Report of the CIC Summit on Scholarly Communication in the Humanities and Social Sciences

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Overview

On December 2, 2003, some 50 representatives from across the CIC, including colleagues from national education organizations, scholarly societies, libraries, and university presses gathered to consider acting upon a recommendation from the Modern Language Association to cease relying on the book as the standard for promotion and tenure in the humanities and social sciences. Pre-meeting research, funded by the Mellon Foundation, and subsequent discussion at the Summit revealed that while the MLA report raises important questions, the experience of the faculty in the CIC universities is quite different with respect to scholarly monographs, and therefore a change in promotion and tenure is not warranted. However, virtually all agreed on specific action steps that may help CIC institutions influence the development of new systems of scholarly communication that are responsive to the needs of the academy.

Background

For many years, the national research community (scholars, librarians, press directors, and university administrators) has expressed concerns over the state of the system of scholarly communication. Consider, for example, “Scholarly Communication: the Report of the National Enquiry” published in 1979. The report considered a number of elements that, together, offered evidence of a dysfunctional system of scholarly communication including: declining sales of scholarly monographs; increasing costs of scientific journals; the shift in library budgets from monographs to serials; the need to shift to new modes of electronic publishing; and concerns by faculty that the process of publication in the humanities was too long and burdensome.

Conversations have progressed in these areas over the past 25 years. However, the fundamental issues and tensions remain, and many continue to consider the challenges articulated above as representing (individually and severally) a crisis in the system of scholarly communication.

Responding to these concerns, CIC university presses and libraries have initiated responsive programs of collaboration including a pilot project to provide electronic versions of select scholarly monographs published by CIC university presses. Collaboration among the CIC presses, as well as the continued challenges they face, is documented in a report prepared for the presidents and provosts of the CIC member universities and further explored in the final report of the CIC Advisory Committee on University Presses.

Conversations across the academy and within the CIC addressed different concerns and articulated different solutions – but nearly universal was the belief that (as the MLA report suggested) issues of promotion and tenure, particularly as they related to the requirement of a book – appeared to be contributing to the continued dysfunction of the system. With consensus around this one aspect, and support from the Mellon Foundation, the CIC moved forward to research and document the impact (perceived or real) of promotion and tenure practices on the system.

Many believed that such a conversation would provide the basis for shared understanding and action that would benefit our universities. For example, the CIC Deans of Arts and Sciences conveyed the following recommendation to the CIC
We must distinguish between enduring values and enduring systems. Strong support for the humanities and social sciences is an enduring value of the CIC universities – the systems that undergird that support may necessarily evolve. — Lou Anna Simon, Provost, Michigan State University and Chair of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation

Summary
Through both pre-meeting research and discussion at the meeting, it was determined that there is not a “crisis” linked to book publication or the scholarly monograph in CIC member universities. While views differ on the relevance or importance of the book as object, CIC faculty are not having difficulty finding publishing outlets for meritorious manuscripts – nor could a single case be identified where a faculty member was denied promotion or tenure solely because they could not find a publisher for their work. Moreover, the research and discussion revealed that faculty are open to new forms of scholarly publishing.

The Summit agenda included a series of panel presentations followed by open group discussion. As the day progressed, the following themes emerged:

• Within the CIC, there is no need to abandon reliance on the book for promotion and tenure in certain disciplines. However, it should be possible to consider multiple and alternative distribution mechanisms for such works, as well as other forms of disseminating scholarly research.
• While there is not evidence of a crisis tied to scholarly monographs and promotion and tenure in the CIC universities, there is recognition that other aspects of the scholarly communication system are problematic (including increasing costs of scientific journals, declining sales of university press publications, and a shift in library acquisitions from monographs to serials).

• Peer review, dissemination, and archiving of scholarly works are all critical elements of the system, and must be integral to any new system.

