

Recap of AUPresses 2018 Sessions
Attended by Laura Baker, Books Marketing Manager

The 2018 Association of University Presses annual meeting took place June 17-19, 2018 in San Francisco, CA. The following is a summary of my notes from the sessions I attended.

Session: Plenary Session: Discovering Scholarly Resources in a Digital Age

Date: Monday, June 18, 2018

Chair: Erich Van Rijn, Dir. of Publishing Operations, University of California Press

Featured Speakers: Anurag Acharya, Dir. of Google Scholar; Mark Algee-Hewitt, Dir. Stanford Literary Lab and Assistant Professor of English, Stanford University

The increasingly digital nature of scholarship provides unprecedented power to enable the frictionless discovery and dissemination of all types of information nearly instantaneously. This plenary session examined Google Scholar's rise as a discovery engine for published research and examined its impact on the discovery landscape. This session also looked at emerging scholarship in the digital humanities and discussed the challenges to traditional mechanisms of research and discovery posed by these unique formats.

Erich, University of California Press

- Why care about discovery?
 - Drives usage
 - Usage is key to subscription and open access models
 - eBooks are growing as a proportion of library book acquisition – acquisition will continue to be driven by usage
 - We (University Presses) add value by connecting scholarship with its audience

Anurag, Google Scholar

- Google Scholar: “One place to find everything scholarly – all languages, all formats, for all time.”
- What does it bring us? It makes it possible to transcend barriers by giving only one place to look
 - Relevance ranked results – keeps older significant articles from being lost; tremendous growth in novice and related area (semi-expert) queries
 - Full text indexing – allows all sections of an article to rise to the surface
 - Free for all users – insights are not limited by country
 - Index all versions of a work – enables rapid communication of results
 - Subscriber links
 - Easy to build author profiles
 - Topic maps for query suggestions
- “We are lucky to live in a world where we can bring everyone to the same frontier”

Mark, Stanford University

- Challenges of digital humanities dissemination
 - Searching and finding digital resources
 - Preserving and maintaining digital resources
 - Updating and editing scholarly platforms
- The role of the University Press

- Anticipate the image and data requirements of humanities and social science scholars and plan accordingly
- Assist scholars in creating and maintaining websites to host data not available in an article or book
- Take an active role in the preservation and legacy of digital humanities projects and sites

Session: Making the Most of Exhibits and Conferences

Date: Monday, June 18, 2018

Chair: Kathleen Hensley, Exhibits Manager, The MIT Press

Panelists: Ellen Freiler, Exhibits / Advertising Manager, Yale University Press; Elaine Maisner, Executive Editor, University of North Carolina Press; Eric Schwartz, Editorial Director, Columbia University Press

Book exhibits at scholarly conventions and other types of meetings are part of University Press DNA, so much so that we may become inured to fresh ways of thinking about them as opportunity spaces – for both acquisitions and marketing essential functions. This panel aimed to bring together acquisitions, marketing and exhibits staff to think about best practices and new opportunities.

APPROACH TO EXHIBITS

Ellen, Yale University Press (advertising point of view)

- Exhibits are considered to be the faces of the press
- For some people, it is the only 1:1 contact they will have with your press/institution
- The way your booth looks and the way your staff represents is very important
- It is important to respond quickly to those that contact you
- Yale treats exhibits as a communal effort, everyone at the Press can weigh in on it
- For events when an author is on a panel and Yale won't be there, they send the author an "author pack" which is a copy of the book and 50 flyers with a show discount

Eric, Columbia University Press (pointers from an acquiring editor standpoint)

- Exhibits and conferences are essential to what Columbia does
- Exhibits are where the concept of the editor is best embodied
- Keys to a successful exhibit – making a positive impression and spending time to gather as much information as you can; know your lists and focus on their strengths; know where you are and where you want to go with your work
- Planning and preparation are keys to success, which can begin months in advance
- Look at who is attending/what the conferences is going to focus on – chances are that the key topics are what people will be excited about
- The books that people are most excited about are almost always the ones that are not the best sellers – people are really into the work that is focused on their field
- When considering what to bring think about what is relevant to who will be there, bring books from related fields that attendees may be interested in
- Too many "outside" books and your list may be seen as unfocused – have a balance
- Use a publication date as a cutoff for what to bring – helps answer the question "why isn't my book here?"

