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University Presses: An Australian Perspective

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University presses in Australia share much in common with other university presses in the world in their missions, modes of operation and history. Since the reduction of higher education funding in the 1970s, affecting universities, their presses and libraries, they have been forced to experiment with new business models and publishing strategies. The cuts in library budgets, combined with the substantial price increases of journal subscriptions started a decline in the purchase of scholarly monographs, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, which continues to the present. This trend has been recently boosted by libraries moving away from standing orders to patron-driven acquisition of books. These days, the average print run of a scholarly monograph is between 150 and 300 copies. With diminishing demand from individual readers and libraries, and dwindling financial support from host universities, some presses turned to foundations, government agencies and private donors; some ventured into the money-generating markets of textbook, professional and trade publishing. Some started to experiment with open access publishing, facilitated by digital technologies.

Despite those pressures, the world of university presses in Australia remains diverse and vibrant, with a number of active players with different approaches who publish across academic, academic-trade and trade sectors of the market, in print and digital formats. The presses vary in size from three to four in-house staff in smaller presses to over 40 in larger enterprises. All of them employ freelance editors, designers and indexers, and many other professionals on a casual basis.¹

The Beginnings

The history of Australian university presses goes back to 1922, when Melbourne University Press (MUP) was founded as a department of the university to sell books and stationery to students.

¹ Unless stated otherwise, this article is based on information acquired from the websites of individual presses as well as email correspondence with publishers and directors of the presses.

The first monograph published by MUP a year later, *History of the White Australia Policy* by Myra Willard, started a publishing program with a focus on Australian history and biography, and the humanities in general. Other university presses followed over the next few decades. Text Books Board at the University of Western Australia (renamed in 1948 as the University of Western Australia Press, UWAP) was established in 1935, University of Queensland Press (UQP) in 1948, University of New South Wales Press (UNSWP) in 1962, Sydney University Press (SUP) in 1964, Australian National University Press in 1965, Deakin University Press in 1979 apart from several others. MUP, UQP and UNSWP combined running bookselling operations with publishing programs.²

For years these university presses successfully relied on institutional support, government grants and book sales. This period of relative stability ended in 1970s, when sales to libraries dropped and subsidies were cut. As a result several Australian university presses were closed (at Sydney University and ANU, for example) and others had to ensure a sound commercial footing.

Four university presses (MUP,³ UNSW Press,⁴ UWAP⁵ and UQP⁶) survived the storm in Australia, by focusing on trade-academic 'cross-over' and trade books, fiction and non-fiction, for the general readership, and reducing traditional monograph publishing in an attempt to make the presses commercially viable and save them from closure. These presses not only survived, but have become established cultural institutions that contribute greatly to the intellectual cultural and political life of Australia.⁷

UQP, for example, has become Australia's leading poetry publisher through its Paperback Poets series established in the mid-1960s, and has maintained a poetry list that includes John Tranter, David Malouf, Thomas Shapcott, and others. Through its Paperback Prose series set up in 1972, the press launched the careers of many acclaimed Australian writers, such as David Malouf, Peter Carey, Kate Grenville and Nick Earls. In 1989 UQP established an award to recognise unpublished Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors and their writing, named after David Unaipon (1872–1967), an Indigenous preacher, author and inventor from South Australia. This award started the careers of several Indigenous writers including Doris Pilkington Garimara, Larissa Behrendt, and Tara June Winch among others. UQP continues to publish the winning manuscript for the Emerging Queensland Author award at the annual Queensland

2 Frank Thompson, University Presses, in Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright (eds), *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia 1946–2005*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Qld., 2006, pp. 328–336.

3 <http://www.mup.com.au>

4 <http://www.newsouthpublishing.com>

5 <http://uwap.uwa.edu.au>

6 <http://www.uqp.uq.edu.au>

7 Agata Mrva-Montoya, Academic Publishing Must Go Digital to Survive, *The Conversation*, 15 February 2012, <http://theconversation.com/academic-publishing-must-go-digital-to-survive-5286>

Premier's Literary Awards and to sponsor literary events such as the Brisbane Writers Festival.

