

**The German new university press:
small and perfectly formed or an enterprise in transition?**

A White Paper

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Abstract

Innovations in publishing technology and staunch commitment to Open Access have combined to produce a proliferation of “new” university presses in recent years. Often run by the university’s library by seconding a tiny group of heroically-dedicated librarians, their ethos is very different from that of the traditional university presses – so different, in fact, that the two entities sometimes co-exist and collaborate within the same institution.

This paper examines the objectives, ideals and activities of 6 “new” German university presses, TU Berlin University Press, Göttingen University Press, BIS-Verlag, The Universitätsverlag Potsdam, Universitätsverlag *universaar* and *universi* (the University of Siegen Press). All are primarily engaged in Open Access book publishing. The paper explores their ethics and philosophy and the constraints and opportunities which they experience; their relationship with authors; the operational logistics they deploy; and the extent to which they can or may choose to use the services of third parties, including other publishers.

It concludes with an assessment of what the future might hold for these presses and others like them, including whether it is in their interests to grow larger, engage with additional ancillary activities, such as systematic marketing, or find other ways of generating greater revenues. What are the options open to them, if the priority is not to compromise their Open Access ideals?

1) Introduction

Much virtual ink has been spilt on Open Access. There is now a hefty body of scholarship relating to Open Access for books and much more about OA journals. This paper offers a study of OA monographs published and disseminated in Germany by small university presses primarily set up and run by librarians. For context, it draws significantly on a range of papers published on OA for books in both Germany and other, mainly Anglophone countries. The literature referenced in the article is representative rather than exhaustive.

It is recognised that Open Access for journals became operationally possible with the advent of digital publishing technologies, which (advocates argue vigorously) lowered production and dissemination costs. Almost simultaneously, the ability to search widely for academic material online was transformed by the advent of the search engine algorithm, developed most famously and successfully by Google, Twitter, Facebook, etc., and rapidly applied to the academic publishing environment by deploying a range of public and industry-specific search engines.

The Open Access movement gained momentum through an interrelated series of ethical and practical shifts. From the moral high ground, it was argued that research output that could benefit all mankind should be available “free” to everyone who wished to access it and not only to those who could afford

to pay. Increasingly, academic funding bodies asserted their right to insist that this principle should be applied to the outputs of research they had supported financially. Looking at the payment question from the other end of the telescope, university managers began to scrutinise more closely the time spent by academics on research. If the research was carried out in “university time” - i.e., during the salaried academic’s working hours - they argued it was unfair the library should be expected to pay again for journal articles, the main outputs of this research. At a practical level, library budgets were being cut at a time when some publishers were escalating journal prices faster than inflation. Academics were becoming increasingly confused and frustrated by the application of copyright laws that impeded their ability to share works and reproduce elements of them. In STEM subjects particularly, the length of time that elapsed between submission of an article and its appearance in a journal was deplored.

This is a broad-brush description of the OA landscape: each of the points raised carries with it a host of subsidiary issues. It aims to provide context, a shorthand explanation of both the enabling and driving factors underpinning commitment to Open Access.

Books, however, are different beasts from journals. Although from the start there was intent to extend the Open Access concept to books, those engaging with it quickly discovered that the creation and dissemination of OA books presents some tricky challenges. The true cost of producing and disseminating an online journal article continues to be a matter of – sometimes fierce – debate. The costs of producing and disseminating an online book may also be a cause of debate, but less controversial, because no one questions that these costs are substantial¹. And although academics and students adjusted relatively quickly to reading journal articles online, there is less evidence that readers have adapted to sustained immersion in longform works in digital formats. Furthermore, digital monographs come with a set of challenges that either do not apply or are not as crucial to the success of the print book:

They ... require more constant intervention and maintenance than stable print inventory in a warehouse, including a constant investment in metadata and conversion standards for software such as Kindle, Overdrive, Adobe and Kobo. Much of the work in fulfilment now involves chasing down erroneous metadata and revising for the latest versions and software demands.²

