

**Office of the President**

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

**DISCUSSION ITEM**

*For Meeting of July 17, 2024*

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS—A NEW CHAPTER**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This item provides an overview and update on the latest developments at the University of California Press, which celebrated its 130th anniversary in 2023. During those 130 years, the Press has amplified the University of California’s global impact through its commitment to influencing public discourse and challenging the status quo, and an ongoing commitment to excellence in scholarly publishing. The Press has served as a bridge connecting the academic world and curious readers worldwide, and published books and journals that continue to shift paradigms in the arts, sciences, humanities, and social sciences. UC Press publishes 180 to 200 new book titles each year and over 40 journals across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences and maintains over 7,000 book titles in print.

Beyond publishing award-winning scholarship that advances the presidential goal of expanding the knowledge base of social justice through research, the Press is committed to innovative approaches to how it publishes scholarship. UC Press has pioneered open access publishing models that promise to help sustain scholarly publishing into the future. It has also launched a pathbreaking program to support first-generation scholars—those who were the first in their families to attend college—as they begin their publishing journeys and advance their careers in the academy. Its imprint is overseen by the Editorial Committee of the Academic Senate with whom the Press has traditionally had a strong partnership that has led to many collaborations. The Press is almost entirely self-supporting; that is, it supports itself primarily through the sales of books and subscriptions to journals. However, as a nonprofit, mission-driven publisher, the Press, which also relies on funding beyond sales, has engaged with its UC Press Foundation in an effort to diversify and expand its funding streams. In publishing scholarship of enduring value to diverse audiences, the Press supports the UC mission of research, teaching, and public service. As the Press embarks on a new chapter in its history, it continues to focus on service to the University of California campuses and advancing UC’s global impact.

**BACKGROUND**

The University of California Press was founded in 1893 by the Board of Regents with an annual appropriation of \$1,000 to facilitate the publication of “monographs, etc.” by the faculty of the University of California. The Press’s charter also established a faculty committee to oversee the Press, consisting of five members appointed by the President of the University, who also served

as a member. The ambitions of the Press were originally modest in scope. In a 19th century world in which the dissemination of scholarship was limited by the ability to print and physically deliver books and other bound materials, the University needed a press to print and distribute papers produced by University faculty to enhance its visibility and reputation. It also needed a formal mechanism to vet and approve the scholarship published by the Press to establish credibility as a scholarly publisher. Both the establishment of the Press as a printer and the faculty committee, which eventually became the Editorial Committee as an oversight board for the scholarship, helped advance the prestige of an institution that at the time was still very young.

### *UC Faculty Role as Key to Success*

For several decades, the faculty committee *was* the Press. Not only did UC Press publish only scholarly monographs and papers written by UC faculty, but acquisition and approval of titles for publication was handled entirely by UC faculty and the President. This began to shift in the 1940s and 1950s, as the Press added professional staff to acquire book-length manuscripts that had an audience beyond the academy. During the post–World War II economic boom, the University of California Press, as well as other leading university presses in the United States, expanded their output to include both specialist research publications intended primarily for university researchers and titles intended for a broader audience of general readers that could be purchased through an expanding network of local bookstores. The tremendous growth of scholarly journals published worldwide also began to take shape during this time, and UC Press, like many other university presses, added journals to its program. The Press’ journals program was, and continues to be, very rooted in partnerships with UC departments. In fact, two of the longest running journals in the Press’s history, *Asian Survey* and *Film Quarterly*, grew into established journals in the 1940s in partnership with University faculty and departments and continue to be published by the Press to this day.

Partnerships with UC faculty and departments have been key to the evolution of the Press. Many of its greatest publications have resulted from connections with UC entities across the campuses. Through a partnership with the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley, the Aaron Wildavsky Forum for Public Policy lecture has resulted in a series of books through which UC Press published one of its earliest books with UC Provost and Executive Vice President Katherine Newman, “Taxing the Poor: Doing Damage to the Truly Disadvantaged.” Other long-standing partnerships include the Sather Classical Lectures book series in collaboration with the Department of Ancient Greek and Roman Studies at UC Berkeley and the partnership with the Mark Twain Papers Project housed at the Bancroft Library.

