STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION AND MISSION STATEMENT

The AAUP is an organization of nonprofit publishers whose members strive to advance scholarship through their offerings. The AAUP’s mission is to assist its members through professional education, cooperative services, and public advocacy. We educate by offering training programs and workshops, by holding specialized and general annual meetings, and by aggregating and distributing industry information. Our cooperative services expand our members’ reach and efficiency. We advocate by promoting the value of university presses both within and outside the university community and by acting as our members’ collective voice on matters of free speech, academic freedom, copyright, and other core issues.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF PUBLISHING AND THE WORK OF THE AAUP

University presses offer polished works of scholarship to the widest possible audience—this is their fundamental mission and it has not changed over the past 125 years. But the landscape in which we conduct this mission has changed dramatically over the past quarter-century. From new technologies to new economic conditions to changing relations with libraries, booksellers, university administrators, and even commercial scholarly presses, the world of scholarship in 2006 looks very different than it did a generation ago. University presses have been adapting to this new world by adopting new technologies and new operating methods, and the AAUP has helped them do so. Its role of helping member presses thrive in changing conditions and thereby enhancing the sharing of knowledge will not change; the means by which it serves scholarly communication will continue to evolve.
It is beyond the scope of a strategic plan to list all the changes in the publishing landscape, but some of the major ones are worth noting. Although subsidies for university presses have increased modestly in recent years—a welcome reversal in what was a long-term downward trend—they still lag behind inflation. Libraries, one of our major markets, spend an increasing share of their acquisitions budgets on STM journals and electronic resources. Because university presses, with some notable exceptions, tend to be oriented toward books in the humanities and social sciences, this decline in library sales raises some daunting financial challenges. Presses have had to learn how to reach even deeper into existing markets and to create products that appeal to new ones.

Although the changes brought by these new financial conditions are challenging, they are dwarfed by the problems—and exciting new opportunities—being wrought by new communications technologies. These technologies are often double-edged swords; at the same time that they create opportunities to reach students and scholars in corners of the globe that presses could rarely reach before, they also offer unprecedented opportunities for unauthorized use of our books and journals and, consequently, the potential for a dangerous loss of sales and licensing revenue as well as a loss of control over copyrighted material. New technologies offer more efficient means of vetting, revising, editing, and finally presenting scholarship in either print or electronic formats. But choosing which innovations to implement for which problems is far from clear-cut. These innovations often require expertise beyond the traditional resources of most publishers, and mistakes can be terribly expensive.

The new technologies also bring new players to the game. Libraries, university departments, and individual scholars increasingly disseminate information on their own. This change offers a tremendous opportunity for university presses to collaborate with partners in new ways. University presses, because of their expertise in evaluation, editorial development, production standards, and marketing, still represent the gold standard of scholarly publishing within the university. We can and should be among the leaders who guide our parent institutions and their constituents through the confusing and expensive new world of digital publishing and information management.

New technologies have also created a new tension between so-called open access and the protections offered by intellectual property law. The inclination among “born-free” adherents to believe there are no costs associated with posting usable information on the web seems to be waning, but challenges persist to the idea that the creators of scholarship as well as those who vet, edit, and disseminate it should enjoy some control over their product. Currently, that challenge is greatest for those university presses that have a significant stake in journal publishing, but proponents of open access would like to see the idea applied to book publishing as well. University presses have particular points of view in this debate that sometimes vary from other parties in the academy; as actual members of the academy, they have real opportunities to present those points of view and affect the policies that will ultimately prevail.

The rapidly changing landscape in which university presses operate requires more resources and expertise than any one press can bring to bear. The AAUP, by itself adapting to this new environment, can enable its member presses to seize the opportunities the new landscape offers. To do so, it will both revise old programs and develop new ones, providing education and services relevant to presses of all sizes. It will also reconsider who qualifies as a member press, modifying requirements regarding size or product format in favor of embracing all whose mission is the nonprofit dissemination of scholarship. It will recognize that a climate offering newly diverse means of increasing knowledge will inevitably necessitate a healthy debate of important issues before uniting around specific policies. And the AAUP, in pursuing increasingly global aims, will do all it can to enable presses to employ staffs that reflect the diversity they encounter in their markets.
All these goals must be pursued in the context of maintaining AAUP’s fiscal health, and so all new programs will need to be evaluated with regard to both financial and staffing impacts on the central office. The AAUP will also pursue new funding opportunities for central office programs where possible, and will provide assistance to member presses that undertake fundraising efforts of their own. The latter could involve continued workshops such as those offered at recent annual meetings, articles in AAUP handbooks, and facilitation of press-to-press contacts that enable newcomers to fundraising to benefit from presses further along in the process.