¹ Estimates of the cost of publishing a monograph vary widely, from \$10,000 to \$120,000, depending on the nature of the work and which overheads – such as staff costs – are included or omitted. The 60 monographs published in the TOME project each had a budget of \$15,000, supplied by the authors’ respective universities. See Ayuwor, J. (2020) ‘60 OPEN-ACCESS UNIVERSITY-PRESS MONOGRAPHS PUBLISHED THROUGH TOME INITIATIVE’, States News Service (press release). Available at <https://www.bing.com/search?q=60+OPEN-ACCESS+UNIVERSITY-PRESS+MONOGRAPHS+PUBLISHED+THROUGH+TOME+INITIATIVE.&cvid=2177f74cf572454a9f7784f26235e41f&aqs=edge.0.69i59.1457j0j1&pglt=43&FORM=ANNTA1&PC=U531> (Accessed 16 July 2021). Interestingly, this figure is roughly the same as the Book Processing Charge [BPC] typically levied for OA monographs by traditional academic publishers.

² Wright, J, Open Access for Monograph Publishing: Operational Thoughts and Speculations. Journal of Scholarly Publishing, Volume 49, Number 2, January 2018, p. 180.

Technology does bring one incontrovertible advantage to the digital monograph: searchability. The keyword recognition tools incorporated into an e-book, even in its simplest pdf format, enable thorough text searches that even the most comprehensive index in a print book cannot match and simultaneously empower widespread discoverability and dissemination³. Academics therefore see the virtue of using both the digital and print formats to complement each other – one for research, “dipping into”, dissemination and citation; the other for more sustained personal reading. This has inspired the development of a viable business model for the Open Access monograph which does not undermine the integrity of the OA ideal: making the digital version available free of charge while charging for the print version.

Conventional publishers now operate this model with considerable success, especially for so-called “crossover” books that appeal both to academic and general readers. Although not the catalyst for setting up the new breed of university presses that have been founded over recent years, it has helped the cashflow of many.

University presses are not, of course, a new concept: the oldest and best-known European ones have existed since mediaeval times. Some of the more prestigious American universities established presses before the second world war. Typically, such presses are run on the same lines as commercial publishing houses, albeit with more altruistic objectives. They offer very high standards of scholarship and make modest profits that are ploughed back into the enterprise itself and / or its parent institution. However, most no longer exist primarily to promote the work of their own institution’s academics; and although substantial in number they are by no means ubiquitous.

As awareness grew among those already committed to the Open Access ideal who were also keen to explore the possibilities offered by digital publishing, so did the feeling that more universities should engage with publishing and approach it in a different way from the established university presses. The concept was articulated in an Ithaka report in 2007:

As information transforms the landscape of scholarly publishing, it is critical that universities deploy the full range of their resources – faculty research and teaching activity, library collections, information technology capacity, and publishing expertise – in ways that best serve both local interests and the broader public interest. We will argue that a renewed commitment to publishing in its broadest sense can enable universities to more fully realize the potential global impact of their academic programs, enhance the reputations of their specific institutions, maintain a strong voice in

³ Usage of Open Access e-books has been tracked by the Open Access eBook Usage (OAeBU) Data Trust. See Drummond, C. (2020) ‘Engaging Global Networks to Support Global OA Monograph Usage Statistics.’ *Collaborative Librarianship*, 12 (2), 193-204. Available as a pdf at [Engaging Stakeholder Networks to Support Global OA Monograph Usage Analytics \(du.edu\)](#) (Accessed 19 July 2021). The article emphasises the importance of networking communities as well as good metadata to maximise the dissemination of OA books.

determining what constitutes important scholarship and which scholars deserve recognition, and in some cases reduce costs⁴.

This describes a set of holistic objectives so different from the ethos of the traditional university press that at some universities the traditional press and a “new university press” now co-exist and may collaborate side by side⁵, while many universities that previously had no publishing track record have been inspired to found their own presses. Articles about the new university presses – and there are many - are often written by advocates. However, some writers have questioned the effect they are having on the publishing landscape⁶.

The Ithaka report mentions the library; and it is notable that most of these new presses rely on input from librarians⁷. Some may be run entirely by librarians, often working part-time on publishing and part-time on conventional library duties. This raises a series of issues. Librarians are talented, resourceful people, many of whom embrace some – but, given the small numbers of staff typically involved in any one such venture, often not all - the qualities required of a publisher.

In this complex business of scholarly publishing, university press staff require a Renaissance-like blend of business acumen, marketing savvy, editorial ability, design sense and people skills – a talent set unlike that found in any other part of the university, including the library, meaning that press staff must look outside the university for their own professionalization⁸.

