Press in the mid-1950s under the leadership of August Frugé, who expanded the Press’s publishing by using competitively priced national printers, circumventing the increasingly cumbersome UC printer’s office; selling the Press’s books through the “trade” (i.e., bookstores) in addition to simply giving them away to libraries and faculty; and expanding the press’s author pool beyond the UC system.

This mirrors the story of the elite university presses more generally: the gradual expansion, professionalization, and integration into the wider publishing industry. But with these shifts came more competition for authors and market share even as university presses hew to their original mission of promoting and disseminating scholarship, and providing a distinct service to their university community.

Today, UC Press’s peers (and competitors) include Princeton University Press, Harvard University Press, Yale University Press, and the University of Chicago Press. University presses, including UC Press, also find themselves competing with commercial publishers, such as Basic Books, an imprint of Hachette, the largest trade publisher in the world, who seek scholarly authors with household name recognition. It’s a radically different landscape than existed in 1893 or 1953. Yet, UC Press still takes seriously its original scholarly mission. For instance, even as the Press has expanded the number and kinds of books it publishes, it still publishes a significant number of monographs.

### ***What UC Press Publishes***

Today UC Press publishes approximately 180 new book titles per year and more than 30 journals across the humanities and social sciences. Additionally, UC Press keeps more than 4000 titles in print. It also has an internationally recognized program in digital innovation.

UC Press’s editors acquire scholarly monographs, which are still the core of its list; trade books, aimed at a wider audience; and books that are designed for classroom use. UC Press publishes in

a wide range of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, including American studies, history, anthropology, sociology, Asian studies, Middle Eastern studies, film and media studies, music, religion, criminology, food studies, art history, communication, ancient history, geography, and classics. The Press also produces its own books and journals, publicizes, markets, and sells them, and manages the many facets of their distribution.

UC Press's authors, a group that includes both new and more experienced academics, publish with UC Press because of the powerful combination of its publishing expertise and its academic roots. What does publishing expertise mean? It is the ability to work with authors to help them accomplish their goals, including reaching their audiences through editorial, marketing, publicity, and sales know-how. They also recognize the power of the UC brand: UC Press stands for a powerful, progressive vision of the world. They also publish with UC Press as part of their tenure and promotion process. In certain disciplines, having a peer-reviewed book published by a leading university press is a real feather in an academic's cap.

UC Press publishes more than 30 journals in fields that mirror the books program. Journals subscriptions are now sold as packages – that is, more than one at a time – and in digital form to academic libraries. The articles that scholars publish in journals form the building blocks of scholarly communication. This is how scholars in numerous disciplines across the academy share new ideas and contribute to the ongoing development of their fields. All UC Press books and journals are available online through many venues.

Over the past five years, UC Press has also started to experiment more aggressively with new products. This includes a new journal for peer-reviewed case study articles, case study pedagogy articles, and editor-reviewed slide decks. The Press has also launched two “open access” programs – programs that shift the shared cost structure of scholarly monograph and journal publishing. In the older model, universities pay faculty to produce research that university presses would publish and sell to libraries – a shared cost model that was the standard for the dissemination of new research throughout the academy. In response to changing patterns in academic library purchasing of monographs and subscribing to journals (a trend that has been ongoing since the 1970s) and in an effort to migrate monograph publishing to a more robust, digital future, UC Press invested in open access monograph and journal publishing programs. In this model, authors and their institutions pay a “title publication fee” to help support the publication of the monograph or journal articles, which thereafter is free to access online. The program is also supported by member libraries around the world.

UC Press has nearly 50 monographs in its open access program and has two journals that publish under this model. This is a natural area of collaboration with stakeholders throughout the UC system, including the California Digital Library and the UC Irvine Center for the Digital Humanities. These initiatives put UC Press at the forefront of experimentation in scholarly publishing. They have also allowed UC Press to develop new capabilities and have provided a potential path forward for similar digital-only products in other fields.

### *How UC Press has impact*

#### UC Press markets

UC Press sells books and journals wherever it finds its customers: that includes sales to individual consumers through booksellers like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and independent bookstores (the natural allies of university presses and other independent publishers); through the Press's website; to libraries and other institutions.

UC Press is also a staple in the classroom. Many professors adopt UC Press books for their undergraduate and graduate courses. Large course adoptions are a staple of UC Press publishing. In addition, over the past decades UC Press has begun to partner with scholars to produce books that are designed around pre-existing courses as a way of further bringing peer-reviewed, quality scholarship into the hands of students.

However, UC Press also must "sell" itself as an outlet to book authors and journal editors, since they are independent actors with many options. This means the Press must be on top of its game, building relationships over time and providing authors with the editorial partnership, production quality, sales, publicity, and marketing know-how that matters to them.

Because its titles are present in so many markets, UC Press also represents the University of California to other key constituencies: students, UC faculty, the faculty of other premier institutions, books reviewers and journalists, policymakers, and librarians. The reputation of UC Press as a fair actor and premier publisher matter to the University's reputation with scholars, readers, students not only in California but throughout the world. UC Press is a visible presence in the world of the power and quality of the University of California.

#### Shaping public discourse and academic disciplines

UC Press's books earn praise from many corners. This past year, top-tier media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Review of Books*, *NPR*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, the *London Review of Books*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *The Guardian*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and many others covered notable books and authors published by UC Press. Additionally, UC Press's book program received more than fifty awards across a range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, art, music, history, food & wine, Asian studies, media and cinema, religion, Middle Eastern studies, environmental studies, and education.