- Bring bound galley of books that are just going to miss the meeting – makes people feel like they are insiders, that they are getting an inside peek at something
- Don't just meet with potential authors, meet with people you should know but don't
- Gather intel – see how people are engaging with books
- Do what you can to drive people to the booth (before, during, and after the meeting)
 - Examples: book signings, preconference trailers, give copies of textbooks away but get a name/email for it to add to your list
- Make sure all of your messaging reinforces the image you want to project – be accurate and consistent in the way you present yourself

Elaine, University of North Carolina Press

- From an acquisitions point of view, exhibitions are a neat way to see how a press has grown and changed over the years as it is reflected in their lists
- UNC Press goes to 30-35 events that align with their list areas
- When not at a meeting, think about other ways to have a presence such as bag inserts
- The primary function at scholarly conferences is still shared between acquisitions and marketing
- Elaine thinks of events as “pop-up intellectual communities.” These communities occur at the conference level, the panel level, and the booth level. This is the fruit of bridge building. It is personal work.
- Communities of scholars grow around the Press's work, and the Press grows around the communities
- Acquisitions has always been key, but is becoming more dominate.
- Sales don't occur at meetings like they used to (they will take place later)

Q&A SESSION

Q: How do you choose the conferences you attend? Are there dialogues between acquisitions/marketing? Is the choice largely acquisitions driven? Are there any marketing only conferences?

- **Kathleen** - MIT is mostly acquisitions focused at events. Some events have a marketing focus to show MIT out and about
- **Eric** – Review previous shows attended and shows based on your lists. If you decide to go to a meeting, go on a consistent basis. If you take a year off, your absence is noted.
- **Ellen** – There is turnover in your editors and staff, and with that comes a change in focus – so your shows change. It is a very fluid thing – picking shows. Start looking in October at what you did last year and what you want to do the coming year. Exhibits are about your new books – it is where people get to touch and feel the book.

Q: What are the trends with on-site book orders?

- **Ellen** – Sending less and less books to sell at shows as costs to ship are getting higher and higher (shipping and show handling costs are typically determined by weight).
- **Attendee comment** – Went from a % discount to a flat rate that gets discounted daily (ex. \$20 on day one, \$15 on day two, \$10 on day three). This has increased sales and the flat rate eliminates calculating taxes and fees.

Session: Managing Technology Transitions

Date: Monday, June 18, 2018

Chair: Lynn Fisher, VP, Book Publishing, University of Toronto Press

Panelists: Erin Rolfs, Marketing and Assistant Director, Louisiana State University Press; Allison Belan, Assistant Director for Digital Strategy, Duke University Press; Martyn Beeny, Marketing and Sales Director, Cornell University Press

This panel shared their learnings and tips for managing technology transitions. Their experience stems from transitions relating to: online publishing platforms, databases, and websites.

Allison, Duke University Press – Online publishing platform migration (made in 2017)

- Journals were all online with one technology partner, online eBook site was a different site – looked to put these together under one site
- What was the project?
 - Website design and build
 - Conversion and migration of 35000+ articles, 2400+ books
 - Customer and product data migration
 - Partner communications
 - Near global process change
- Work was impacted by 25 people across 8 teams
- Challenge encountered – each person had a different role and knew how to do that role, but didn't know how that piece fit together in the whole

Erin, Louisiana State University Press – Implementation of Bibliolive title database