The librarians running new university presses are inevitably not experts in all the academic fields in which they publish. They may or may not have all the requisite technical skills. They are almost always resource-poor, in terms both of time and money. They inhabit a place on a spectrum in which a fully-fledged authoritative academic press, complete with editorial boards, peer review mechanisms and academic recommendation as a pre-requisite to publish sits at one end⁹ and a straightforward

⁴ Brown, L, Griffiths, R and Rascoff, M, *University Publishing in a Digital Age*, (Ithaka Report), 2007, Ithaka NY, Ithaka S+R; DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0010.301> (accessed 25th June 2021), p.60.

⁵ See, for example, Roughley Barake, S. and Welsby, A. (2021) ‘Collaboration across campus: open monograph insights from a library and ‘old’ university press partnership.’ *Insights* [UKSG] 34(1). Available as a pdf at [Collaboration across campus: open monograph insights from a library and ‘old’ university press partnership \(uksg.org\)](https://www.uksg.org/insights/2021/06/collaboration-across-campus-open-monograph-insights-from-a-library-and-old-university-press-partnership-uksg-org) (Accessed 23 June 2021).

⁶ See, for example, Dodds, F. (2017) ‘The future of academic publishing: Revolution or evolution?.’ *Learned Publishing* [ALPSP]. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1109> . (Accessed 18 July 2021), who states that traditional publishers remain the favoured choice of many academics, and warns that academic networks may prove to be more disruptive than new university presses; and Mounier, P. (2018) ‘“Publication favela’ or bibliodiversity? Open Access publishing viewed from a European perspective.’ *Learned Publishing* [ALPSP], 31, 299-305. Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/leap.1194> (Accessed 15 July 2021), who says that for new university presses to reach their potential, they need to co-operate more fully instead of working mainly as individual units.

⁷ The special relationship between the library and the new university press has been further explored by Oberländer, A. and Reimer, T. (2019) ‘Open Access and the Library.’ *MDPI*. Available as a pdf at https://mdpi.com/Open_Access_and_the_Library.pdf (Accessed 18 July 2021) and Horava, T. (2019) ‘Making OA monographs happen: Library-Press collaboration at the University of Ottawa, Canada.’ *Insights* [UKSG] 29(1), 57-64. Available at <https://insights.uksg.org/articles/10.1629/uksg.278/> (Accessed 23 June 2021).

⁸ Bradley St-Cyr, R. (2018) ‘Special Section on the Future University Press in Canada.’ *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* [University of Toronto Press], 49(2) 145-152. Available at: <https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/jsp.49.2.145?af=R&> (Accessed 25 June 2021).

⁹ University of Michigan Press is a well-documented example. It employs rigorous selection and peer review procedures. Separately, Michigan also runs a publishing services outfit.

publishing services outfit sits at the other. They may or may not be able to fulfil all the publishing services functions in-house; if they can't, they may employ a "white label" dedicated publishing services company or adopt "umbrella" facilities offered by traditional university presses or commercial publishing houses.

The six German university presses that are the subject of this white paper occupy different points on this spectrum. All operate within certain constraints and opportunities that are unique in Germany. In other respects, they more closely resemble their counterparts in other countries. Characteristics peculiar to German university presses have been explained and explored in a series of papers by Margo Bargheer and Jutta Pabst.¹⁰

2) Methodology

The primary research consisted of a series of semi-structured telephone conversations with librarians running university presses of the type described above in Germany. They were conducted in German by Annika Bennett of Gold Leaf. Case studies based on these conversations (not published) were prepared in English. The participants approved / amended the case studies to ensure their accuracy and kindly allowed their use for the preparation of this white paper, provided nothing material was altered or misrepresented by quotation out of context. We should like to express our massive debt of gratitude to the librarians running these presses who were so generous with their time and advice.

The main research vehicle employed was therefore more flexible than a survey and allowed more opportunity to discuss and explore the individual characteristics of the six presses. The topics discussed varied both in content and emphasis between respondents.

