

# CANADIAN UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING IN A DIGITAL AGE: *A Symposium*

**Canadian University Publishing in a Digital Age  
A Symposium Held under the Auspices of the G13 Provosts  
March 21-22, 2010  
University of British Columbia**

*Report on the Proceedings – prepared by Leonora Crema, Ted Dodds, Peter Milroy, Walter Stewart*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

These are transformative times for Canadian scholarly publishing and for scholarly communication around the globe.

For decades, control of the scholarly record has been outsourced to large commercial publishers, and not actively managed by academy. Today new opportunities have emerged to increase access to new knowledge with less need to rely on models that demand exclusive distribution rights. Technologies for creating, teaching and disseminating scholarship are evolving rapidly; they are accessible, relatively low cost, highly scalable, and easy to use. Meanwhile, economic models that support university press publishing have become unsustainable; library collection budgets are strained; and the university community must develop new funding approaches to monograph publishing which remains central in many humanities and social sciences disciplines. Open Access mandates for publicly funded research are emerging but are not well integrated in the academy, nor have the costs and skill-sets for their implementation been fully considered. Intellectual property and copyright legislation for digital material is unclear. Faculty tenure and rewards systems are being impacted by all of these factors.

Current academic publishing models have served the historic needs of scholars for dissemination and exchange of knowledge, but are not addressing demands on universities to be more closely connected to innovation across society and in the economy. Governments are increasingly demanding that universities make a clear and immediate difference; as a consequence, there is an imperative for universities to improve the flow of ideas to the wider society. New academic publishing models must increasingly respond to these demands.

Ultimately, the size and scope of these challenges are greater than any one institution can address. **Canada's universities need to take ownership of these issues and act, individually and collectively,**

**to reassert control over how their intellectual capital is managed, and to maximize its accessibility and impact while assuring that quality is maintained.**

A symposium entitled *Canadian University Publishing in a Digital Age*, held at the UBC Vancouver campus on March 21-22, 2010 brought together 54 invited participants – provosts, press directors, IT leaders, university librarians, faculty and others - to explore new models of scholarly publishing emerging in Canada and the US. The symposium was intended as a first step toward developing a national vision for scholarly communication and a concrete action plan for transforming Canadian academic publishing.

See <http://blogs.ubc.ca/universitypublishing/> for the complete symposium program, speaker presentations and transcripts.

Recommendations from the symposium confirmed the need for coordinated action at local, national and international levels. Attendees were unanimous in the need to sustain momentum from the event through a collective approach. This could include as **potential next steps**:

- 1) **Establish a national task force or working group** to be appointed and led by the country's provosts. It would chart an initial course of action to create a Canadian university publishing strategy, including concrete outcomes and projects to be launched in 2010. Membership should include the campus constituencies noted above – provosts, presses, libraries, IT, faculty and researchers - along with other stakeholders and organizations<sup>1</sup> invested in these issues. Its first task would be to define the process, communication channels and timelines. It should also assess public policy, specifically: what do governments and citizens outside the academy want and expect from universities' dissemination of knowledge?
- 2) There are already several **Canadian-led infrastructure platforms** for scholarly publishing, with Érudit and Synergies being two outstanding examples. Next steps toward developing stable national platforms could include building on these successful initiatives and finding ways to leverage the resource base.
- 3) Redefine the **role of university presses**, including the business model to support them. Redefine the **role of the university library** in scholarly communication and publishing. **Identify IT's role** in these developments.
- 4) Create **forums for developing new publishing models** across Canadian universities - for example, establish scholarly communications steering committees at all G13 universities.
- 5) Explore **alternative incentives** related to promotion and tenure that will encourage more research faculty to adopt innovative dissemination models, including online publishing.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, a March 24, 2010 Scholarly Journals Stakeholders meeting held in Ottawa explored similar transformation in journal publishing, and recommended national collective action.

## PROCEEDINGS

**Background:** In 2007, the US-based Ithaka Group published a landmark report on new models for scholarly book publishing. The report recommends renewed commitment to publishing in its broadest sense so universities can realize the global impact of their academic programs, enhance the reputations of their institutions, maintain a voice in what constitutes important scholarship, and in some cases reduce costs. The report highlights the need to deploy the full range of university resources – faculty research and teaching, library collections, IT capacity, and press publishing expertise – and signals the leading role university provosts can play in developing new publishing models for their campuses.<sup>2</sup>

*Canadian University Publishing in a Digital Age: a Symposium* built on these ideas and took the discussion to a pan-Canadian level. It examined:

- What new models are emerging for production and digital dissemination of scholarly work?
- How are these transforming the roles of university presses, libraries, IT and faculty authors?
- What approaches are no longer working and why? What new collaborations, especially using digital platforms, are possible? What must we preserve about our current system?
- How can we achieve sustainability from the creation of new scholarship through to its long-term preservation and accessibility?