Similarly, MUP, UNSW Press and UWAP also expanded their trade publishing programs while reducing the publishing of scholarly books with limited market potential. This had a negative impact on publishing opportunities for Australian scholars, in the environment of increasing pressure to publish as part of their academic careers. While many academics continued to publish their research monographs with UK and US university presses, those who specialised in Australian topics were finding it difficult to get their work published overseas. This need for scholarly publishers that would publish Australian research aimed at specialist audiences was filled by new, library-based university presses, which have been established since 2003 at ANU, Sydney, Monash, Adelaide and UTS. These presses have adopted new technologies (such as print-on-demand) and various business models (combining open-access electronic publication with commercial distribution into the retail sector) ensuring that important, publicly funded research can be published.

Open Access Publishing

At its core, library-based publishing was conceived as a service to the academic community of the host university and ideologically it remains committed to open distribution of knowledge. Digital developments in publishing have allowed the new presses to implement cost-effective operations, use print-on-demand technology for the production of hard copies of books and rely on online distribution of open access and for-sale copies.

As the level of institutional support varies, the new presses differ from each other in their operations, business models and publishing strategies. Publishing in open access relies on university funding or title-specific publishing subsidies to offset some of the production costs and the loss of sales income.

ANU E Press was established in 2003 as an open access, electronic publisher to “make available the intellectual output of the ANU academic community”⁸ and it remains the epitome of a library-based publisher. In 2014 ANU E Press changed its name to ANU Press as a way to acknowledge that the digital character of the press was no longer a point of difference in the increasingly digital publishing industry. The press works with 23 editorial boards across campus, which cover all disciplinary areas of research at the university and who make all publishing decisions. The press produces between 50 and 60 titles per year, which can be read through a web browser, downloaded for free as PDF, ePUB or MOBI files, and sold as print-on-demand books, which are currently distributed by NewSouth Books, a distribution arm of UNSW Press. ANU Press co-publish with other publishers or incorporations based at ANU including Aboriginal History Inc., Australian New Zealand School of Governance, and Asia Pacific Press among many others. Apart from publishing academic monographs and journals, ANU eView

8 <http://press.anu.edu.au>

was established in 2009 to publish ANU student writing, community publications, poetry, conference proceedings and student journals. In 2013, ANU Press launched ANU eTEXT, an open access imprint for ANU academics interested in developing and distributing textbooks. The press measures its impact in ebook downloads: in 2011, for example, the press reported over four million downloads across 400 titles on its backlist. Reporting on downloads is a common strategy used by open access advocates and publishers to demonstrate the benefits of open access for dissemination of the research output, and its superiority over traditional publishing models with shrinking print runs.

UTS ePress, established in 2004, is another scholarly press fully committed to open access. The press has been publishing journals, but also conference proceedings and books in diverse areas including cultural studies, governance, history, law, literacy, international studies, society and social justice, and Indigenous studies.⁹ UTS ePress strengths lie in the publication of peer-reviewed open access journals and, according to Dr Belinda Tiffen, Director Library Resources Unit at UTS, the press' "goal is to explore innovative, interactive and multimedia formats to advance scholarly communications and challenge the paradigm of the traditional academic monograph". UTS ePress aims to publish scholarship in areas of strategic priority for the University of Technology, Sydney, but in line with its focus on the potential of multimodal publishing, the press remains particularly interested in works that experiment with the nature of digital publishing.