The following German university presses took part:

- TU Berlin University Press
- Göttingen University Press
- BIS-Verlag
- The Universitätsverlag Potsdam
- Universitätsverlag *universaar*
- *universi* (The University of Siegen Press)

They are listed here and in the rest of this article in the order in which the interviews took place. Annika Bennett also interviewed representatives from Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Universitätsverlage or

¹⁰ See for example Bargheer, M. and Pabst, J. (2016) 'Being small is not a fault: Making sense of the newer generation of German-language university presses'. *Learning Publishing* [ALPSP], 29(1) [Special issue: 'The University Press Redux. 313-371.] Available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1053>. (Accessed 27 June 2021). See also <https://net.lib.byu.edu/estu/wess/germ/GermanUnivPresses.pdf>. Accessed 16th July 2021.

AG Univerlage for short, the Working group of German-speaking university presses, which started as a cooperative of various German university presses about 15 years ago.

To place the research within the international context, Linda Bennett interviewed Charles Watkinson, Associate University Librarian, Publishing, and Director, Michigan University Press and Kate Petherbridge, Press Manager, White Rose University Press. Linda Bennett carried out the literature search, massively aided by Fiona Greig, University Librarian, the University of Winchester, Erika Banski, Associate University Librarian, Carleton University, Ottawa and Charles Watkinson¹¹. We should like to offer very sincere thanks to all of them. Their support is hugely appreciated.

3) The Findings

The findings from the research have been grouped under a broad series of headings:

- Foundation and Personnel
- Ethics, philosophy, constraints and opportunities
- Relationship with authors
- Logistics: production and dissemination
- Third party involvement
- Possible future developments.

Foundation and Personnel

All six German presses are run by their respective university libraries. Typically, German university presses evolved from existing structures and services and were born of the need to formalise the activities of library staff who supported publishing services already undertaken by the library.

¹¹ Charles Watkinson has recently published an up-to-date overview of university presses: Watkinson, C. (2021) 'University presses and the impact of COVID-19.' *Learned Publishing* [ALPSP], 34(1). Available at <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1352> (Accessed 23 June 2021).

TU Berlin University Press

TU Berlin University Press, the oldest of the six presses, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019. Until it was founded, the seven faculties at the university each published books series separately, resulting in varying production standards. The need for an entity that could coordinate these publishing efforts was recognised. The University Library, a central resource which already worked with all faculties and employed staff with expertise in the publishing process, was the obvious candidate. Originally it had the simple name “Publikationsstelle”. Since 2005 its name has been “Universitätsverlag der TU Berlin”. It is an integral part of the University’s Publication Services Department. Its responsibilities also include giving basic publication advice to researchers, administering the University’s repository and overseeing the publication of some 500 PhD theses each year. Most recently, it has taken on the coordination of bibliometrics and implementation of the University’s overall Open Access strategy.

Göttingen University Press

Göttingen University Press is not set up to build a specific branded profile or develop marketing plans to enhance the brand. The importance of marketing is acknowledged, but the staff usually only have the resource to carry out the operational function. Manpower consists of 2.75 FTEs, spread over 6 people.

BIS-Verlag

BIS-Verlag is the University Press of Carl-von-Ossietzky University Oldenburg. Founded in 1979, it was one of the first university-owned presses in Germany. The then library director saw the need for a publications service for the University. As the provider of a key central service and important intermediary between the academic disciplines, the Library was the obvious candidate.

Universitätsverlag Potsdam

The Universitätsverlag Potsdam was formally named in 1998, but is older than this. Like many German university presses, it was created in response to a specific need. The University Library already had a Publications Services Department which eventually became a fully-fledged publishing service. The Library had long supplied publishing expertise and ancillary publishing services – e.g., work on metadata - so it was a natural step for the University Press to become an organic part of the University Library.

Universitätsverlag *universaar*

Universitätsverlag *universaar* is the university press of Saarland University. Founded in 2010, it is run as part of SULB (Saarländische Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek), the University Library, which is also the State Library of the federal state of Saarland. Three members of library staff are involved in running the press part-time, in addition to retaining some library duties. One oversees its overall strategy and the others work on day-to-day operations.

universi

The University of Siegen is one of the younger universities in Germany. The University Press, called “*universi*”, was set up in 2001 by a professor of German literature, to provide a publication service for HSS subjects. Today it offers a full publication service. This is based within the University Library and complements the institutional repository (OPUS). It employs 4 members of staff, of whom three work part-time (one on a temporary contract). Most new publications are published digitally as well as in print and hosted by OPUS.