The symposium was designed to be the first step in a longer process of transforming academic publishing in Canada to ensure that universities can effectively meet and sustain their obligations for learning, research, and service.

### ***Presentations***

**David Farrar**, UBC Provost and Vice President Academic welcomed the group on behalf of the University and the G13 Provosts. He noted the impact of these transformative changes and stressed the opportunity within the symposium to precipitate collective, concerted action.

He introduced keynote speaker **Daniel Greenstein**, Vice Provost, Academic Planning and Programs, University of California, who gave an opening address entitled - *Sustainable scholarly communication. Is it possible?*

Dan Greenstein noted that the future of a university's library, press, IT organization and museums ought properly to reflect choices made at a broader level about the university's mission.

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<sup>2</sup> From the Ithaka Report: *University Publishing in a Digital Age* available at: <http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/strategy/Ithaka%20University%20Publishing%20Report.pdf>

Increasingly, strategic choices and trade-off decisions will need to be taken to maximize the impact of investments in scholarly communication. Moreover, resources already being spent in these areas could be effectively reallocated to new organizational models, based on new assumptions about what most adds value.

As illustration, he posed a series of provocative questions:

- ‘Cabinets of curiosities’ – that is, our collections held digitally or locally in print - are wonderful and inherently worthy. But are we investing in them in ways that surface important and high quality information allied with the institution’s mission? Should libraries continue building print collections that are frequently duplicated elsewhere?
- If we eliminated our investments in publishing, if we closed our university presses, would we harm our faculty? Don’t our faculty members always have peer-reviewed outlets for their research?
- If we shut our institutional repositories today would our faculty’s research, conference and seminar papers, and their data, simulations, and images – still not find their way to the Internet?
- Should the university publish in the interest of discipline building and gap filling, or should it select a few areas that make sense to the institution given its strategy and mission, its unique location, history, and discipline and research strengths, and that it can afford?
- Can the university investigate possibilities for continuum publishing between academic publishing and trade publishing as a way of reducing costs and increasing revenue?

In summary he urged the audience to explore new business, technical and organizational models aligned with the university’s core mission and what can, realistically, be sustained.

Following the keynote, **Ingrid Parent**, University Librarian, UBC, introduced a panel to present on specific issues and initiatives underway. Panelists were:

- **Peter Givler**, Executive Director, Association of American University Presses, who provided an overview of innovative US-based scholarly publishing projects and trends;
- **Carole Moore**, University Librarian, University of Toronto, who described work underway in Canada’s university libraries, focusing on open access initiatives and collaborations among libraries and presses; and
- **G rard Boismenu**, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Universit  de Montr al, who presented  rudit, the multi-institutional digital publishing consortium comprising Quebec universities that offers an innovative model for promotion and dissemination of research.

**Peter Milroy**, Director, UBC Press, introduced the final presentation by **Melissa Pitts**, Assistant Director, UBC Press on the *Results of a Canadian Open Access White Paper* commissioned by the Association of Canadian University Presses.

Presenters offered differing and valuable perspectives on projects currently underway in Canada and the US, along with their underlying access and business models. Many projects are exploring new modes of distribution and publishing including increasing 'on demand' delivery. Open Access mandates offer new possibilities for public access and impact, but their effect on press revenue models – fundamentally, does OA impair them, or is it a value-adding adjunct – is far from clear. Projects have tended to be led by libraries, groups of universities, groups of faculty or societies and branches of the academy rather than being mandated by the university as a corporate entity. The role of provosts in steering and empowering change will be critical in future.

 **Slides from all presentations are available on the symposium website:**

<http://blogs.ubc.ca/universitypublishing/presentations/>

 **A recording of the presentations is also available at:**

<http://mediasite.mediagroup.ubc.ca/MediaGroup/Viewer/?peid=b7322220708f43ac99b43ca2a55f2a00>

### ***Group Discussions***

Speaker presentations were followed by discussion in groups which were pre-assigned in order to ensure each group had representation from each constituency. The presenters joined the groups. Groups were asked to discuss all three of the following issues:

- Guiding principles for building a national strategy for academic publishing
- Desired outcomes and potential projects
- Challenges and resource issues

but were assigned to focus on one in detail. These sessions were followed with reports back to the whole groups, summarized below:

#### **Guiding Principles**

1. Quality assurance and pursuit of excellence must be paramount in any model.
2. Open access is a value embraced by most. There is, however, a wide range of understanding of what open access means. As part of any strategy, open access must be clearly defined particularly with respect to the rights of creators and of their institutions. Limits to “open” should be defined and acknowledged: open access does not mean free. Economic models that incorporate open access need to be explored.
3. Any strategy for new models of university publishing should be national and fully engaged with similar efforts internationally while preserving some autonomy at the local level.
4. Academic publishing from Canadian universities should bring prominence to Canadian scholarship.
5. Preservation and access to source data behind scholarly works should be ensured.