Belinda Tiffen considers two recent publications to be successful examples of the type of works that the UTS ePress aims to publish. *Creative Business in Australia* (2015)¹⁰ is a unique snapshot of the Australian creative industries. Drawing on the expertise of academics and industry professionals, the press produced a high-quality monograph (which has been nominated for an Australian Book Design award) and an accompanying digital archive. According to Tiffen, this was the most downloaded title for 2015 and is on course to be the UTS ePress' most downloaded title ever. Another title, *Lace Narratives* (2015),¹¹ documents the innovative practice-led research of textile artist Cecilia Heffer. Rich in designs, images and patterns, the monograph is available electronically, via print-on-demand and as a special limited edition incorporating bound samples of the artist's work, and is also accompanied by a video documenting the artist's lace-making process. The multiple forms offer a unique and holistic means of exploring Heffer's work, and the relationship between content and presentation within the scholarly monograph.

Following the example of ANU E Press, the University of Adelaide Press (UAP) was established in 2009 as a separately funded operation managed within the university library.¹² The press directly handles all book proposals from the academic staff of the University of Adelaide

9 <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au>

10 <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/books/creative-business-australia>

11 <http://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/books/lace-narratives>

12 <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/press>

and manages them through to publication in open access. Dr John Emerson, the press's director, is committed to "free dissemination of Adelaide-based research". He considers *Magnesium in the Central Nervous System*, edited by Robert Vink and Mihai Nechifor (2011) as the biggest success as the book is about to reach 100,000 downloads.¹³ In contrast to ANU Press, UAP also has a commercial imprint, the Barr Smith Press, which publishes titles on the history of the university and scholarly works not available in open access.

Beyond Open Access

The remaining two library-based presses are more commercial in their approach. Monash University Press was set up in 2003 as an electronic scholarly journal and book publisher,¹⁴ to publish new works by Monash scholars across the humanities and social sciences, with a focus on Asian studies, politics, education, communications, and the study of Australian history, culture and literature. The press used to release books in open access after a one-year embargo. In September 2010, the press was relaunched as Monash University Publishing to reflect a change in strategy to a stronger focus on commercial print book publishing, while retaining electronic and open-access components to its identity and practice.

According to Dr Nathan Hollier, Director of Monash University Publishing, the press strives "to publish books with solid intellectual foundations, great public relevance, and a distinct and attractive style in terms of both the writing and the physical or electronic object". The press works with university-based series editors to commission and publish monographs in areas of strategic importance to Monash University. The specific series include: Art History, Australian History, Contemporary Australian Authors, Herb Feith Translation Series (of works originally published in Indonesian), Monash Asia Series (focusing on political economy in Asia), Social Informatics, and Vernacular Indonesia (focusing on the anthropology of the region).

Some of the outstanding titles of Monash UP include *Maestro John Monash: Australia's Greatest Citizen General* by Tim Fischer (2014), which has sold around 10,000 copies; *The Two Frank Thrings* by Peter Fitzpatrick (2012), which won the National Biography Award for 2013 and Meredith Fletcher's *Jean Galbraith: Writer in a Valley* (2014), which won the major Victorian Community History award in 2015. Finally, *Northern Lights: The Positive Policy Example of Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Norway* by Andrew Scott (2014), provoked much public discussion and is now being cited positively in works on future policy directions for Australia.

Sydney University Press¹⁵ was re-established in 2003 to publish and distribute reprints of Australian classic literature and out-of-copyright books from the University of Sydney Library's

13 <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/press/titles/magnesium>

14 <http://www.publishing.monash.edu>

15 <http://sydney.edu.au/sup>

digital text collections. In 2005 the scope was expanded to publish new scholarly research works and reprints of interest to the scholarly community in Australia, and it developed over the years into a fairly broad publishing program in humanities and social sciences. SUP does not publish in open access by default and does not require publication subsidies, but encourages authors and editors to release books in open access after an embargo of 12 months to three years. A few titles have been released in open access on publication, but many titles are likely to remain commercial for the foreseeable future. In contrast to other library-based presses, SUP has always published works by scholars from outside of the University of Sydney and even outside Australia. Apart from scholarly works and reprints of classics, SUP publishes books with a more general appeal under its Darlington Press imprint.

