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Sustaining the growth of library scholarly publishing

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Abstract. In 2012, the University of Huddersfield Press presented a paper at the 16th International Conference on Electronic Publishing on its new open access journals platform. At the time, the Press was one of the only New University Presses (NUP) in the UK and one of the first to publish open access journals, open access monographs and sound recordings. This paper will develop Hahn's programme and publication level business plan and relate this to the sustainability of the Press. It will demonstrate how the Press has been able to show value to the University in order to secure funding. The paper will conclude with a discussion around the need for collaboration between library led NUPs.

Keywords. Library, publishing, university press, open access, business models

1. Introduction

The University of Huddersfield Press was re-launched in 2010 as a library led publishing initiative with decisions taken by an academic led Editorial Board. In 2012, the Press presented a paper at the 16th International Conference on Electronic Publishing on its new open access journals platform (Stone, 2011). At the time, the Press was one of the only New University Presses (NUP) in the UK and one of the first to publish open access journals, open access monographs and sound recordings. Since then it has published seven journals, ten scholarly monographs and nine music recordings. The library as publisher or library scholarly publishing is now a growing worldwide movement (Simser, Stockham & Turtle, 2015) and Huddersfield has followed the lead from NUPs in the United States and Australia (Lynch, 2010).

This paper develops Hahn's (2008) programme and publication level business plan and relates this to the sustainability of the Press. It demonstrates how the Press has been able to show value to the University in order to secure future funding. It concludes with a discussion about the need for collaboration between library led NUPs.

2. Business models

Business model development for NUPs is an area that needs significant work (Hahn, 2008; Withey et al., 2011). Issues with open access business models have also been discussed and refined for much of the last decade (Thatcher, 2007). However, they are still based on the principles of rigorous peer review and close engagement with faculty

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and strategic leadership through an advisory board with representatives from all faculties (Missingham & Kanellopoulos, 2014). Like many NUPs, the University of Huddersfield Press developed without a clear business model in its early years. This has issues for sustainability and scalability.

3. Sustainability

In 2012, a report to SPARC found that only 15% of libraries surveyed had a documented sustainability plan (Mullins et al., 2012). Hahn (2008) found that very few library publishers were able to ‘...support even 10 journal titles or more than a handful of monographic works’ (p.25). Thus, library presses hesitate in more aggressive marketing due to fears that this could generate more demand than could be satisfied. This leads to the question of scalability. If a library publisher wishes to expand, it has to identify the resources needed and this is a long-term commitment. This could result in resources being diverted from other areas (Xia, 2009). A more successful press will create a need to reallocate greater staffing resources unless new resources are identified.

4. Programme level planning

Regarding the development of the business model, Hahn (2008) suggests two levels of business plans for library publishers:

- Programme level planning
- Publication level planning

A NUP operating without a business model at the programme level is effectively operating at a publication level. Moving from one publication to the next without a clear plan. Staffing and funding challenges need to be resolved at a programme level for the library as publisher to be sustainable. In addition, planning is needed at both programme level and publication level in order for the initiative to become a success.

4.1. Scalability of library publishing services

NUPs offer a truncated list of services when compared to traditional publishers (Hahn, 2008). However, this represents a leaner version of traditional ‘legacy’ publishers. Once presses begin to grow there is a question of scalability and sustainability and this is what programme level planning provides. This is the case for the University of Huddersfield Press, and is echoed by comments made by other library presses (Mullins et al., 2012). There is a fear that greater demand could lead to the press becoming a victim of its own success.

4.2. Staffing

The issue of staffing and the resulting effect of increased success verses a limited staff base have been the focus of discussion for many successful presses as over time this inhibits growth (Perry et al., 2011). The SPARC study found the number of staff

allocated to publishing activities ranged between 0.9-2.4 FTE, with staff dedicated to library publishing programmes described as relatively rare (Mullins et al., 2012).

4.3. Business models and funding

As part of the UK Crossick report (London Economics, 2015), theoretical tests established that each open access business model has its own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This was further developed as part of the OAPEN-UK project (Beech & Milloy, 2015). The predominant business model for the University of Huddersfield Press is the institutional subsidy model where the Press receives subsidies from the University, either centrally, from faculty or the library, or from a funder.

5. Publication level planning

In order for publication level planning to work, programme level planning needs to be in place. For example, planning at the programme level leads towards a business plan. This plan can outline the case for growth of the press. The plan at Huddersfield suggests a more robust funding allocation and modest increase in staffing. This in turn supports a greater number of publications and improved publication level planning. An annual plan, which includes a budget, key dates and an evaluation process, could then be produced. An example of this at Huddersfield is *Fields: journal of Huddersfield student research* (Stone, Jensen & Beech, 2016). The Press worked with the University's Teaching and Learning Institute to ring-fence funding for the publication. Publication level planning helps to address issues that have arisen in the process. The journal is now entering its third year of publication and lessons learned from volume 1 have led to a revision in the notes for contributors, a writing retreat for authors, conference attendance for student authors and marketing around campus.