Awards included the prestigious 2016 R.R. Hawkins Award, PROSE Award for Excellence for Aldon Morris's *The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology*, the American Educational Research Association Outstanding Book Award for *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America* by Roberto G. Gonzales, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum's 29th Annual Charles C. Eldredge Prize for Distinguished Scholarship for *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* by Jennifer L. Roberts.

Beyond coverage and accolades, the Press's publishing programs have actively shaped academic disciplines. Without the Press's publishing programs, disciplines like sociology, American studies, Middle Eastern studies, and food studies would look markedly different than they do today. That's the power of a great university press publishing program: that UC Press not only cultivates ideas from the academy, it magnifies them and shapes those very academic disciplines.

### *A financial picture of UC Press*

UC Press is an almost entirely self-supporting entity in that it generates the bulk of its operating revenue. Unlike many of its peer competitors, the Press functions without a major endowment (Harvard and Princeton university presses, for instance, have endowments in excess of \$100 million) or a major side business (University of Chicago Press serves as a distributor for many smaller university presses). However, UC Press is able to produce major value for the University for a relatively modest investment.

Seventy-five percent of UC Press's revenue derives from its books program, while 25 percent derives from the sales of scholarly journals. UC Press's new digital initiatives have begun producing modest revenue, and are expected to serve as a growth area in the portfolio. Yet, despite much digital hype over the past ten years, UC Press is of the opinion that traditional book sales and journal subscriptions continue to matter and will continue to be a key component of UC Press business. While many expected the availability of scholarly "content" on the Internet to completely change the academic publishing scene – breaking the hold that books and journals have had on scholarly communication for centuries – books (and often *print* books) continue to dominate scholarly and popular discourse alike.

Sales revenue does not make up the entirety of UC Press's sources of income. Other sources of support include:

- UC Press's external 501(c)(3) UC Press Foundation, which contributes to specific areas of its book publishing program as allocated by its independent Board of Trustees,
- Shares in the Regents' Endowment Fund directly granted to UC Press by the Regents in 1961,
- The Scientific Account, which was established in 1893 to support the publications of UC faculty. These funds are controlled by UC Press's Editorial Committee, which directly allocates these funds to specific books and journals written and edited by UC faculty as well as to the Press's general operating expenses.

The Scientific Account and the Editorial Committee deserve specific comment, as they are unique to UC Press and are a significant part of the foundation of the Press's relationship with the UC faculty and the system more broadly.

### *Shared governance*

#### Editorial Committee

Most university presses have a faculty committee or faculty consultants associated with them. The purpose of such a committee is to confer the imprint of the university on new books and journals. Different university presses convene this committee at different points in the publishing process, and ask their members to read different materials related to new projects.

UC Press's editorial committee is appointed by the systemwide Committee on Committees of the Academic Senate; without them, UC Press could not publish under the imprint of the University of California. The projects that UC Press's editorial committee considers have already been selected or commissioned by sponsoring editors, vetted by peer reviewers, reviewed internally at the Press, and planned according to appropriate schedules. It stands to reason that there are many projects that Press editors consider and reject well before they get to the editorial committee, but no project can move forward without the editorial committee's agreement.

#### Scientific Account

The University provides funds of roughly \$1 million per year to UC Press to support publications by UC faculty. The funds themselves are controlled by the UC Systemwide Academic Senate, and the Editorial Committee appropriates and approves the use of the funds. The fund – known as the Scientific Account – has been in existence in one form or another since the Press's founding. As the publishing program of the Press expanded, the Academic Senate expanded the use of the fund to help support UC authors publishing through both the Press's book and journal publishing businesses. Approximately 25 percent of UC Press book authors are affiliated with the UC. In addition, UC Press is able to support the publication of several high-profile scholarly journals through the application of these funds.

#### Board of Directors

In addition to the oversight of the Editorial Committee, which forms the foundation for UC Press publishing under the name of the University of California, the Press formally reports to the systemwide Provost. Advising the Provost is the UC Press Board of Directors. This board is neither a governing nor fiduciary board but is technically constituted as an advisory board to the Provost, its chair. The board is charged with ensuring that UC Press fulfills its mission to add impact and visibility to important scholarship, to provide publishing leadership during a time of market transformation, and to be a partner in the progressive mission and values of the University of California. The Board reviews the Press's performance and advises on its strategic, financial, and organizational direction. It reviews the Press's quarterly and annual financial performance and approves its annual budget and staffing plan. The Board, chaired by the Provost, consists of up to 12 members including senior UC Office of the President officials, faculty, representatives of the UC libraries, and external publishers.

*Challenges Ahead for University Press Publishing and UC Press*

University presses are a remarkable cultural institution dedicated to publishing books and journals based on their merit and their contribution to scholarly and public knowledge. While these presses do not completely ignore market concerns, they are not driven solely by them, as are their commercial competitors. However, this can put university presses in tenuous circumstances: the University of Kentucky Press was funded in the state budget only after a considerable fight this year, and the University Press of New England has been shut down altogether. While each of those presses was considerably smaller in revenue and output, UC Press faces the same kind of pressure. UC Press must keep both eyes on its mission and on its income streams. Only by walking that tightrope can UC Press remain a vital public cultural institution.