Following a review in 2012, the press refocused its publishing program and established several series which build on the strength of its backlist but also complement the research priorities of the University of Sydney. Each of the series has its own editorial board with experts from Australia and overseas, who help shape the publishing program. While some of the series, such as Sydney Studies in Australian Literature and Indigenous Music of Australia, are focused on Australian topics, others are broader in their subject area like Tom Austen Brown Series in Australasian Archaeology. Other series: Animal Publics, Public and Social Policy, and a new series in development: China and the West in the Modern World, are international in scope. Outside of the series, SUP continues to publish reprints of Australian classic literature and scholarly monographs in the area of public health, aged care, urban planning, which have some of the most successful titles in its backlist.

Staying Power: Tips and Tools for Keeping You on Your Feet (2010)¹⁶ is SUP's commercially most successful book to-date with over 10,000 copies sold. This title on falls prevention aimed at general audiences accompany a series of very successful evidence-based workshops run in Australia and the USA. SUP has also published a manual for health practitioners *Stepping On: Building Confidence and Reducing Falls, a Community-based Program for Older People* by Lindy Clemson and Megan Swann (2008),¹⁷ and two related titles on incorporating incidental exercise for the elderly (*Lifestyle-integrated Functional Exercise [LiFE] Program to Prevent Falls*).

SUP's top-downloaded books in the area of public health have been strategically published in open access on release to ensure the greatest possible readership and impact internationally. *Let Sleeping Dogs Lie? What Men Should Know before Getting Tested for Prostate Cancer*¹⁸ by Simon Chapman, Alex Barratt and Martin Stockler has had over 33,000 downloads since its release in 2010. Another book by Simon Chapman, *Over Our Dead Bodies: Port Arthur and Australia's Fight for Gun Control*,¹⁹ has been downloaded over 16,000 times since 2013. In

16 <http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/sup/9781920899578>

17 <http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/sup/9781920898755>

18 <http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/sup/9781920899684>

19 <http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/sup/9781743320310>

December 2012, Australia became the first nation in the world to require all tobacco products to be sold in standard 'plain' packs. In their book, *Removing the Emperor's Clothes: Australia and Tobacco Plain Packaging*,²⁰ Simon Chapman and Becky Freeman report on the background, the process and the preliminary impact of this policy change on smoking rates in Australia. The authors also give tools to policy makers in other countries wanting to make the best case for plain packaging and to defend it from the inevitable industry-based attacks that follow. This title has been downloaded over 22,000 times since 2014.

SUP has also been interested in experimentation beyond the book whether in print or digital format. A monograph on Aboriginal public dance-song from the Daly region of northwest Australia, *For the Sake of a Song: Wangga Songmen and Their Repertories*, was released in 2013 with a companion website,²¹ which allows for streaming of music. Finally, SUP also manages the Australian Poetry Library,²² a full-text poetry database which aims to promote a greater appreciation and understanding of Australian poetry by providing access to over 42,000 poems as well as related critical and contextual material, including interviews, photographs and audio-visual recordings. The poems and associated material can be read and listened to freely online. Readers can also create personalised anthologies, which can be downloaded for a small fee, part of which is returned to the poets via the Copyright Agency Limited.

Embracing Trade Publishing

While the library-based presses tend to focus on publishing books by academics for other academics, the traditional university presses have embraced the general public and excel in publishing books that make an important contribution to the Australian culture and society. While they are known for the commercial titles, they also publish scholarly works and some have even started experimenting with open access. They also continue to evolve and experiment with new business models and publishing strategies in response to shifting technological, governmental, educational and legal environment. They typically require publication subsidies for their scholarly monographs, even if the books are not available in open access on release.

