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Bonn and Furloughs' "Getting the word out: Academic libraries as scholarly publishers" (Book Review)

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Book Reviews

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Bonn, M. and Furlough, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Getting the word out: Academic libraries as scholarly publishers*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries. 274pp. $43.94. ISBN 9780838986974

Whether libraries are ready for it or not, the library profession is moving into scholarly publishing. Within the last decade or two, a whole new sub-discipline within library science has been created, built, and sustained with funding, research, and administrative effort to create a path towards solving the unaffordable and unsustainable dead-end path that scholarly publishing has been on over the last several decades. This book, *Getting the Word Out*, tracks those efforts and what is being done today within many libraries to enter the publishing business. Section 1 of the book presents why libraries publish and makes the point that current business models have to be adjusted. It has long been realized that "commercial presses are bound to select works to publish based on their potential for sales, while university presses are (or ought to be) more concerned with selecting works based on their potential contribution to the advancement to the advancement of knowledge," and that a more mission–oriented approach can be more effectively accomplished through non–profit means. With the efficiencies that can be gained through digital publishing, "selling the products of scholarly work ceases to make sense as a means of financing any part of publication; attaching a cost to scholarly information simply diminishes its reach."

Once the technical infrastructure is in place, the cost for making the information available to one person as compared to a thousand people is essentially zero. "In the digital world, the press and the library need no longer be separate…" and "should unite." This sort of merger, according to Courant and Jones' article in chapter 1, "Scholarly Publishing as an Economic Public Good," should not occur at just a few universities, but at all of them. These authors posit the suggestion that there should be two publishing tracks: one, a "baseline digital edition: a lightly edited, open access edition of the text made available online," and a second or perhaps many additional levels of published versions from enhanced digital versions to fancy hardback editions. The first level, the competent work type, which would include the vast majority of scholarly publishing, could be quite cheap, while the second, more deeply edited and pampered versions could be more vigorously marketed in wider markets.

The library is strategically placed because it already holds the keys for acquiring, cataloging, and archiving works, and now with the Internet and associated digital infrastructure technologies, libraries now own very effective distribution methods that can distribute scholarly works "widely over time and space without incurring any appreciable additional cost."

There are five chapters on how libraries of various sorts are publishing now, and an additional four chapters on what libraries are currently publishing, including open educational resources (free textbooks), student works, humanities data publishing and scientific data curation publishing. But chapter 7, which covers publishing services at seven small academic libraries, may be of greatest interest to the Christian coalition of colleges. "Because small academic libraries don't have to navigate the complex bureaucracies of larger institutions and often can build upon strong relationships with faculty and other campus partners, they can be nimble and flexible in experimenting with new services. "Small academic library publishing programs distinguish themselves by emphasizing teaching, learning, and undergraduate research." Clem Guthro highly recommends that small colleges and universities need to join publishing consortia to have a seat at the table to be able to express the needs of small institutions. It helps to be in the middle of things to better run one's institutional repository and digitization programs, even if you're not involved in more in-depth publishing.

The book also includes note citations at the end of each chapter, a short biography of each of the 20 authors, and a 20 page subject index, which all prove to be helpful.

Reviewer
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