Perhaps most critical to the AAUP are new educational and cooperative programs. We must continually meet in traditional and new forums to share information and educate each other. This is true especially, but not exclusively, in the digital environment, where journals staff, who previously have tended to operate somewhat tangentially to books staff, have particular expertise to offer. Shared education is a critical part of the AAUP mission.

The AAUP will offer increased consortial services where such collaboration can benefit members and, where possible, central office finances. Possible new programs are offered in this strategic plan.

The AAUP will continue to develop strategic alliances on behalf of member presses. Recent collaborative initiatives with such organizations as the Association of American Publishers (AAP), the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and the Association of American Universities (AAU) are examples. These initiatives can range from joint public and professional education programs to lobbying efforts and even legal action. The increased public prominence of AAUP since the implementation of the last strategic plan represents one of the organization’s great achievements in recent years. Heightened public awareness of the importance of scholarship, the value that university presses add to it, and presses’ role in its distribution further our core mission and society’s traditional endorsement of the value of education and knowledge.

**Strategies**

**Broaden membership.**

While we intend to retain our identity as an association of university presses, we will increase collaboration with nonprofit scholarly publishers and organizations whose interests and goals are compatible with those of the AAUP. We expect to streamline the current membership categories so that most American university presses fall into one category. New membership categories and benefits will allow more nonprofit publishers, learned societies, library societies, and other organizations to partner with the AAUP in shaping the future of scholarly communication. We will reach out to new scholarly publishing enterprises by offering an introductory membership to acquaint them with the work of the AAUP and the supportive community it represents. The proposed innovations will require changes in the By-Laws and Guidelines of the Association, with approval of the current members.

**Current:**

- There are now four AAUP membership categories: full, affiliate, international, and associate.
• The distinction between full and affiliate university press members is the size of the publishing program. Full members must publish a minimum of 5 titles (books or journals) annually.

• Associate members are presses affiliated with non-degree-granting institutions and associations. The number of associate members is capped at 30% of the number of full members. Associate members are not eligible to serve on the Board of Directors or Standing Committees of the AAUP.

• International members are university-affiliated publishers outside the Americas and such presses within the Americas that publish primarily in languages other than English.

Innovations:
• Change the membership categories to full, international, associate, and introductory.

• Eliminate the affiliate category so that all North American university press members of AAUP become full members.

• Allow an increase in the number of associate members by raising the cap to 35% of the number of full members.

• Allow representatives of associate members to serve on the Board of Directors and Standing Committees of the AAUP.

• Set up a new introductory membership category for small non-profit publishers (university or other) that do not yet meet the minimum standards for AAUP membership.

• Revise dues structure in two stages, first to reflect new membership categories in a relatively revenue neutral way and secondly to reflect non-book income, particularly journals and electronic products.

Enhance education and training, especially with the goal of helping members manage change.

Professional development is one of the most valued services that the AAUP has to offer. Opportunities for professional development and training are ever more important as technology produces constant change in just about every aspect of scholarly publishing. Training staff to perform new tasks and to perform old tasks in new ways is essential to presses of all sizes. To meet the goal of helping members manage change, the AAUP will facilitate and enhance the educational opportunities offered by the annual meeting, premeeting workshops, regional meetings, and birds-of-a-feather gatherings as well as provide more educational and training resources on the AAUP Web site. While educational programs will be addressed to all staff, we see a particular need for programs geared to junior staff and to press directors.


**Current:**

- Sponsor an annual meeting, with preconference seminars and workshops.
- Facilitate regional and special interest meetings, featuring seminars or workshops.
- Convene task forces and committees to examine critical issues, such as open access and its many possible effects on university presses, or the impact of electronic publishing on the traditional roles and relationships between books and journals, to name two; serve as clearinghouses for new developments; and distribute information to member presses.
- Maintain a members’ Web site with working papers and resources relating to professional training and development.
- Sponsor the week-in-residence program and diversity fellowships for annual meetings.

**Innovations:**

- Further develop the AAUP Web site as an educational resource, including online handbooks, and regularly review and update online materials.
- Include junior staff in the planning of annual meeting sessions geared toward the needs of new and junior colleagues.
- Review the current committee structure with a view toward including professional development components in all committees.
- Conduct research on development programs run by other organizations such as the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, the Society for Scholarly Publishing, and the Association of American Publishers, and recommend complementary, supplemental, or alternative programs geared to university press staff needs.
- Recognizing that journals programs encompass much-needed expertise in developing successful business models in electronic media as well as comprehensive knowledge of library markets, appoint a taskforce to recommend how to integrate journals publishing more fully into the programs of the AAUP.