6. Cash flow and profit and loss forecast

At Huddersfield, a paper on staffing was taken to the Press Board in 2015. As a result annual staffing costs for the Press of around £40K have been absorbed by Computing and Library Services (CLS) as part of the staffing budget. Institutional repository costs (the publication platform for the Press) are also covered by CLS. As part of the Press business plan, the following costs were identified in order to grow the Press at a sustainable level.

- DOI costs for seven existing journals, with a growth rate of an extra two journals per year
- Set-up costs for the additional journals
- Two monographs to be published in 2016, three in 2017, four in 2018 and five in 2019
- Recurrent costs including appropriate memberships and marketing

Sales forecasts were also included for print copies of monographs, although these are not guaranteed. Income from print sales would enable the Press to publish additional titles to those highlighted above. This model also allows the Press to run a

fee waiver model for peer reviewed monographs and journals from Huddersfield authors as this would be underwritten by programme level funding. This model is also being adopted by other NUPs in the UK such as UCL (2015) and the recently launched White Rose University Press (2016).

7. Value and impact

NUPs are not for-profit enterprises, they are an exercise in scholarly communication. In order to attract programme level funding and to justify a local subsidy the press must demonstrate its value to the university rather than monetarize the work of the press. An example of how to do this is to show that financial returns, which do not come back to the Press directly, have the potential to earn research income for the university. At Huddersfield this has been done by showing how the Press can contribute to ‘quality-related research funding’ (QR funding) from the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) (HEFCE, 2015).

As part of the 2014 REF, the University submitted 100 research outputs from its staff to the music Unit of Assessment (REF, 2014). University Press publications were included in eleven of these outputs (some of these were as part of portfolio outputs). While REF scores cannot be associated with individual outputs, 85% of music research was judged to be internationally excellent (3* and 4*), which attracts QR funding. The assumption here is that at least some of the Press output was ranked in these categories. In addition, Press output also contributed to the wider impact and environment statements, which were also ranked highly.

If all 100 outputs were treated equally, then six outputs from the Press (three books and three CDs) have contributed to 11% of the University’s QR funding for music in 2016. This is a not inconsiderable sum, indeed far more than the overheads of the Press for all publications forecast in the Press’s four year plan.

In February 2016 a discussion paper was tabled at the University of Huddersfield Press Editorial Board. It invited the Board to discuss the four-year plan, which outlined the funding required at programme level in order for the Press to become sustainable and scalable. This included a detailed cash flow and profit and loss forecast and evidence of the value and impact of the Press on QR funding in the University. It was suggested that there was potential for this to have impact on other disciplines such as history, politics and English, which rely on monograph publishing as the gold standard. The Board approved the proposal for a programme level funding model in principle. As a result the Press has now had funding confirmed for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years. This is in addition to staffing costs and will allow the Press to finance additional monographs and journals described above as part of a programme level plan. The Press will also be able to offer a fee waiver to researchers at Huddersfield who submit proposals for new titles subject to satisfying the Press’s peer review process.

8. Collaboration

In addition to programme and publication level planning, NUPs also need to collaborate to achieve scalability. The 2012 report to SPARC recommends that collaborations should be used to, “...leverage resources within campuses, across institutions, and between university presses, scholarly societies, and other partners”

(Mullins et al., 2008, p.19). This paper suggests that the follow areas of collaboration are required.

- **Landscape survey.** In the UK there is uncertainty as to how many library led open access university presses are operating. Huddersfield, White Rose and UCL presses have all been mentioned in this paper. However, there are others emerging in both the UK and the rest of Europe. A data gathering exercise is required in order to assess the current state of play regarding NUPs and library publishing ventures in Europe
- **A Library Publishing Coalition for Europe.** This paper suggests that NUPs in Europe establish a European Library Publishing Coalition (LPC). This would be based upon the LPC in the United States (Educopia Institute, 2013) and could become a hub for best practice and innovative approaches
- **Best practice/efficiencies in the workflows.** The Landscape study will give intelligence on where the new and proposed library presses are, a LPC would help to establish a community. It is hoped that this will lead to further collaboration and therefore sustainability for NUPs. It is suggested that a series of best practice guidelines could be developed providing useful tools for NUPs. For example, licences, workflows, business models and recommendations for appropriate membership, e.g. COPE, OASPA, DOAJ and DOAB. Best practice around establishing value and impact would also allow these NUPs to flourish in the future.

9. Conclusion

This paper has shown how the University of Huddersfield Press has used evidence of value and impact based on REF output to secure funding for the next two years. An understanding of Hahn's programme and publication level business plan has allowed the Press to achieve sustainability going forward. This will allow the scaling up of publications with a view to the next REF in the UK. The next steps for the Press are to produce a plan for the next two years in order to secure further funding going forward. In addition, the Press needs to work alongside other NUPs in order to establish best practice for library-led open access publishing.

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