

Member Presses

- University of Alberta Press
- Athabasca University Press
- University of British Columbia Press
- University of Calgary Press
- ISER Books
- Canadian Mennonite University Press
- Presses de L'Université Laval
- University of Manitoba Press
- McGill-Queen's University Press
- Les Presses de L'Université de Montréal
- Les Presses de L'Université D'Ottawa/University of Ottawa Press
- Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies
- University of Regina Press
- Les Presses de L'Université du Québec
- University of Toronto Press
- Wilfrid Laurier University Press

March 2015

Open Letter to the Scholarly Community

We, the members of the Association of Canadian University Presses/Association des Presses Universitaires Canadiennes, wish to publicly state our position on the recent and disappointing actions of the WLU administration with regard to Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

University presses, by definition, are organizations that publish by employing the imprint of their parent institutions and, in so doing, carry forth the mission of universities to advance scholarship and enrich knowledge and learning, in Canada and around the world. As such, we are very sensitive to the financial difficulties facing many universities as well as the need for universities to act in a fiscally responsible way. Nonetheless, the recent announcement of the integration of WLUP into the administrative structure of the Wilfrid Laurier University Library masks the withdrawal of critical financial support from the Press. As has been reported in the *The Waterloo Region Record*,¹ this has already resulted in job losses.

University presses rely directly on the creativity, experience, and expertise of their staff to engage in publishing that meets the standards of academic excellence that have long defined scholarly publishing as well as the emerging challenges of the digital environment. Such publishing is extraordinarily difficult to accomplish in the absence of financial resources necessary to innovate and without the expertise of vital staff. Both elements are threatened by the withdrawal of the university's operating subsidy to the Press, historical support that has allowed WLUP to become a leader in the dissemination of scholarly research. It is disingenuous to describe or understand these developments as an expansion of the Press when staff and operating resources are being cut.

There are many models that govern the relationship between university presses and the administration of universities whose name they bear. In addition to provosts, presidents, and other members of administration, some presses (such as such as Alberta, MIT, and Stanford) operate independently but report to university librarians. In the North American publishing landscape, the full integration of a press's operations into the library is a model that is active in only a small minority of cases, Purdue and Michigan most saliently. The majority of presses remain active participants in the life of their home institutions but operate independently and at arm's length from universities. Moreover, all university presses are taking up the challenges of publishing and dissemination in a digital environment. While there are many shared concerns between presses and libraries on the electronic publishing front, innovative formats and practices in digital publishing are being developed by many publishers regardless of their integration with the functions of a university library.

We applaud the university librarian and the Press staff for taking measures to remain functional under extremely demanding circumstances and support the Press and its staff in continuing the work that has made WLUP such a highly esteemed press. Universities that have taken on a leadership role in research and scholarly communications by establishing and maintaining university presses face many challenges but must continue to assume the responsibility of financially supporting their presses even in the context of fiscal restraint.

¹ <http://www.therecord.com/news-story/5468890-laurier-eliminates-22-support-jobs-faculty-reductions-planned/>