The Editorial Committee of the Press has evolved and is now a committee of the Systemwide Academic Senate. The committee now counts 20 faculty amongst its members from across the campuses who serve five-year terms of appointment. This UC Press partnership with the Editorial Committee not only provides strong oversight of its imprint but has also led to fruitful collaborations; many UC faculty who serve on the committee have gone on to become book authors, editors of scholarly journals, or, in some cases, both. The members of the committee have also acted as valuable ambassadors who help expand the UC Press network across a vast ten campus system and connect UC Press’s editorial team with cutting-edge scholarship.

Approximately 20 to 25 percent of all books published by the Press are authored by UC faculty members—a larger number than many of its competitors—and currently a dozen UC faculty members serve as editors of the Press’ scholarly journals.

These relationships with research units and directly with UC faculty have allowed the Press to not only amplify the voices of UC faculty and departments but reflect its voice and approach, which builds on its affiliation with a progressive and diverse public research university.

*Advancing Impact—Bringing a UC Perspective to the World*

Since the Press’ modest beginnings, it has evolved into one of the most innovative and productive university presses in the world.

UC Press is strong in key disciplines across the social sciences and humanities, including sociology, anthropology, criminology, law, economics, history, art, music, and film. It also has a long-running publishing program in natural history, which is growing into a science book list. Among its hallmarks are interdisciplinary areas that include environmental studies, technology studies, media studies, as well as topics that cut across disciplines—race, migration, food, gender and sexuality, inequality, and labor.

A good example of the interdisciplinary nature of the work is also UC Press’ long-standing focus on racial justice, which is a core part of its book list and is central to its mission. UC Press has been publishing the Martin Luther King Papers since 1992 and began publishing the Marcus Garvey Papers in 1983. UC Press has published pivotal books in the civil rights field such as Charles Payne’s “I’ve Got the Light of Freedom” and an authoritative history of the Black Panther Party.

Another area that engages with social justice issues is UC Press’ California Series in Public Anthropology, which is committed, through ethnographic research, to transforming received and accepted understandings of social issues with new insights and frameworks. In more recent years, the Press also launched a series of short books aimed at students that explore emerging, rapidly changing topics that affect American history and culture. Jack Halberstram’s book, “Trans: A Quick and Quirky History of Gender Variability,” is an excellent example of these books that speak to the popular conversation happening at the current moment and help advance scholarship into the public square.

UC Press is interested in issues that are too broad for a single discipline to address. Topics like the environment or inequality require conversations among economists, ecologists, sociologists, and policymakers, and UC Press’ lists are an ideal place to facilitate those conversations among scholars from different disciplines. This exploratory, interdisciplinary, and progressive mindset helps the Press stay abreast of emerging fields and issues. For instance, UC Press has launched several recent book series in critical refugee studies, reproductive justice, and hip-hop studies.

The publishing industry as a whole has undergone tremendous commercial consolidation during the past 25 years. This has led to increasingly homogenized approaches to publishing nonfiction

books for general readers. It has also led to increased pressures on commercial publishers from their parent corporations to increase margins as they achieve economies of scale through mergers and acquisitions. In the journals space, pressure to increase publishing volume has led to accusations that many commercially published journals have become mere paper mills. In 2023, one large commercial publisher was forced to retract over 8,000 previously published research articles due to concerns about quality.<sup>1</sup> In this environment, mission-driven scholarly publishers such as UC Press, with strong faculty oversight, act as a bulwark against the worst impulses of its commercial competitors.

### *Finances, the Future, and Growth*

The Press covers an expense base of approximately \$22 million dollars, with approximately 85 percent of expenses covered through revenue generating activities—book sales, journal subscriptions, and open access publishing fees. UC Press has the distinction of being the only unit at the Office of President that generates revenue through sales of products and services. The remainder, roughly 15 percent, comes from several sources:

- Shares in the General Endowment Program that were transferred to the Press through Regental action in 1968. This amounts to roughly \$2 million annually.
- Approximately \$1 million in campus assessment funds designated to partially underwrite the costs of journal and book publications from UC faculty. This subsidy dates back to the Press's earliest days, when it was known as the "scientific account." These funds are allocated by the Academic Senate Editorial Committee.
- The balance of \$1 million comes from contributed revenue and endowment income from the UC Press Foundation, a separate 501(c)(3) fundraising entity that supports UC Press.