In discussing these several themes, the group did agree that while the book retains its importance to the community, the scholarly communication system as instantiated in the arts and social sciences may not be taking full advantage of new technology and communication models. The CIC universities can and should take deliberate steps toward the development of projects that will support and inform new systems of scholarly communication that are responsive to the needs of the academy, and that support and encourage access to the results of research and scholarship. To ensure that they take account of the continuing needs of the academy, these steps should:

• Encourage intra-campus conversations about the future of scholarly communication between press directors, university librarians, chief information officers, deans, and other stakeholders.
• Encourage CIC faculty to retain and apportion the rights to their intellectual property rather than granting all rights to commercial publishers.
• Initiate inter-institutional “collaboratives” to develop digital repositories in select areas (foreign language materials, specialized inter-disciplinary studies) that include elements of strong peer review, dissemination structures, and permanent archiving.
• Identify existing digital publishing efforts in the CIC, and continue to support the establishment of electronic journals and other forms of digital publishing that take advantage of new communications systems and structures, with concomitant peer review, distribution, and archiving support.

All of these issues will be carefully considered by the CIC Members (Chief Academic Officers) in order to consider how these steps might be implemented. More information about the proposed next steps, as well as any proposed action plans, will be shared broadly throughout the CIC in the coming months of 2004.
Leigh Estabrook reported that her data do not suggest that faculty are having difficulty finding outlets for publishing, but do suggest that the process for publishing is problematic. Additionally:

• It also appears that the promotion and tenure guidelines are changing throughout the CIC with respect to the acceptance of alternative (nonprint) publications. The definition of scholarship appears to have broadened.
• Subventions did arise as an issue with two clearly divided viewpoints: those who feel subventions are crucial to keep the presses afloat, and those who fear their work would be perceived as “vanity” publications.
• Faculty interviews revealed concerns about non-U.S. press publications, as well. First, some faculty are deliberately choosing foreign presses because they can publish more pictures, for example. Second, departments struggle sometimes with how to evaluate books written for a non-U.S. audience.
• There seems to be confusion about the new digital environment, and concerns about issues such as permanent archiving, intellectual property, and other issues associated with publication.

Arnita Jones indicated that the CIC report echoes findings of similar AHA investigations. History faculties still maintain that the book is the primary means of scholarly communication, but AHA research suggests that faculty are not having difficulty finding outlets for publishing. Historians also seem willing to consider alternative means of publishing (electronic). She also indicated that:

• AHA research suggests that faculty are not disadvantaged by using digital or electronic publishing outlets rather than print.
• In 2001, 25% of new faculty appointments were full-time tenure track.

Rosemary Feal expressed concern that the slow publication process is a challenge for the scholar, and there is no way to judge scholarship independent of the process of publication. Further, she suggested that:

• The imprimatur of a scholarly press should not be the only way to judge the value of a scholarly work.
• Subsidies and start-up packages, as well as support for the presses, should be provided by universities.
• CIC university presses should consider complementary acquisitions, so that within the consortium there are areas of specialization.
• Mentorship for new faculty in the process of publishing would be very helpful.