UQP has retained a vibrant trade publishing list on top of the academic publishing program. This trade list features fiction, poetry, Indigenous writing and children's books, as well as non-fiction. According to Madonna Duffy, the publisher of UQP, books "must have fine writing, ideas that inspire us, characters that move us and make us want to stay up all night reading them. Only then can we sell them on passionately to all the other readers out there who might love them too." In recent years, the biggest commercial success of the press has been Matthew Condon's

20 <http://purl.library.usyd.edu.au/sup/9781743323977>

21 <http://wangga.library.usyd.edu.au>

22 <http://www.poetrylibrary.edu.au>

Three Crooked Kings trilogy of true-crime genre,²³ which tells the story of police corruption in Queensland from the 1940s to the 1970s. Claire Zorn's young adult novel *The Protected* (2014) has been the most 'awarded' book with wins in the Prime Minister's and Children's Book Council Awards during 2015/2016.

Apart from publishing commercial titles, UQP has established an academic imprint called UQ ePress, which combines free online access to HTML files, with the sales of ebooks and printed books. Books under UQ ePress have been published in several series including Pacific Studies, Creative Economy + Innovation Culture, and New Approaches to Peace and Conflict, and there are plans to publish in other areas including environment and sustainability, biological science and political science.

On another side of Australia, UWA Publishing (the press changed its name in 2009) also specialises in publishing of fiction, poetry and other creative works. Apart from books about Perth and Western Australia (WA), UWAP also publishes non-fiction across social, political and cultural spheres, Australian and Western Australian history, and botanical and environmental sciences. Professor Terri-Ann White, Director of UWA Publishing, says that they "encourage [their] scholarly authors to think about their readership and broaden it from their best colleagues and enemies by thinking about making their books as acts of communication with smart people who don't necessarily work in a university." As director of the press, White is the first assessor of submitted manuscripts. She says, "If the book is well researched and well written and makes a valuable contribution to the field I take it as a recommendation to our publishing committee (internal and external members) with a full costing and marketing analysis of how it fits our list, how it sits with its competition, and how many copies we think we can sell."

The press has been publishing children's books since 1980s, joined later by young adult books, and in 2005 it established a literary fiction list, focusing on works produced by students in Australian creative writing courses. In 2015, UWA Publishing established The Dorothy Hewett Award for an Unpublished Manuscript, which aims to "support literary talent both in and related to Western Australia". The award is supported by the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund.

Somewhat more controversial than publishing literary fiction, was the decision to start publishing books on food and wine, following the success of *Theo & Co.: The Search for the Perfect Pizza* by Theo Kalogeracos (2009), which has been the biggest bestseller and financial success for UWA Publishing to date.

In 2014, UWA Publishing started a scholarly imprint called UWAP Scholarly aiming to publish monographs in the fields of humanities and social sciences, and natural sciences. The imprint has been launched "in response to a crisis of career-building currently facing Australian Humanities academics, to cope with the demand of academics and the limited publications opportunities today", according to Terri-ann White.

23 *Three Crooked Kings* (2013), *Jacks and Jokers* (2014) and *All Fall Down* (2015).

Similarly to UWA Publishing, MUP was renamed Melbourne University Publishing following a restructure in early 2003. The press became a proprietary company owned by the university, when Louise Adler took over as CEO and in an interview in *The Age* she stated that although MUP would still be subsidised by the university, it would have a “much sharper commercial edge” (9 November 2002). MUP publishes close to 50 books per year in a wide range of subject areas and disciplines, under four main imprints: Melbourne University Press, Victory Books, The Miegunyah Press and Academic Monographs.

Melbourne University Press focuses on serious non-fiction writing on politics, history, society and culture by academics, public intellectuals, journalists and politicians of all colours including Germaine Greer, David Malouf, Tony Abbott, Antony Loewenstein and others. The press has published many awarded, important or controversial books, and has not shied away from experimenting. *Mindless Colouring 101: For Every Political Tragic* by David Rowe (2015), an award-winning cartoonist, is probably one of the more unusual titles published by a university press in recent years. MUP’s recent book, *Comrade Ambassador: Whitlam’s Beijing Envoy* (2015) by Stephen FitzGerald, a diplomat, China scholar, and first Australian ambassador to China in the 1970s, has been just shortlisted for the National Biography Award 2016.