- Migrated database from a version of All Books last updated in 2008 to Bibliolive
- The guiding points behind this specific implementation for this transition are as follows:
 - Treat migrating title databases like moving houses
 - Talk with all departments to see what their needs are
 - Assess real impact on your time
 - Take the time to audit current data
 - Expect that not everything is going to fit and you will need to reconsider how you treat certain information
 - Manage expectations, limit detours
 - State upfront that not every question has an immediate answer and superficial issues are not a priority
 - Use Google forms to collect questions/concerns
 - Share stages and goals with future users not involved in the implementation – give updates
 - Engage the right people at the right time
 - Outsourcing some aspects of a project can be seen as insurance
 - Give future-users the opportunity to demonstrate competence in incremental ways
 - Recognize fast-learners and empower them as the implementation draws to a close

Martyn, Cornell University Press – Website revamp

- Upon starting at Cornell University Press, Martyn was charged with revamping the website

- He had just finished completing this same thing at the previous Press he worked for, University of Nebraska Press
- 12 month process

DISCUSSION/Q&A

Q: Who was involved in the process, was it an organic process?

- **Allison** – Started with organizing the project itself and broke it down into subprojects, picked a team lead for each subproject. Leaders needed to have the authority and ability to speak up and get answers quickly.

Q: What worked well during the project:

- **Allison** – What they were doing was in line with the strategy of the press
- **Erin** – 1) Put together a flow chart that showed how the new system would line up and work against the old system. 2) Ninja gift card – When people would find things they would get rewarded with a gift card – it was a competitive and fun way to engage people in the project.

Q: Biggest challenge faced during the project?

- **Martyn** – 1) Having too many people involved. Find the sweet spot of who you need and from what groups. 2) Workload. Project tasks are extra things that pile on to your daily tasks. So having deadlines, and things not complete are an obstacle.
- **Erin** – Managing your time and being mindful of the time of those that you are asking things of.
- **Allison** – Made this her priority and it became 80% of her workload. Challenge was staff turnover in key positions so key input from a few others was missing. Allison had to fill in the gaps in areas she knew about but were not normal for her.

Q: What would you have done different?

- **Allison** – 1) Document the old process and why things were done the way they were so it didn't have to be reconstructed. 2) Add another subproject based on workflows – work with publishing operations about how workflows were going to change and getting ready for the change.
- **Erin** – 1) Thought harder about what they would do internally vs what they would have the other company do (would outsource more). 2) Push harder for more incremental training for the company. 3) Make sure the vendor's representatives fully understood the Press' workflow.
- **Martyn** – 1) Would have hired an outside project manager. 2) Try to identify ahead of time what skills people have when picking the project team.

Tips/Tricks

Allison

- Connect the changes to strategy or mission
- Share the vision early and broadly
- Single point of strong, empowered leadership
- Avoid the blind men and the elephant
 - Nail down the why and how of the work – but understand the difference
 - Connect the why to the new how
- Devote resources to planning use of new system during project
- Be ready to adapt

Erin

- When you're trusted to lead a project that requires everyone's participation it's your responsibility to get buy-in from those individuals as best you can
- For technological changes that impact the entire press, select a liaison from each department to both relate aspects of the system that matter to that department and their collect questions. They should contribute to the objective that everyone adapts successfully.
- Articulate what everyone has to gain from the process, early on. Establish routine updates.
- Make sure the company you are working with provides you with a representative that is knowledgeable about your current workflow or has a solid frame of reference. Take/insist on the time to educate them, don't assume the relationship is the other way around

Martyn

- Use a small group of key personnel who know what they're doing
- Make sure best talent in key leadership/technical roles
- Broad representation allows for varied viewpoints, but competing ideas/visions can lead to too much compromise
- Project management capabilities are crucial
- Project leader needs full and complete support of the director
- Establish a realistic budget early
- Communication is key

Session: Managing Print Runs

Date: Monday, June 18, 2018

Chair: Mary Beth Jarrad, Marketing and Sales Director, NYU Press

Panelists: Romi Gutierrez, Associate Director of Sales and Marketing, University Press of Florida; Madeline Wieters, Finance and Operations Manager, Baylor University Press; Susan Donnelly, Assistant Director/Sales and Marketing Director, Harvard University Press

As academic publishing continues to adapt to a changing marketplace, as well as to changes in print on demand technologies, the management of print options can be confusing at best. What are the benefits and trade-offs to each of the many different options? This panel reviewed different strategies from different presses, and featured frank discussions of each approach.