Audience Comments and Observations

• Are there special issues around international publication? How does this intersect with expectations of globalizing our institution?
• The Deans in the CIC find they cannot recall a time when any of their faculty were denied tenure because they could not find a publishing outlet.
• The data suggests two issues: timing of the publication process and the link between evaluation and publications. Communication technologies are changing (including scholarly communication), and we should take advantage of new technologies to improve the process of publication and dissemination of results.
• If we could take a small part of the funds that we use to subsidize university presses and/or that we use to support scientific journals, we could build a different mechanism that would buy us peer review, editing, archiving, and dissemination.
• There may be vertical stratification in the system such that faculty in teaching institutions may be experiencing more difficulties in finding outlets for publishing than their colleagues in research universities. These difficulties may not be the result of a dysfunctional scholarly communication system, but may instead raise questions about whether teaching institutions should apply the same standards for promotion and tenure as research institutions.
• The perceived differences between publishing in mathematics and in humanities may be artificial. There may be no larger “audience” for either, but the distribution mechanisms do appear to be different. What can we learn about the successes or failures of these systems?
• It was observed that faculty in the humanities do receive start-up and support packages within the CIC, and that the CIC universities do subsidize the budgets of their respective presses. Is it possible to find the “right” and comfortable level for such support and subsidies?
• It was noted that it is extremely unusual to publish in one’s own university press. The system supports all faculty – many of those who are not associated with universities that support presses.
• The form of the book has adapted well for 1,000 years, and it is unlikely to go away. It is important that faculty learn to write, and that they learn to write a book that someone will want to buy.
• In terms of looking at electronic publication: there must be the same assurances that exist in the print world (e.g., editing, peer review, archiving, permanence, access).
David Shulenburger noted that it is difficult to quantify the challenges and issues. It was also noted that providing subventions directly to faculty and/or to presses will affect the sales of monographs, ultimately. Do we want to publish books with zero sales? When you move into subsidies, how do you know when to stop? Part of the problem seems to be too many books chasing too few readers. Solutions: hold down costs of journals; enhance library budgets and tie the enhancement to the purchase of university press books; societies could set up review panels to which manuscripts could be sent, and the panel would then evaluate the scholarly merit – this would decouple the judgment of the scholarly merits from the publishing process (which process would still continue). The electronic literature is cited four times as often as the print literature.

Stanley Fish noted that the impact of a particular monograph may not show up for many years. One must also realize that books and articles are not just different lengths and forms, they represent different ambitions. The university press returns many benefits to the university. The presses are a great and efficient bargain providing multiple services including editorial, design and production, subscriptions, business, journals, and marketing. The level of review in a university press process is extraordinary. Very few administrators seem to understand how a hybrid commercial/university/scholarly venture actually operates, and each university must examine how it is supporting the press and where it is placed in the university structure. If you decouple review from dissemination, you must still rely on the presses to disseminate. Eighty-seven percent of the revenue from the press comes from outside the university.

Terry McDonald raised six points: 1) a very strong statement in support of scholarly monographs and their importance (university presses are an important public good); 2) publishing and P&T are two different issues; 3) issues are multi-faceted and there will be several and varied approaches to address the issues and challenges – we must make choices, and we seem to be making choices to buy science journals; 4) we must support our scientists, but we must also break the stranglehold of the commercial science publishers; 5) everyone must come to the table – on each campus, convene librarians, press directors, research vice presidents, graduate deans, provosts; 6) university presses play a vital role in scholarly communication.

Kumble Subbaswamy suggested that: 1) we should not be so anxious about the format of the book as physical object; 2) there are emerging forms of publication that seem promising; 3) changing the criterion of the monograph takes a major change in the cultures, and requires a complete rethinking of the dissertation process. Judging the impact of a scholar would actually be more difficult without the monograph. The humanities publishing paradigm is significantly different than the sciences. 4) the relationship of the university press to the university seems challenging – more like housing or the bookstore and we might want to consider bringing it closer to the university mission. There is much, internally, that each university needs to address.

Audience Comments and Observations
- Wouldn’t it be useful and important to pull together the published works of the entire faculty within an institution into one open archive or repository? Having said that, presses should have exclusive publishing rights for a particular period of time (e.g., five years).
- Are peer reviews critical enough? If we set up review panels, could we actually expect to get anything less than a positive review for any monograph? There is also a political problem, if the review board is “public.” Further, what kind of release time would be needed for our faculty? It was countered that the notion of a review panel would work best in extremely narrow fields.
- It was observed that in the 70s, the universities almost fully supported their presses, but it wasn’t necessarily a better system then. The technology issue may in fact be a red herring, and university presses are moving quickly to alternative means of distribution.
- We need to be equally concerned with distribution and access mechanisms for our scholarly communication system.
- How about if we abolish the requirement for publishing articles in the sciences? Sciences are heavily peer reviewed through the grant process. In fact, it might be argued that by the time a journal article is published, the few people who need to read it have already read it as a pre-pub.
- The university press directors should be invited to identify problems and solutions for each campus.
- Could we develop a peer review system similar to the NSF?
- The Deans believe the peer review process is working.
John Unsworth identified three stakeholders in the scholarly communication system: content producers, publishers and readers. The economies involved in the system are three: 1) prestige economy; 2) cash economy; 3) subsidy economy. Digital by default is the future. Almost all scholarship is now born digital, no matter the final form of the work. Much of the conversation around publication has to do with the promotion and tenure process. The ideal system would include:

- High quality, peer reviewed information available soon after creation in both electronic format and print
- Available online for free
- Available in print for a fee
- Stable address

Libraries should collect and hold this content. In order to do this, we need to mount large scale digital systems for collection building.