Books published under the Miegunyah Press are highly illustrated and designed, and lavishly printed. The imprint was established in 1967 through the vision and the bequests of Sir Russell Grimwade and his wife, and named after their house *Miegunyah* in Toorak (Victoria). *Miegunyah* is an Aboriginal word meaning ‘my house’. Apart from many award-winning art, photography, historical and biographical works such as Jenny Hocking’s two-volume biography of Gough Whitlam (the 21st Prime Minister of Australia), popular culture, travel, food and gardening titles have been published under this imprint.

Victory Books is a commercial imprint established in 2009, which publishes across a broad range of mass-market genres including sport, true crime, fiction, food and wine, popular culture, humour, television tie-ins and self-help.

Finally, the MUP Academic imprint publishes scholarly monographs. The key areas of focus include history, Australian politics and policy, education, Islamic studies and military/strategy, but the press has also published academic titles in Aboriginal studies, law, science, international relations, media and culture, sociology, economics and philosophy.

Apart from books, since 2008 MUP has published the literary magazine *Meanjin*, Australia’s second oldest literary journal founded in 1940.²⁴ Over the years, the journal has published essays on art, culture and literature and discussions of broader issues society by leading Australian and international writers including Arthur Miller, Anaïs Nin, Ezra Pound, Jean-Paul Sartre, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Dylan Thomas.

24 http://www.mup.com.au/page/about_meanjin

Like MUP, Sydney-based NewSouth Publishing (as UNSW Press was renamed in 2011, while retaining this name as an imprint) focuses on publishing non-fiction books: reference works for the general reader, textbooks, academic monographs and professional materials, covering a broad range of subjects across the arts and sciences. The press publishes about 40 titles per year encompassing biography, Australian history, popular science, politics, culture and literary non-fiction.

In 2006, the NewSouth imprint was established, focusing on general, literary and illustrated non-fiction, while UNSW Press has been used mainly for more scholarly and reference titles and books published for client organisations. In 2008, the company became the publisher of consumer advice books under the Choice imprint, which were originally published by the Australian Consumers Association.

Some of the more interesting titles published by NewSouth Publishing in recent years include a series of short hardback literary portraits of Australian cities. The first *In Search of Hobart* by Peter Timms was published in 2009, then *Sydney* by Delia Falconer in 2010, *Brisbane* by Matthew Condon in 2010, *Melbourne* by Sophie Cunningham in 2011, *Adelaide* by Kerry Goldsworthy in 2011, *Alice Springs* by Eleanor Hogan in 2012, *Canberra* by Paul Daley in 2012, *Perth* by David Whish-Wilson in 2013, with other cities to follow. Another series – books on writing styles and techniques by Mark Tredinnick, the first of which was *The Little Red Writing Book* (2006) followed by *The Little Green Grammar Book* (2008) and *The Little Black Book of Business Writing* (2010) are amongst the company's best-selling titles.

Under the leadership of Kathy Bail, CEO, the company continues to build a successful book sales and representation business (NewSouth Books) and manages a profitable, award-winning bookstore on the Kensington campus of UNSW in Sydney, apart from investing in a high-quality publishing list. Eleven awards won in 2015 and another 16 shortlisted titles, followed by the Australian Book Industry Award – Small Publisher of the Year in 2016, confirmed the company's reputation as one of Australia's most innovative university presses.

In 2010, the company established the UNSW Press Literary Fund with the UNSW Foundation to help finance their efforts to publish the best non-fiction writing in Australia. In 2012 UNSW Press has established an annual prize for the best short non-fiction piece on science written for a general audience. The Bragg UNSW Press Prize for Science Writing is named in honour of Australia's first Nobel Laureates William Henry Bragg and his son William Lawrence Bragg and is supported by the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund. All the shortlisted entries are included in NewSouth's annual collection *The Best Australian Science Writing*, which was first published in 2011, featuring the finest Australian science writing of the year.