POD, was defined by the panelists for this session as printing one-book at a time, true POD, not short run printing.

Q: How do you determine what prints POD or offset at your Press?

- **Mary Beth** – Every book gets an offset printing from the beginning then everything transitions over to POD.
- **Romi** –
 - 80-90% of academic monographs go POD, they are printed case
 - If paper bind and no color, it is POD

- **Madeline** –
 - Most of the list has an offset initial run, unless it is a reprint from another publisher (those come out in POD)
 - The offset print run is planned to cover 12-18 months of sales then titles are planned to go POD after that
 - Baylor has switched to printed case vs having jacketed books
- **Susan** –
 - Harvard does not use POD for frontlist books. They do a small amount of POD for backlist (about 5%). Otherwise, backlist titles have a short run program.
 - Not printing POD is used as an acquisition tool
 - Still do jacketed monographs

Q: How do you decide how many books to print? What gets pulped?

- **Mary Beth** – When going POD, there are no repercussions for guessing how many books to print.
- **Susan** –
 - Uses old school methods and has been in the industry a long time – they print what they think the market can bear
 - Harvard has good partners – production and printers are good at making the gaps disappear when enough books aren't printed. Even when there are gaps, they won't consider changing the printing method, but would consider changing the shipping – how quickly they can get books out the door.
 - Overstocks don't usually happen on the first printing, they often happen more on the reprints
- **Madeline** – Most of what is pulped is older titles
- **Romi** – In looking at trade titles, mostly backlist titles are the ones that are pulped

Q: What are your return rates, are they impacted by POD?

- **Romi** – “The best print run is when you've sold the last book and no one else wants one” – POD lets you get there. Returns have improved significantly since going POD at Univ. Press of Florida. Went from 18% to 11% returns. Average returns are 15%.
- **Mary Beth** – When NYU Press put trade titles in POD, the return rates dropped drastically
- **Madeline** – Returns are flat around 7-8%
- **Susan** – Return rate is 16.2%. Susan questions if this is too low given their trade titles – they do a good job getting books into the store, but don't really push the resale (the follow up sale to replace the books that were sold).

Q: Is book cost a factor in order quantity/type?

- Color books tend to be the ones that are over ordered, because they order more to hit a certain unit cost
- **Romi** – The unit cost at the book level does not have as much weight as it used to
- **Madeline** – Cost is a factor, but not the most important
- **Susan** – Harvard has meetings for backlists, about what they can get for unit cost. On the topic of costs, they have found that they spend more time and money redesigning and reprinting jackets for key titles that are selling.

Q: What is the purpose of the paperback conversion?

- **Romi** –
 - Authors really want to see their books in paper. It extends the life of the book. They think they might have more legs on that title if they go paper and make it more affordable when the library market is over.
 - Often encourage authors to have events when it is in paper so that it is more affordable for those at the event
 - We have a target number of 220-250. Once we sell that many cloth books, we will bring out the paperback version.
- **Madeline** – Paper keeps extending the books life. Will go paper when the cloth offset run starts to run out.
- **Susan** –
 - Harvard will produce paperback books after the book has been out in hardcover for over two years. Even at 18 months, if a title runs low and they need to print more they will print more cloth. They are looking at making the change to paper more quickly now.
 - Review attention does not happen on publication date, it tends to be drawn out and happens over time
 - Harvard does not transition all books to paper

Q: Where is the market for paperback?

- **Romi** – Online sales and overseas
- **Madeline** – If a book goes for course adoption, it goes paperback (offset) to start with
- **Susan** – Will produce paperbacks for three reasons: 1) cloth was a trade success and there is the expectation that a less expensive version will do well, 2) contracts stating they will go paper, 3) course adoption books

Q: Role of international sales and print decisions?