Authors are currently insulated from the vagaries of the economic conditions to which universities are subjected. The Budapest Initiative was identified as a model for the future. It focuses on the authors and users. California has an e-archive that holds papers from faculty across the California system. The aim is to make research literature freely available to the research community. Libraries and presses should work together to look at these opportunities.

Here are some forms of common cause: 1) administering online authoring and peer review; 2) producing standard metadata to improve access; 3) working with authors on issues of intellectual property; 4) working together to ensure support of print on demand; 5) determining when the size of an audience warrants different distribution (e.g., print and digital).

With expanded portfolios, the presses would need additional subsidies, but the costs would be well worth it. The full text of Dr. Unsworth’s presentation is available online at http://www.iath.virginia.edu/~jmu2m/CICsummit.htm.

If we are going to move to journals, moreover, we must recognize the costs inherent in that system. The importance of the digital domain cannot be overlooked, but it is not the silver bullet.

- Serious peer review is critical and will be essential in a digital environment.
- Accessibility is also essential. Our system does not just distribute materials, but it makes them accessible. Digital publications have a great advantage in this regard.
- Preservation and permanent archiving is critical, and new forms must maintain continuity with the disciplines.

There is reason to remain optimistic. We have rich resources to draw upon, including outstanding faculty, libraries, information technology infrastructure, and presses.

**Audience Comments and Observations**

- Is there a place for coordinated, cooperative development of library repositories? Yes, there will likely always be holdings unique to any individual library, but there are opportunities to cooperate. But, could we not do both?
- The subventions from universities are important, but 87% of the press support comes from outside the university. The goal for university presses has been to manage the finances so they break even. But, it has created an “access to capital” issue. There are opportunities for exploring new formats of publication, but all of the costs must be borne on top of the current system. Could libraries and presses work together to capitalize these new systems?
- It was noted that there is also something of a crisis in terms of editorial work in the humanities and social sciences.
- Digital publishing does provide opportunity to augment publications in a way that is not possible in the print – a living text, if you will. Yes, there are opportunities, though of course it introduces a complexity into the system.

Pauline Yu spoke of a project related to the issue called advanced cyber infrastructure. She encouraged all to remain calm and recognize that the issues are complex and resolutions will be complex. More books or print books may not be a desirable solution. How did those who went before us solve these problems? They subsidized the supply. If we believe in an autonomous university press, do we accept the results of that system? Or should we link subsidies to demand instead of supply, or ask the societies to administer subsidies?
Lavonne Ruoff indicated that faculty of color to whom she has spoken, and the MLA Committee on the Literatures of People of Color (CLPC), stress that some of the important presses publishing research on literatures by people of color may not be the major academic presses familiar to departments, colleges, and universities. Consequently, departments should inform themselves about the significance of the presses in which faculty of color publish and forward this information to other units evaluating such candidates for tenure and promotion. The MLA’s CLPC addresses this issue in its “Guidelines for Good Practice.” [The report is available on the MLA web site: http://www.mla.org]

Doug Armato pointed out that there has been much discussion of collaboration among presses – both within the CIC and nationally. The CIC presses and libraries have successfully collaborated on an experiment to create a website providing access to electronic versions of monographs published by the presses. The CIC universities collectively subvented their presses at a cost of $2 million. There are 90 university presses in the United States. Bringing presses and their expertise to the table in conversations is critically important, and the presses may be an underutilized resource.

Dan Linzer followed up with a note on the growth of non-tenure track positions (in lecture or full-time tenure faculty). More of the teaching is being done by the lecture faculty, thereby creating more time for the tenured faculty to pursue scholarly communication outlets.