Ethics, philosophy, constraints and opportunities

All six university presses show a passionate commitment to the Open Access philosophy¹². In this they are aided by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Universitätsverlage, which has become a powerful politically-active body. After Open Access became recognised as an alternative business model for publishing books, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft positioned itself as an OA advocate. Although digital formats have been a great enabler of OA in many countries, for most of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft’s members print continues to play an important role, because most of its member presses focus on book-orientated disciplines which continue to rely on printed volumes.

The AG Universitätsverlage collaborates with other Open Access and Digital Publishing initiatives and working groups. One such group, operating within the “Deutsche Initiative für Netzwerkinformation e.V.” (DINI¹³) or the AEUP, focuses on electronic publishing. Even though most books published by

¹² However, Bargheer and Pabst (op cit) suggest that the ideological commitment to OA which they share was originally born of necessity: “International discussion on university presses appears to be dominated by Anglo-American concepts and concerns, passing over many continental European presses that operate in their national contexts ... we provide a case study of German-language university presses that highlights challenges and opportunities when publishing in languages other than English. A common thread across those university presses is their adoption of open access (OA) publishing. OA has become a necessity for them because the combination of publishing niche scholarship and a potential audience limited by linguistic borders serves to create market conditions that are not viable in a conventional model. See also Bargheer, M. and Walker, K. (2017) ‘Library Publishing and the University Press in the United States and Germany: Lessons from Two Academic Contexts for Sustaining the Scholarly Book.’ *Preprints der Zeitschrift BIBLIOTHEK – Forschung und Praxis*. Available at [Library Publishing and the University Press in the United States and Germany: Lessons from Two Academic Contexts for Sustaining the Scholarly Book \(hu-berlin.de\)](https://www.librarypublishingandtheuniversitypress.com/) (Accessed 27th June 2021)

¹³ <https://dini.de/>

Universitätsverlage members are in the German language, the AG publishes a high volume of research output from internationally-funded projects; therefore its reach extends well beyond German-speaking countries. It predicts that its importance will increase as the prices charged by commercial publishers continue to escalate, creating a need for vehicles for research outputs that are less attractive to the commercial sector. The AG's members have no plans to operate in a more commercial fashion: they believe they have developed cost-efficient and sustainable publication services which are deliberately and self-consciously the polar opposite of the business models operated by commercial publishers. Sustainability was their core mantra long before it became a buzzword in the publishing industry more generally.

Relationship with authors

TU Berlin University Press dedicates itself explicitly to its parent university's researchers. Authors or editors must normally have an affiliation with the university to be eligible to work with the Press. The 35-40 books it publishes annually are all Open Access, using the CC-BY licence as default. Most titles appear as part of books series; some single monographs and conference proceedings are also published.

At Göttingen the approach is similar: authors who want to publish with the Press must be affiliated in some way to the University. The librarians running the Press are happy to offer general advice both to academics hoping to publish with the Press and those who wish to publish elsewhere. The financial model follows the traditional German model, in which the author pays for a first print run ("Produktionskostenzuschuss"). German researchers are used to having to raise this money¹⁴. It means all authors get the same chances of being published.

In the first half of 2021 the BIS-Verlag focused on making the transition to an exclusively Gold Open Access business model. Authors are now able to produce print copies at their own cost. They must also find their own printers (though the Press is willing to help) and take responsibility for the distribution of the print copies. Printing used to be undertaken by the University's in-house printers; going forward, this will still be an option for university staff who have been allocated a cost code for printing services. However, the warehouse, which was located in the Library premises, has been disbanded, so there is no longer a stockholding facility.

These developments have created tensions between the Library and those authors who still want printed copies to be available. The Press works very closely with its authors and sees the danger of losing the "human component" through digitising all its processes, yet strongly believes that Open Access offers big opportunities and fulfils the imperative to make research outputs available and discoverable to all.

¹⁴ Universities in Germany don't charge tuition fees, so the outlay for publications, although substantial, is readily accepted.

At Potsdam the librarians running the Press first ensure that all authors whose books are accepted for publication are affiliated to Potsdam University, which funds it. This is not as straightforward as it may seem, as it raises ambiguities. What happens to a series if an editor moves university? Does a researcher have to be affiliated to the University at the time when the research is being conducted or at the time of publication, or both?