- **Mary Beth** – 100% POD for UK and Australia list (due to shipping costs/time). Sales went up 17% in the first year after going POD.
- **Madeline** – Moving to an international POD strategy. Right now international sales are buying off of the initial print run that is on the floor.
- **Romi** – Most international sales are Asia Pacific, UK, Australia – and are POD. Do have consignment agreements for offset titles that won't go POD.

Q: How much of your business is print?

- **Madeline** – 90%
- **Romi** – 90%
- **Susan** – 95%
- **Mary Beth** – 75%

Session: Evolution of the Book Review in the 21st Century

Date: June 19, 2018

Chair: Brenda King, Publicity Director, Yale University Press

Panelists: Ian Buruma, Editor, New York Review of Books; Evan Kindley, Senior Humanities Editor, Los Angeles Review of Books; Laura Marsh, Literary Editor, The New Republic

During this session a panel of editors from three of America's most influential publications shared how they are continuing to adapt to the changes in the churning media environment in the U.S. They discussed challenges, opportunities, and the new generation of readers.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BOOK REVIEW AT EACH ORGANIZATION

Laura, The New Republic

- Book reviews are just as important for non-fiction as they are for fiction work
- “Reviews are places where people are getting in fights about books and falling in love with them”
- Reviewing is a distinct type of writing and has its own way of setting up narrative tones
- Give attention to books that give a new idea or attitude, whether fiction or non-fiction
- There is often going to be friction between pairing the reviewer and the author – you have disagreement, but you also have conversation

Ian, New York Review of Books

- Feels the new “Right” is not just against political views, but culture, learning, understanding...this is felt at the liberal NYRB
- Ian became editor of a liberal publication right after Brexit and Trump was elected – so he/NYRB is looking for a new rite of readers in this world

Evan, Los Angeles Review of Books

- LARB focuses not only on books, they welcome pieces on film, television, comics, art, culture...
- Primarily online, at least at first
- Their geographical location, away from the East coast and NYRB, gives them a different view in the eyes of some that pitch their books to them [those that might not consider pitching their books on the East will pitch them to LARB]
- Work largely with academics and cover many University Press books, but not exclusively
- Founded by an academic, run by academics or aspiring academics (grad students)
- There is an ongoing crisis in the academic jobs market that is pushing scholars into journalism, or public writing – there is a movement towards journalism and book reviewing
- One thing academics can do – value this new form of labor
- Foster an environment where there are incentives for people to write for publications like LARB, NYRB, The New Republic, and such

PANEL Q&A

Q: In regards to book coverage as it stands now, is the glass half-full or half-empty? Shrinking space, shrinking pay... is this part of your mental landscape and how does it factor into the books you cover?

- **Laura** – Feels the crisis is in the newspaper reviews (the daily review of reading and writing), not really in the reviews covered by The New Republic

- **Evan** – Agrees that decline is felt mostly in daily book reviews. Evan questions if the news was even covering University Press books – was the decline even felt by those in the room?
- **Ian** – “It is moving away from a cleaner separation from what is regarded as academic and those that would read for more than just a specialized knowledge” – recommends resisting separating the two spheres.

Q: In thinking of the new generation of readers, at your publication, is trying to reach different demographics a concern?

- **Ian** – Yes, it has to be. Ian doesn’t want to second guess what the younger generation wants to read, so he suggests getting younger contributors and younger writers to write things that younger readers are interested in. Ian cautions not to go “pop” – just let the style work in gradually. Keep the quality as high as it always was but be aware of changing trends.
- **Laura** – Feels their readership is very young. Feels there is some Darwinism with really great work. If it is really good, people will find it – from a 20 year old scholar to a 60 year old retired academic – and they talk about it.
- **Evan** – Finds that pieces that circulate the most are those that have been picked up and shared by social media, some intellectual sites, and find an audience that is somewhat unusual or out of the norm. LARB will take chances on topics off the beaten path, and often they do really well.