**Contemplated:**

- Create portable curricula for training and professional development workshops, including a “basic boot camp” to orient new and junior staff to working at a scholarly press.
- Coordinate structured training workshops, following the model of the finances for nonfinancial people workshops.
- Organize a directors’ workshop or management roundtable.
- Develop a mentoring program.
Assist presses by effecting economies of scale through collaborative services.

The AAUP’s cooperative services, through which member presses join together in marketing books and journals and other joint services, have long been important parts of the association and will remain so for the planning period ahead. These programs are utilized by AAUP members of all sizes, providing savings in the cost of space advertising; in course adoption mailings to faculty; in obtaining publicity clippings; in access to sales information tools such as BookScan and Publisher Alley; and in informing public and secondary school libraries about the university press books most appropriate to their users. The AAUP commits to providing these services at a reasonable cost to members while also regularly evaluating programs to ensure that they recover direct and operating costs.

From discussions with member presses, it is clear that there are two areas where the already successful marketing services could become yet more valuable. First is Web marketing, which member presses overwhelmingly name as the area where they hope to develop or expand their activities. Second, at the recommendation of the AAUP’s Marketing Committee, is the development of potential new marketing services related to the AAUP’s successful Books for Understanding communications initiative, itself a Web-based program.

In further improving the AAUP’s cooperative economic services during the planning period ahead, we will follow three general principles: programs should benefit member presses of all sizes; wherever possible, all established programs should also have a Web marketing element; established programs must remain financially self-sustaining and new programs must become self-sustaining within a reasonable period of time.

Current:

• Operate catalog and subject mailing programs promoting university press books for course adoption and library purchase.

• Negotiate discounts for its members for space advertising, press clippings, and sales information tools.

• Coordinate booth space for member presses at BookExpo America and the Modern Language Association.

• Compile and distribute annual statistics on the number of titles published, compensation, and the cost of operations.

Innovations:

• Expand its program of negotiating discounts for members to data services such as ONIX conversion of title metadata as well as digital file archiving and management services.

• Develop wherever possible Web components to existing marketing programs. One possible example of this would be a Web-based course adoption resource center featuring books included in the current subject flyers and including additional material such as tables of contents or excerpts.

• Add a bookselling function to Books for Understanding in which one or more
Internet booksellers would fulfill orders placed through the site. The AAUP would maintain or enhance links back to individual press homepages for customers who want additional information.

- Explore ways in which presses can cooperate in the electronic delivery of content, including possible partnerships with other organizations.

**Contemplated:**
- Develop an academic program parallel to Books for Understanding that would promote new titles in selected scholarly disciplines via an RSS feed.
- Leverage the existing Books for Understanding program to create the opportunity for regular updates on new books to individual subscribers but also potentially to media contacts, key booksellers, and library decision makers. Possible ways of achieving this would include a Books for Understanding RSS feed or a Books for Understanding e-mail alert program highlighting new titles.
- Explore establishing cooperative promotion and sales arrangements and translation rights representation in markets such as Europe, Latin America, and Asia.

**Stabilize finances.**
The AAUP is funded through a combination of income from cooperative marketing and business services, membership dues, and meeting and educational program registration fees. The primary financial goal is to fund each year’s budget entirely from these sources. Broadening the membership will provide one source of new revenue. In addition, the AAUP will invite organizations with compatible goals that wish to support the work of the AAUP to become AAUP partners. These partners will make an annual contribution to the AAUP. They will receive recognition on our Web site (with links to their organizations’ Web sites), in the directory, and in the annual meeting program.

An important aspect of the other strategies listed above will include making each one financially self-sustaining, either at inception or within a reasonable time. In the first year after this plan is adopted, the emphasis will be on implementing a new dues structure along with membership changes. At the same time, the existing committee system will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised. In addition, the design of new programs will begin, including projected budgets over the first few years. These will show any potential short-term startup costs and how their eventual recovery will occur and will take account of staffing needs for any new programs (along with those costs). In the second year, with board approval of proposed budgets, the implementation of the first new program or programs will begin, along with a consideration of how to incorporate journals and perhaps electronic revenue into calculations of individual presses’ place within the dues structure.

These are the strategies that the AAUP will pursue in the years ahead, all with the ultimate aim of helping member presses fulfill their missions more effectively.