Universitätsverlag *universaar* does not offer an editorial service or promote itself actively. Any author affiliated to the University is eligible to publish if quality criteria are met. As it belongs to a State Library, the Press originally offered its services to everyone in Saarland, charging a premium for non-University authors, but the uptake of this service was low, so it decided no longer to serve external authors.

universi takes a slightly different approach. The University of Siegen is striving to play an active role also within its local community, so *universi* will publish work by unaffiliated authors if relevant to Siegen or the surrounding region. The Editorial Board of *universi* has high standards. It consists of 11 junior and senior members of the professoriate, representing all schools across the university. It has authority over quality control, the publishing programme and Business Models. Most publications are in German; about 50% are OA. Although *universi* recommends Open Access to all its authors, they may choose which business model to adopt. Some of the publications are exhibition and arts catalogues, so legal constraints may in any case prevent their being offered OA, sometimes even from being produced digitally. Authors must contribute to printing costs. Revenues are put towards new print-runs.

There is high demand for advice and training from academics, one of the services *universi* offers. The “House of Young Talents” is a University-led advice and training programme for postgraduates, post-docs and assistant professors. The Press works in close cooperation with faculty to teach all “Young Talents” about Open Access and other publication options. These training sessions have led to increased interest among authors to be published by *universi*.

Logistics: production and dissemination

TU Berlin University Press offers a proof-reading service, collaborating with authors and external typesetters in an iterative (time-consuming) process which eventually produces the final manuscript. In an effort to streamline this process, the Press is developing templates for authors, but owing to the diverse nature of the different subjects covered– from Humanities to Economics, Engineering to STM – it is not possible to develop a single template that works for all. It is planning to introduce an XML workflow.

The diversity of the publishing programme means it is difficult to develop a streamlined marketing strategy. Marketing is focused on promoting the webshop and publishing blog posts about individual titles in the University Library’s publishing services blog. It is data-driven, with a strong focus on

discoverability. Although the books are available from bookshops, there is no targeted marketing effort to support bookshop sales.

As at Berlin TU University Press, at Göttingen publishes all books digitally and using an OA model, with clear licences for reuse. The Press does not follow the traditional PoD model for print (i.e., the creation of each copy post-sale), but prefers to order mini print-runs of 10-30 copies at a time. The Library keeps two print archive copies. Print copies are also sent to each of Germany's several national libraries and most authors want some print copies. The free digital version generates other print sales¹⁵. Production processes are not xml-based because set-up costs would be too high: the German tax-payer ultimately foots the bill for the Press's activities, so all costs must be kept as low as possible. There has been investment in professional publishing software, to keep an accurate record of expenses and costs. This makes the annual auditing process much easier. Distribution is handled in-house. The Library has an extensive Inter-Library Loan output, so the post-room is accustomed to sending out large numbers of books every day and can accommodate despatching a few Press titles as well.

Bis-Verlag helps with typesetting, using Word templates or InDesign for layout¹⁶. It does not offer other editorial services. Since the beginning of 2021 it has been moving to an exclusively Gold Open Access business model. OA is now a key part of its publication policy; economics and tax issues have contributed to the change, as well as the need to manage employee workload. In April 2021 OA became mandatory for all publications. Gold Open Access files are hosted on university servers and delivered via `"/oops/` ("Oldenburger Online-Publikations-Server").

At Potsdam, the Press handles all editorial processes in-house and uses external typesetters to ensure a professional layout. It offers 2 rounds of editorial reviews for each author, which is time-consuming but a service of which it is proud. The biggest challenge is quality control: many titles are published in series, so the editors must take responsibility for ensuring continuing high standards. It will only accept dissertations if the researcher has achieved a certain grade and gained academic recommendation to publish. It relies on the goodwill of academic staff at the University to undertake peer review.

The costs of typesetting and a first print run of 20 copies are covered by the authors. Any monies generated by the sales of print copies are re-invested in further print runs of these titles. The Press sees itself principally as a service, not a profit-making entity. It sets the prices of the books only a little higher than cost, to make the print versions as affordable as possible.

Sales and distribution are handled by Press staff. Books are listed in established catalogues – for example, VLB - and made available via Amazon (predominately to broaden discoverability), the Potsdam University Press's webshop and a shared catalogue listing titles from 20 different German-speaking University Presses.

