

Governing Small OA Publishers

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- Mercedes Bunz (meson press)



Scholar-Led (and ScholarLed) Presses

- Presses founded and led by academics or scholars
- These are not university presses
- Academics and scholars have been involved in running publishing projects for more than 300 years, most importantly as part of the publishing activities of scholarly societies
- Academics have been a significant force in the adoption of open access publishing, and founded some of the earliest fully-OA journals
- Open Access book publishing has historically presented some different challenges: costs, technological demands (somewhat ameliorated by digital technology)

Governing 'Knowledge Commons'

- Non-depletable and depletable resources
- OA Publishers both create and share the resources in question
- 'Labour of love'
- Stickiness of the term 'community': power differentials between stakeholders

Impetus to start up: Values and Needs

- To publish books that were not being published
- To make use of experimental digital formats
- To think beyond the conventional constraints of the academy
- To meet OA needs

“ [The punctum founders] felt like the same kind of scholarly books were being produced over and over again, and they're boring. A lot of amazing research is done by university and other traditional academic publishers. That is highly valuable, so I don't want to be misinterpreted. But there is a certain homogenization of what research looks like when it ends up in a book published by a university press, and how it ends up in the book”

(Eileen Joy, 2022)

Incorporation and its forms

Press	Form	Location
African Minds	Trust	South Africa
Mattering Press	Charitable Incorporated Organisation	UK
Mediastudies.press	Nonprofit Corporation	Pennsylvania, USA
Meson press	Co-operative	Germany
Open Book Publishers	Social Enterprise and Community Interest Company	UK
punctum	Public Benefit Corporation	California, USA

Elements, Resources, Actors

- financial resources: managing and dealing with available income.
- human resources: the people involved in the labour of publication, from press staff to peer reviewers, cover designers and external advisory boards
- the technological systems and digital infrastructure involved in producing books
- the rules and bylaws of their form of incorporation, as dictated by location.

Informal structures

- Discourse and consensus building
- Lack of mechanisms for dealing with conflict
- Aims to include elements (e.g. boards) more fully, and more communication between said elements
- Transparency as time and forms allow
- Independence highly valued, whether or not it was planned.

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- “ I don't think [independence] was a deliberate decision. I think it was more a decision that was forced upon us. We had discussions about linking up with universities. Maybe getting a group of universities together to form a press, even with one university becoming *their* press, in the very early days. But that just never went anywhere, as much as we tried. It was just becoming too complicated. That might actually have convinced us and that to maintain our independence gives us more flexibility. I think that's still the case. When we interact with the university presses, the independence and flexibility is something that we value more ” (Francois Van Schalkwyk 2022).

Recommendations (always contextual)

- The implementation of government structures or practices when setting up a press can pre-empt some of the potential problems publishers could run into later
- Explore forms of incorporation
- Clarify elements of governance structure, both human and non-human, and the relationship of each element to the others
- Diversity and representation
- Transparency of processes
- For resources, see the report.