6. Peer review must be preserved.
7. Redundancy should be avoided through national/international common platforms.
8. Strategic leadership must come from senior administrations.

### **Desired Outcomes**

1. Common understanding of Open Access.
2. A vibrant national system of digital publishing of academic materials closely aligned with international efforts.
3. A small group of risk-tolerant, early movers providing leadership to move forward with pilot projects.
4. A national repository/archive.
5. Sustainable economic models that recognize incremental funding to institutions is unlikely.
6. A national system that can involve collaboration with the private sector without contravening the principles of open access, creator's rights, and public ownership.
7. The university brand is seen as strong and an assurance of quality.
8. Better measures of impact and success for academic publishing are determined.
9. Libraries move from a holding strategy to a more on-demand strategy.
10. Strategic priorities of the host university are more directly incorporated in planning.

### **Challenges and Resource Issues**

1. Private sector and not-for-profit publishers that currently operate on a 'purchase by user' financial model bring considerable value to the dissemination process but with significant associated costs. This will not be easily replaced if moves to open access reduce or eliminate that engagement.
2. Digital technology presents opportunities to reclaim academic publishing from private hands without incurring the large capital costs of print facilities. It is important to note that the ease of digital publishing in no way covers the need for editing, the co-ordination of peer review, marketing and other support functions. Digital and especially e-publishing is non-capital intensive. It is, however, human resource intensive. Any strategies to reclaim the role must take into account these needs.
3. Current models of academic publishing are not seen as financially sustainable except perhaps in some of the more high-profile scientific disciplines. Those exceptions are not sustainable if demands for open access and safeguarding the public interest are taken seriously. Sustainability must be a major focus of any movement for change.
4. Change will not be cost neutral. Those costs will likely have to be recovered from savings or increased revenue. Increased government support is unlikely at least in the short to medium term.
5. Universities are not well known for their ability to collaborate with each other. Will senior administration take up the demand for their leadership on these issues?
6. Many other university processes are bound up in current publishing models most notably promotions and tenure.
7. Bringing research faculty into the discussion is imperative at an early date.

8. These issues are urgent, but there is not a general perception of that urgency on campuses across the country.

A plenary discussion followed the group reports, and focused on: pilot projects, funding, task forces to address issues and who else should be engaged in next steps.

#### **Funding:**

1. Clear assessment of the use of existing resources must be made in the anticipation that the cost of new models will largely need to be borne out of reuse of existing funds.
2. The granting councils support the existing models to a significant extent. The role of the councils and of CFI in support and building of new models needs to be discussed fully with them.
3. A change in the model does not necessarily eliminate roles for the private sector. Exploration of new business models must occur before funding decisions are set in stone.
4. Foundations like the Mellon Foundation may be sources of funding for exploratory work and pilot projects.

#### **Who else needs to be engaged:**

Suggestions included but were not limited to faculty and students and their associations, granting councils, CFI, commercial publishers, scholarly societies, professional associations such as CARL/ABRC for libraries and ACUP/APUC for presses, federal and provincial governments, clients and end users.

#### ***Concluding Messages***

The Symposium concluded with **Doug Owram**, Deputy Vice Chancellor and Principal, UBC Okanagan and **David Farrar**, Provost and Vice President Academic, UBC, summarizing what they had heard and what would be communicated back to the G13 Provosts.

Both provosts commented on the value of having the diverse groups at this event, and that though there are differences there is also growing desire for change. They noted that the current publishing model is broken; technical innovation makes new models possible; and that universities should be creating the future not simply allowing it to happen to them. It was clear that a number of experimental models have emerged, but that nothing has yet emerged as “the way.” Funding for new models will mostly have to be found from repurposing existing resources. The concerns of a much wider group of stakeholders than represented at the symposium will need to be engaged – most notably those of research faculty members.

The provosts in attendance committed to taking these issues forward to the G13 Provosts who meet in April 2010 and to a national meeting of all provosts in the autumn.

**Comments from Walter Stewart, Facilitator:** *As has been noted, those who attended represented a range of roles within the university. A very wide range of positions on the issues was also represented - ranging from those who would be happy to 'blow the whole system up' to those who wished to incorporate new technologies and business models to significantly sustain existing structures. No one in attendance expressed an opinion that nothing needed to be done. No one said all was just fine and that change was unnecessary. The day concluded in an atmosphere of good will and belief that a process had begun that could make the changes required to make the dissemination of Canadian scholarship both powerful and sustainable.*

*The consensus reached at the end of the day is both a great argument for change and a major asset in beginning that change. There is will and there is demand for senior administration to lead a process in which all can engage. It would, however, be a mistake to over estimate the depth of consensus. If the task force is appointed, it will face a strong challenge charting a course among revolutionaries and incrementalists and those who wish to tinker to preserve and those who are committed to building anew. Its ability to navigate among those positions and to engage research faculty and graduate students will also be key to its success in building a new model for academic publishing in Canada.*