Apart from publishing books for academic and general markets, the four presses also provide custom publishing services for private clients who would like to use their own funds to publish their work such as organisational and corporate histories, biographies, exhibition catalogues and

others. These services cover manuscript development, editing, design, proofreading to printing, binding and distribution.

Challenges and Opportunities

Commercial or non-for-profit, each of the university presses faces ongoing challenges in the changing landscape of scholarly publishing. With just over 24 million people, about 40 university libraries with a very efficient interlibrary loan system, the market for scholarly books in Australia remains limited. As active participants of the globalised research community, many Australian academics prefer to publish with prestigious UK and US university presses. In this context, the Australian presses need to continually demonstrate their value to their host university, wider academic ecosystem and broader community in the era of increasing financial cuts and technological innovations, and the shifting scholarly publishing ecosystem. The research assessment criteria are moving away from publication-based measures of research outcomes to qualitative and quantitative measures of impact and engagement,²⁵ which may potentially further devalue the role of scholarly monograph in the communication of knowledge.

Together with the rest of the publishing industry, university presses are threatened by the recent recommendations of the Productivity Commission's Draft Report on Australia's Intellectual Property Arrangements released in April 2016.²⁶ The Productivity Commission's report calls to remove parallel import restrictions and turn Australia into an open market, to abolish territorial copyright and to introduce a US-style fair use provision. The suggested changes are opposed by writers, publishers and booksellers as "threatening the future of our Australian stories". Key industry bodies organised a public awareness campaign (#bookscreate) to put pressure on the government to abandon the proposals.²⁷

Apart from broader issues affecting the publishing industry, for smaller presses resourcing has always been a challenge. As Belinda Tiffen from UTS ePress says: "We restrict the number of titles we produce to focus on quality and unique publishing opportunities. Of course, this brings the challenge of choosing which of the fascinating and worthy proposals we are able to work on and bring to publication." Similarly, for SUP, the need to be very selective in choosing publishing projects in the face of limited staff resources is an ongoing trial.

The library-based presses that focus on publishing only their own academics suffer from being perceived as a vanity press. Although supported by universities and funding bodies, open access publishing is affected by an image issue. For John Emerson from Adelaide UP, the biggest challenge is "convincing people that open access does not equate to low quality".

25 <http://www.education.gov.au/assessing-engagement-and-impact-university-research>

26 <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/intellectual-property/draft>

27 <http://bookscreateaustralia.com.au>

ANU Press is about to undergo a review of its operations, “to assess the quality and impact of our publications, our administration and systems processes and to help establish the direction of the Press for the next 10 years”.²⁸ Lorena Kanellopoulos, Manager of ANU Press, hopes that the review “panel will recommend more funding to recruit new staff and purchase software”. For Nathan Hollier from Monash UP, a key issue remains “developing and putting in place a business model to facilitate commercial competitiveness” while retaining support from key university stakeholders. While Kathy Bail commented on the challenges of “managing an agile, self-funding company in the complex higher education and commercial sectors”.

For presses located in Queensland and Western Australia, distance is a problem. For Madonna Duffy of UQP “being based outside of the geographical centres of Australia’s publishing industry and having to travel interstate frequently to be active within the industry” remains a challenge. Similarly for Terri-ann White of UWA Publishing, “the biggest challenge is always the distance we have to the largest population of Australia on the east coast. It costs a great deal to do business from Perth and as WA’s population is still around 10% of the nation it is vital to sell beyond the rabbit-proof fence.” (The rabbit-proof fence, consisting of three fences with the combined length of 3,256 km, was built between 1901 and 1907 to protect Western Australian crops and pasture lands from the destructive scourge of the feral rabbit.)