¹⁵The Press has also ventured into complementary database publishing and has tried concepts such as enhanced publishing or deep reading.

¹⁶ Authors from STM backgrounds often use the Open Source typesetting software LaTeX.

At Saarbrücken, most authors provide a viable pdf which is used by Press staff for basic initial editing. The files are sent to an external typesetter and printer. Templates for authors are being developed. Most books published belong to the University's many series, of which a third have a dedicated editor or editorial board. For the others, the Press actively recruits editors to ensure uniform standards of quality, layout and production processes across all publications. The monographs come from all the University's 6 faculties and cover STM subjects as well as HSS ones. History and languages are particularly well-supported, but books about sports sciences, computer linguistics and business studies are also frequently published. One of the most active series – Saravi Pontes – addresses intercultural topics, as, owing to its geographical location, Saarland University is prominent among universities in the German-Franco border region that offer cross-border degrees. Most books are published in German, but the Press is open to publishing in other languages, especially French. Its catalogue also contains books in Spanish and English.

Universitätsverlag *universaar* is an exclusively Open Access publisher. All titles are published via the Open Access model; this is not negotiable. The author decides whether to make a print version available. All printed books have a minimum print run of 4 to cover legal deposit, but usually print runs range from between 50 to 100 copies. Sales figures are always relatively small, though they vary from title to title. Metadata is sent to VLB and all the books are listed at Amazon. Beyond that there is no marketing programme. The focus is on discoverability, and because it does not rely on commercial success (and all books are available OA anyway), the Press does not concern itself unduly with sales figures. All OA files are held in the University's repository, at the time of writing in transition from OPUS to DSpace.

For print and distribution, Universitätsverlag *universaar* works with an external service provider. At its inception in 2010 it co-operated closely with a small publisher that provided excellent print quality and responsive customer service. When this publisher ceased to exist, the Press moved to its current service provider, but there have been bumps in the road in this relationship. At the time of writing it is considering going out to tender. It has encountered difficulties in finding a partner sympathetic to its ethos that will allow it to retain its independence.

At *universi*, the vast majority of publications are produced in the University's own Printing House ("UniPrint") which keeps the cost of print production low and the prices of the publications affordable. The short communication channels enable a high standard of quality in production and subsequent processing. *universi* does not handle the distribution of printed books itself; this has been outsourced to a local bookshop, which keeps stock of all titles and fulfils any orders. To finance the print runs, authors need to contribute to the printing costs; any revenue generated is used to pay for new print-runs.

universi does not get actively involved in marketing its publications but ensures that good metadata makes them discoverable. It will also offer review copies and shares a stand with other German university presses at the Frankfurt Book Fair. *universi* is not primarily interested in pushing sales – it believes its duty is to make all titles discoverable and accessible to advance research. Generating

income is a secondary issue. It does not compete with other university presses or commercial publishers; all contracts with authors are on a non-exclusive basis. Its mission is to make research accessible to anyone, by whatever route that may be.

Third party involvement

Although all six university presses that are the subject of this study are run by very small groups of librarians, some of them having to fit in other responsibilities with their publishing work, the interest they showed in outsourcing their publishing activities to a commercial publisher or white-label services provider was muted or at best measured. TU Berlin has periodically considered co-publishing models but not yet adopted any. At Saarbrücken, pressure of work once caused the Press to consider closing down the publishing service or running it as an imprint with a commercial publisher, but both suggestions were “met with outrage from authors and series editors”. Most of the librarians interviewed said their main motivations were the twin goals of helping their own academics to publish and providing staunch support for the Open Access ideal.

Some elements of their publishing programmes are outsourced: most use external typesetters and printers; Siegen outsources distribution to a local bookshop. However, such practical tasks, while of course essential, have little impact on the respective brands. If any of these university presses tried to outsource its whole publishing operation, the constraints would be considerable. As the librarians at Saarbrücken discovered, authors would be likely to object. German funding bodies are taking a greater interest in Open Access and might not continue to fund academics whose work was published commercially. Working with a commercial publisher or white label provider would inevitably add an extra layer of cost which would have to be passed on to purchasers of the print monographs, when the aim is to keep prices as low as possible by incurring as little cost as possible¹⁷.