Michael Tanner pointed out that we have been giving away our intellectual content to the commercial sector and that has really created a monster for us.

Louise Sandmeyer suggested that:

• Framing this as a crisis reduces the complexity and encourages “quick fixes” which may be inappropriate.
• We need to look at this from a system perspective – the system is complex (with complex stakeholders, desired outcomes). By framing this as a system, we can support a “both, and” conversation, not an “either, or.”
• Must recognize the opportunities for collaboration and consortial responses to subspecialties and areas most endangered for loss of publishing outlets.

Jesse Delia encouraged attendees to consider how this is related to the employment system in our universities. Our capacity to conduct evaluation and reach conclusions about the worth of a scholar is actually working pretty well. The role of the disciplines as social formations that adjudicate these issues cannot be overstated. The real issues are about the transition to new forms of publishing, with shift in economies, etc. It is just as much a choice to drop an absurdly priced journal as it is to stop publishing the low subscription monograph. We need to get more players to the table inside the university to discuss these issues, as well as the “estranged cousins” (libraries and presses). If you separate out the functions and talk about who could best address each, we could make advances (presses take care of editing; libraries take care of archiving; etc.). Let’s look at sustained archiving as a consortium. Could we bring together presses, disciplines, and libraries to look at new opportunities to support the endangered areas such as Slavic studies? The Deans can be leaders on the campuses in this regard. CIC should be looking for ways to build opportunity for these new conversations.

Paul Courant suggested that we have a system of scholarly communication that is dimly coterminous with the system for publication. The fit, though, is getting less satisfactory.

Any solution (decoupling the review from the distribution) must have norms for: 1) peer review; 2) dissemination; 3) archiving. There may not be a crisis in scholarly communication, but there is a financial crisis. What is the optimum scale for a scholarly press? How does one identify the best model? What is the role for “pretty good” presses, or “almost great” presses? We can’t all be “the best.” The notion of teaching our students and scholars to be better writers is also a very good idea. In a world where people seem to be copyrighting everything, we need to ensure that we are freely sharing the fruits of our research (it won’t be free from an economic perspective – our universities must subsidize this). We should support a faculty movement across the CIC by which, for example, we have an alternate permissions letter that our faculty would send to commercial publishers through which we retain our copyright. The libraries and presses are critically important. Is the CIC big enough to lead in this area? Yes, by all means!

Lou Anna Simon stated that there are enduring values that we should hold to – but we need not consider these as necessarily enduring systems. The timeframe we need to consider includes the timeframe for changes to the system, as well as changes to the timeframes for P&T, and the timeframe for publication. There seems to be a “grass is greener” aspect of the “science versus humanistic disciplines.” How can we take the best of the systems and translate them into something new? Most of the discussion on impact seems to be on a narrow audience – but we need to think about the greater societal, universal, audiences. We should be moving to a broader distribution that enhances accessibility, and helps us address issues of affordability. In our conversation around archiving, we reaffirmed our commitment to the preservation of knowledge as a core value of our universities. The question of ownership is key to reinforcing the university as a public good.
Audience Comments and Observations

- We can build a system through which the faculty and the universities are protected when faculty seek to retain ownership rights to intellectual property.
- This is the digital age, and we have to accept that we’ll be moving to a new system very soon. We should remember that this is an evolutionary process (is there a parallel with the panic expressed when we proposed moving from the card catalog to the online catalog?).
- If we continue the move to the commercial sector, we will have lost a great deal. If we can build and maintain a system within the universities, we are drawn together into a new system that adheres to our norms. Recommended that we read David Shulenburger’s article in “Change” magazine as a model for collective action. The AAU/ARL Global Resources Program could offer the same kind of mechanism for providing consortial action for archiving. We need to find ways to push back at the commercial sector.
- We could provide incentives to presses to “do something new.” University Presses are an underutilized resource – particularly in the CIC. If new monies are available, they could be used to bring new partners to the table.
- The pre-meeting research suggests that there was no difference expressed by faculty in terms of whether or not digital or print was “better.”