While revenue generated through publishing activities has historically been a cornerstone of the Press' efforts to support its program, the kind of independent, mission-driven, nonprofit publishing in which the Press is engaged cannot support itself through earned revenue alone. Therefore, the Press has recently undertaken a concerted effort to focus additional resources to bolster its 501(c)(3) organization, the UC Press Foundation, to diversify and expand its funding streams. Established in 1983 as the Associates of the University of California Press and formally incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization in 1991, the Foundation is central to the Press's cost recovery efforts in an increasingly competitive publishing landscape.

### *Promoting Access within the Academy*

As a nonprofit, mission-driven publisher, UC Press also shares the UC's public focus and emphasis on acting as an engine of social mobility and social change, which lie at the heart of both *what* it publishes and *how* it publishes it. Providing equitable access to scholarly publications motivated the launch of an open access publishing model for books and journals. Since the program's launch in 2015, UC Press has published over 175 books and hundreds of scholarly journal articles in electronic formats that are free to read. UC Press' innovative cost-

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-03974-8>

sharing model for open access books emphasizes a partnership between the Press, the institutions of its authors, and university libraries. With the same high standards for selection, peer review, production, and marketing as the Press' traditional program, this transformative open access book publishing model now comprises nearly 20 percent of the UC Press scholarly book output.

UC's broader efforts to advance equitable outcomes have manifested themselves through the recently established UC Press FirstGen Program. UC Press aims to publish and support bold, diverse perspectives that are representative of an inclusive spectrum of voices. The Press understands that book publishing can be difficult to navigate for many scholars, and it is dedicated to making it a more equitable process for all. The UC Press FirstGen Program cultivates and supports the work of first-generation scholars the UC's FirstGen research and programs, it is known that first-generation students often confront a range of intersecting inequalities across race, class, immigration status, and more. First-generation scholars who have attained advanced degrees and become faculty must navigate additional barriers within the academy. As a nonprofit, progressive press within the UC system, UC Press aims to extend UC's efforts by more effectively cultivating, publishing, and promoting the work of first-generation scholars. This program includes:

- Outright grants for first-generation authors to support the book publishing process.
- Publishing workshops, webinars, and resources to help demystify the book publishing process.

The program has also partnered with other systemwide programs, such as the President's Postdoctoral Fellows Program, with whom UC Press has delivered workshops to aspiring academics from diverse backgrounds.

UC Press views partnerships with UC entities as integral to the Press's future. Many of its existing partnerships have been anchored at the Berkeley campus, and the humanities have been central to many of them. However, much of the growth of the University over the last several decades has been fueled by an expansion into STEM and applied fields in which the Press has not had a strong disciplinary presence and across campuses where the Press has also traditionally had less of a presence. In an effort to bolster its output in fields where UC Press has been less strong in the past, the Press has recently expanded its disciplinary focus to build on key areas of research strength for the University, including environmental studies and climate justice, global health, technology studies, and basic science. In 2016, the Press purchased an open access start-up journal, *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, which publishes high-profile work in environmental, atmospheric, and ocean science, and has a major focus on sustainability transitions. The journal's global editorial team is led by researchers from UC Santa Cruz, UC Irvine, and UC Berkeley. With regard to books, the Press recently launched programs in economics, technology studies, and science, which are cultivating books by leading researchers that will translate research of these disciplines and inform the public discourse.

## CONCLUSION

UC Press is a tremendous asset to the University of California. Between its award-winning core publishing programs and its ambitious leadership role in scholarly publishing innovation, the Press exemplifies the value that a systemwide program can bring to the University. Beyond partnering to increase its disciplinary footprint, UC Press can leverage its deep publishing know-how to facilitate the delivery of services to campus entities that wish to publish scholarship themselves. Through existing relationships, the Press has the capacity and expertise to coordinate the entire book publication and distribution process for campus entities wishing to leverage the Press as a centralized service provider for most types of book content, including conference proceedings, edited collections, open educational resources, and sponsored book series.

As it has for over 130 years, UC Press will continue the unique blend of service and partnership with the University that has allowed it to thrive and will continue to fuel the growth of Press and the global impact of UC scholarship. Led by two first-generation products of the University of California, UC Press is passionate about supporting and advancing the Press' mission to further its strategic development.