But despite the challenges, it is business as usual for the presses. Sydney University Press is in the process of implementing a new title management system, Bibliocloud, which will help to manage all the publishing projects and books’ metadata. The press is working on several new titles in animal studies (*Animal Welfare in Australia: Politics and Policy* by Peter John Chen and *Animal Welfare in China* by Peter Li), Australian literary criticism (*The Fiction of Tim Winton* by Lyn McCredden), archaeology (*Archaeology of Victoria* by David Frankel) and public health (two books by Simon Chapman: *Smoke Signals: Selected Writing* and *Wind Turbine Syndrome: A Communicated Disease*) apart from several other projects.

UTS ePRESS is in the process of the publication of its first open access textbook aimed at new medical students – an interactive quiz book in a question-and-answer format, with accompanying diagrams on introductory anatomy and physiology. Introducing new forms of interaction will allow the press to further explore the possibilities of digital publishing.

Nathan Hollier is particularly excited about *A Handful of Sand: The Gurindji Struggle, After the Walk-off* by Charlie Ward,²⁹ which tells the story of what happened after the Gurindji people of northern Australia were granted rights to their traditional land and sought to achieve economic independence through running cattle and other businesses. Having spent years with Gurindji people, Ward captures the voice and tone of the place and its people in his writing, and he shows the complex nature of the challenges confronting indigenous communities in colonised nations.

28 <http://press.anu.edu.au/news-events/anu-press-review>

29 <http://www.publishing.monash.edu/books/hs-9781925377163.html>.

UQP is working on new novels by Indigenous authors Tony Birch and Larissa Behrendt, which will be published in 2017, and another volume of Matthew Condon's series on the history of crime and corruption in Queensland.

UWA Publishing is about to release some new fiction titles and poetry volumes, and launch a new poetry series that will enable the press to take on more titles each year. One of their scholarly books, a historical study of police in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, "is likely to cause a shift in how we think about the history of this state and, particularly, Aboriginal-White relations", Terri-ann White says.

Kathy Bail from NewSouth Publishing is looking forward to publishing more Australian literary non-fiction and select scholarly titles in the arts and social sciences. "We'll continue to be active in biography, history, popular science, art history, design and culture. Books with authoritative and original content, which find a market in the academic and broader community, will continue to characterise most of our publishing", she says.

In a book published to celebrate the 40th anniversary of UNSW Press in 2002, NSW Premier Bob Carr wrote "Our academic presses hold a special place in the world of publishing. They're a strong, independent voice in the public discourse. They put works into print that might never survive commercial judgements but still warrant publication. They nurture a culture of academic excellence." Whether commercial or non-for-profit, small or large, every Australian university press works to "enhance the reputation of its host university and extend its reach into the community".³⁰

Despite the challenges, the future of university presses in Australia is looking upbeat as these mission-driven publishing houses continue to evolve and reinvent themselves. Another press, which was originally started in the early 1980s and closed down in 1990s, is set to re-emerge in 2017. Announced as a collaboration between an independent publisher Black Inc. and La Trobe University, the new Melbourne-based press will operate as an imprint of Black Inc. and rely on its editorial, production, publicity and marketing capabilities. The new La Trobe University Press will focus on "bringing scholarly works to a general audience" and "continue its longstanding tradition of public scholarship".³¹

Agata Mrva-Montoya
Sydney, 16 July 2016

30 UNSW Press, *UNSW Press, A History: 1962–2012*, UNSW Press 2012, p. 23.

31 <http://www.blackincbooks.com.au/news/black-inc-and-la-trobe-university-press-launch-new-imprint>

Bio

Dr Agata Mrva-Montoya is an Honorary Associate at the Department of Media and Communications, University of Sydney and the Publishing Manager at Sydney University Press. Her research interests focus on the impact of new technologies on scholarly publishing, editing and books in general. She has written articles for scholarly journals and industry publications, and posts for various Australian and international blogs. In pre-publishing life, Agata completed a PhD in archaeology. She is a member of the Institute of Professional Editors Ltd, the Human Animal Research Network at the University of Sydney and the Australasian Animal Studies Association.

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