Next Steps

It was observed that the CIC universities are well positioned for collaborative action, and those in attendance agreed that the following actions should be pursued:

- Encourage intra-campus conversations about the future of scholarly communication between press directors, university librarians, chief information officers, deans, and other stakeholders.

- Identify existing digital publishing efforts on CIC campuses.

- Develop and encourage CIC-wide use of a new intellectual property rights form that faculty may use to retain rights to their works (rather than granting all rights to commercial publishers).

- Initiate inter-institutional ‘collaboratives’ to develop digital repositories in select areas (foreign language materials, specialized inter-disciplinary studies) that include elements of strong peer review; dissemination structures; and permanent archiving.

- Establish a new electronic journal to provide and promote alternatives to commercial scientific publishers, and to provide a peer-reviewed, and archived electronic journal in the humanities.
Scholarly Communication Summit Attendees

Barbara McFadden Allen, Director, Committee on Institutional Cooperation
Douglas Armato, Director, University of Minnesota Press, and Incoming President, Association of American University Presses (AAUP)
Marietta Baba, Dean, College of Social Science, Michigan State University
Nancy Baker, University Librarian, The University of Iowa Libraries, and incoming chair of the CIC Library Directors
Sharon Stephens Brehm, Chancellor, Indiana University Bloomington, and Vice President for Academic Affairs for Indiana University
Patricia Cain, Interim Provost, University of Iowa
Mary Case, Director, Office of Scholarly Communication, Association of Research Libraries
Paul N. Courant, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of Michigan
Jesse G. Delia, Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana
Lawrence B. Dumas, Provost, Northwestern University
Rodney Erickson, Executive Vice-President and Provost, Pennsylvania State University
Leigh Estabrook, Professor of Library and Information Science and Professor of Sociology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Rosemary Feal, Executive Director, Modern Language Association
Stanley Fish, Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, University of Illinois at Chicago
Mary Anne Fitzpatrick, Deputy Dean, College of Letters and Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Peter Givler, Executive Director, Association of American University Presses
Richard H. Herman, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Michael J. Hogan, Executive Dean, Colleges of the Arts and Sciences, Ohio State University
Brian Hosmer, Director, CIC American Indian Studies Consortium
Clark Hulse, Dean of the Graduate College and Executive Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago
Arnita Jones, Executive Director, American Historical Society
Kerry Larson, Senior Associate Dean, The Graduate School, University of Michigan
Daniel I. Linzer, Dean, Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Northwestern University
Sally Mason, Provost, Purdue University
Joan Marshall, Associate Dean, School of Liberal Arts, Purdue University
Linda Maxson, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Iowa
Christine M. Mazzar, Provost and Executive Vice President, University of Minnesota
Terence J. McDonald, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Michigan
Estelle McGroarty, Senior Associate Dean, Michigan State University
Lavonne Ruoff, Professor Emerita of English, University of Illinois at Chicago and member of the Executive Council, MLA
Richard P. Saller, Provost, University of Chicago
Louise Sandmeyer, Executive Director, Office of Planning and Assessment, Pennsylvania State University
David Shulenburger, Provost, University of Kansas
Lou Anna K. Simon, Provost, Michigan State University
Susan Singleton, Director, CIC Center for Library Initiatives
Barbara R. Snyder, Interim Executive Vice President and Provost, Ohio State University
Russell Snyder, Associate Director, Committee on Institutional Cooperation
Peter D. Spear, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Kumble Subbaswamy, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University
R. Michael Tanner, Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, University of Illinois at Chicago
Robert Townsend, Assistant Director, American Historical Society
John Unsworth, Dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
John Vaughan, Executive Vice President, Association of American Universities
Don Waters, Program Officer, Mellon Foundation
Susan Welch, Dean, College of the Liberal Arts, Pennsylvania State University
Wendy K. Wilkins, Dean, College of Arts and Letters, Michigan State University
Pauline Yu, President, American Council of Learned Societies
Endnotes


