Scholarly Publishing in the U.S., Then and Now: A Brief History and Implications for the Future

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The Beginnings of Scholarly Publishing

After Gutenberg’s printing press was operable, as of 1452...

- Cambridge and Oxford Universities, England
  - Late 1400s, Oxford printed religious tracts
  - Presses at each institution were established mid-1500s

- Harvard University, English Colonies
  - Mid-1600s, printed some texts
  - Harvard’s press was not established until much later (1913)
First University Presses Established in the U.S.

- Johns Hopkins, 1878
- University of Chicago, 1891
- University of California; Columbia, 1893
Daniel Coit Gilman, Founding President, Johns Hopkins University

“It is one of the noblest duties of a university to advance knowledge, and to diffuse it not merely among those who can attend the daily lectures--but far and wide” (1878).

Daniel Coit Gilman

Image courtesy of explow.com
Charles Scribner II, Co-Founder, Princeton University Press

“The Press] is formed in the interests of Princeton University, to establish, maintain, and operate a printing and publishing plant, for the promotion of education and scholarship, and to serve the university by manufacturing and distributing its publications” (1905).

“What is accomplished if the work of a lifetime grows mouldy in the drawer of a desk?”
What Do Publishers Do?

- Entertain inquiries, plan projects, negotiate contracts
- Accept and evaluate manuscripts
- Edit content and copyedit
- Administer peer review
- Graphics, design, lay out, and produce
- Promote, sell, and distribute
- Facilitate book reviews
James Bryant Conant, 23rd President, Harvard University, 1940s

Challenged the business model of the Harvard University Press and suggested that a commercial firm publish books on behalf of Harvard ...

“[I] might well be the executioner of the Harvard University Press ... Much as I feel if we were honest and brave, we would give up the Press, we cannot undertake the gruesome slaughter ... The death agonies would drag out for many years because of the nature of our contracts and many commitments.”
American Association of University Presses
founded 1937

- Established to facilitate cooperative projects among presses. Mission: “to assist its members through professional education, cooperative services, and public advocacy.”


- The AAUP still exists today with 135 members.

- AAUP members are, by and large, not-for-profit.
Academic Journals

In time, by the early to mid-20th century, books were no longer the primary capital in academic discourse.

Academic journals became the main tool for scholarly communication.

University presses were just one producer of early journals; academic societies began to establish the corpus of scholarly journals.

This often led to liaisons with the commercial publishing world.
Academic Journals in the Age of the Internet

- Varied economic models for publishing journals, commercial and not-for-profit
- Emanate from: scholarly societies, university presses, commercial publishers, etc.
- Rely on (free) content supplied by scholars
- Supplied to libraries/readers through aggregator services, e.g. BioOne, Project Muse, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, EBSCO, Emerald, HighWire, et al.
- Journal pricing is a much-studied/discussed topic
Open Access Institutional Repositories

IRs are “digital collections capturing and preserving the intellectual output of a single or multi-university community” (R.K. Johnson, *Dlib*, 2002).

IRs serve as a corollary to scholarly publishing. They facilitate scholarly communication by serving as reservoirs of scholarly thought and knowledge exchange.

Directory of Open Access Repositories
http://www.opendoar.org/
Purpose of Scholarly Communication

Scholars write papers, chapters, books, etc., to:

- transmit, and build a body of, knowledge
- to communicate with their peers, students, and the public
- to further their careers

Too often the economics of scholarly publishing drives the model, and scholarly communication is a secondary concern.
Commercial Academic Publishers/Aggregators

- Take free content
- Perform editing and reviewing functions
- Often appropriate most aspects of copyright
- Often allow an “author version” (i.e. manuscript) of an article to be posted in institutional repositories
- Published versions are behind a paywall
- Keep profits from the sale and reuse of the content
- Fiduciary duty is to the shareholders
Not-for-Profit Academic Publishers/Aggregators

- Take free content
- Perform editing and reviewing functions
- Often do not appropriate most aspects of copyright
- Often allow a PDF of the *published version* to be posted in institutional repositories
- Do not keep profits from the sale and reuse of the content
- Fiduciary duty is to the emanating body (society, etc.)
Effects of Economic Model on Scholarly Communication

- Published versions of articles are the primary tool of academic discourse (where citations are key components of the literature)

- Author versions are a form of gray literature

- When author versions (i.e. manuscripts) are required in institutional repositories, publishers can make profit indefinitely on the article (i.e. the free content) they edited and distributed and impede scholarly communication in the process
“RoMEO is a searchable database of publisher’s policies regarding the self-archiving of journal articles on the web and in Open Access repositories ... [It] contains publishers’ general policies on self-archiving of journal articles and certain conference series. Each entry provides a summary of the publisher’s policy, including what version of an article can be deposited, where it can be deposited, and any conditions that are attached to that deposit” (from the SHERPA RoMEO site).
Present and Future of Scholarly Publishing

- Scholarly repositories (institutional or subject)
- NIH mandate, and FRPAA (so-called “Green OA”)
- Author-paid open access (so-called “Gold OA”; “author pays” is distinct from payment of page charges)
- Attempts at post-publication peer-review
- Scholarly work in The Cloud
- Delivery of content through apps and social media
Present and Future of Scholarly Publishing

- *Public Library of Science (PLoS)*—the scale of PLoS negatively impacts the quality of some of the articles

- Predatory publishers (Beall’s list of Predatory OA Publishers, http://metadata.posterous.com/83235355) that will publish if an author pays (and publisher makes a profit)

- Publishing scams (Common Ground Publishing; *Tex-as Journal of Science* scam site)

- Be aware that commercial interests often steer the dialogue about scholarly publishing
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Go, Big Red!