Possible future developments

Finding enough time and money to carry out these presses’ activities is undoubtedly an ongoing concern for the librarians running them, although, as already mentioned, some fiscal aid is obtained from payments levied on authors. Each one of the six presses would benefit from higher staffing levels, but of course there would be a cost attached to this. If the parent universities feel they are already making as great a financial contribution as they can afford, both directly and through the deployment of salaried personnel, the only ways to obtain more money would be to raise the prices charged for print or to step up marketing activities (staff time permitting) to increase sales volume. Arguably,

¹⁷ They may be scrupulously purist about this. As mentioned, Göttingen has not invested in xml or a Content Management System because its activities are funded by the taxpayer and therefore the librarians running the Press feel the expense cannot be justified, even though both applications would save time and create other efficiencies.

increasing marketing resource would further support the presses' promotion of the Open Access ideal, since it would heighten the profile of the publications and expand opportunities for dissemination and citation.¹⁸ Raising the prices of the print books would be harder to justify if OA principles were to be maintained.

The related conundrums these six presses face is whether expansion – either of volume of output or ancillary activities such as marketing – is desirable and if so, how far it can be made to work with their fidelity to Open Access. Four of the presses, each of whose output is as high as that of a small independent commercial publisher, only publish monographs written by their parent institutions' academics. Unless there are authors at one or more of these institutions whose work, despite being of the required standard, is beyond the press's capacity to publish, there is no reason for it to expand its volume of output. Universitätsverlag *universaar* and *universi* accept publications from authors outside their institutions, so the prospect of expansion may be more attractive to them.

All the presses outsource some elements of their publishing activities, but none makes comprehensive or even extensive use of a third-party service provider. Outsourcing more tasks to a traditional publisher or white label company would be a viable way of reducing the workload, but again would add costs that would have to be passed on to end-users unless sales volumes could be substantially¹⁹.

Even if they decide to make no major changes to their strategies or ethos, these six German university presses would undoubtedly benefit from greater collaboration with each other, perhaps by appointing a not-for-profit organisation to develop and share publishing services, akin to the role that Adema and Stone advocate for Jisc²⁰. The obvious candidate for this would be the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Universitätsverlage, although when interviewed its representatives explicitly stated that they have no plans to extend the range of their activities. On a more modest level, the presses could engage more with the types of network-building opportunities advocated by Drummond²¹.

However, despite the unrelenting hard work involved in maintaining the activities of these six presses, the librarians in charge of them may decide that small and perfectly-formed works best and therefore not identify as enterprises in transition. In the succinct words of Margo Bargheer, "being small is not a fault".

¹⁸ Some new university presses will only use certain marketing channels because of their commitment to Open Access. They may avoid commercial aggregator platforms, for example.

¹⁹ Although outsourcing to a traditional publisher would almost certainly increase traffic more than a white label provider, new university presses tend to prefer white label providers, again because of their loyalty to Open Access. Adema, J. and Stone, G., op cit, 49 have published a table of some of the main white label service providers and their attributes. We have been unable to find information about the comparative costs and merits of white label providers and traditional publishers' "umbrella" services. Such a study, if feasible, would undoubtedly be very useful.

²⁰ Adema, J. and Stone, G., op cit, 77-81.

²¹ Drummond, C. op cit, passim.

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[https://aupresses.org/membership/become-a-member/eligibility-requirements/https://aupresses.org/](https://aupresses.org/membership/become-a-member/eligibility-requirements/). “The Association of University Presses advances the essential role of a global community of publishers whose role is to ensure academic excellence and cultivate knowledge.”

[Library Publishing Directory | Library Publishing Coalition](#). This provides a good overview of the current status of library publishers.

About Gold Leaf

Gold Leaf was founded in March 2001 to provide business development and market research for publishers and the publishing community. It has since extended its client base to academic institutions and technology companies.

From its inception, Gold Leaf has undertaken project work. Some projects are extensive, taking several months to complete, or recurring; others are carried out in a few weeks, often to capture snapshots of opportunities or trends. Most involve both primary and secondary research. Smaller projects tend to consist mainly of primary research. Some projects result in reports for publication and are in the public domain; others are carried out for individual companies and organisations under NDA. Sometimes Gold Leaf is asked to carry out repeat surveys, to assess how a market or the needs of its consumers, or perceptions of the service provided by a client, have changed over time.

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