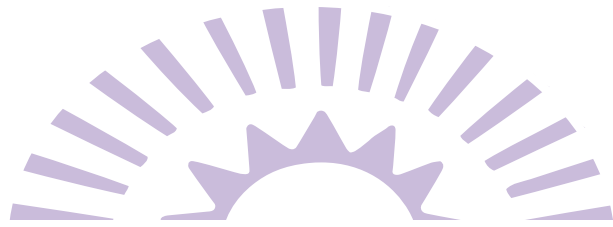




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 - Why Does It Matter? The Case for Studying My Field



THE AMHERST COLLEGE PRESS

Amherst College establishes the Amherst College Press to further the founding mission of the college—to enlighten the world.

As a premier liberal-arts institution, Amherst College seeks to foster the creation of knowledge at the meeting-points of ideas, disciplines, and intellectual perspectives. As a community of scholars, we seek to engage with our colleagues everywhere doing work at the frontiers of their fields. And as a college dedicated to preparing the most promising students to seek, value, and advance knowledge throughout their lives, Amherst has a deep commitment to the fundamental premise that encouraging the exploration of ideas, and communicating those ideas as scholarship and artistic expression, improves the welfare and well-being of all people.

Amherst College establishes the Amherst College Press at a moment when the communication of ideas between scholars and artists is hampered by considerations of profit and ownership. While these objectives are legitimate, they should not exclusively determine the means by which those who bring new ideas to their fields of study communicate with their peers. As we encourage the full range of intellectual exploration through protecting the integrity of academic freedom, so we are determined to facilitate the free exchange of ideas by working to break down any and all barriers inhibiting that communication.

Accordingly, the Amherst College Press:

- Will find and present scholarship integrating ideas across disciplines, cultures, languages, and fields of study; and, remembering our commitment to excellence in teaching, will particularly seek out scholarship with particular promise for engaging and illuminating young minds at the beginning of serious intellectual engagement
- Will engage faculty of Amherst College, and scholars with affiliations to the college, as an editorial board for the press, and through them assure that promising ideas are identified and scholarly merit assured through rigorous review
- Will produce this scholarship in formats accessible to scholars and readers everywhere for no cost through the Internet, and at the lowest practical cost in print
- Will hold the copyright of this work in the name of the Trustees of Amherst College, while licensing all work produced through Creative Commons licenses for the free use of all

In taking this step we seek to offer not only a different model for how the work of scholarly publishing can be done, but a voice not typically heard—from the distinctive perspective of a liberal-arts institution—among the institutions that produce published scholarship.



General Principles and Business Plan

The Amherst College Press will be

- A digital-first press;
- Based at a liberal-arts institution;
- Producing open access work.

Our goals are:

- To create a new pathway for scholarship in the humanities supporting the emergence of digital scholarship and alternatives to the traditional monograph.
- To address the “free rider” problem in scholarly publishing by stepping in from the sidelines as a liberal-arts institution to contribute as a publisher, and by encouraging other institutions like ours to support our work and help shape our mission.
- To design and implement a pay-to-publish business model in scholarly publishing by returning to the founding principles of university presses—strong institutional ownership of the publishing mission, reflected in the willingness of the institution to provide core support for the operations of the Press and to assist in generating the resources necessary to provide for the costs of editorial review, permissions, and production.
- To fully explore the possibility of digital platforms for communicating scholarly ideas by engaging with our authors earlier in the process; supporting them with a team that has mastered digital resources for research and communication.
- To support the emergence of digitally released scholarship as a mark of scholarly attainment by developing a pathway for reviewing such scholarship wherever it is produced.
- To revision the community of scholars on global terms, engaging researchers and scholars beyond the well-resourced institutions of the United States and Europe through open-access works and support for commenting/annotating technologies.

These principles and objectives shape our work in important ways.

How will we build?

1. A growing number of opportunities exist in the marketplace for building digital works. There is no need for us to create our own. Instead we should **evaluate and select among possible pathways**, taking in view:

The need to create a *clear production workflow* encompassing

- Submission
- Closed (peer) review and alternative (peer-to-peer/open) reviews

- The creation of Dublin-Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI)-standard metadata
- Support for multimodal web presence
- Support for downloadable E-publications
- Support for print-on-demand artifacts
- A strong preference for open-source tools

The need to engineer *templates for developing work* scalable across use cases and author needs

The need to support *long-term preservation* of the work we produce in digital repositories

2. Our work must **fully explore the possibilities of digital platforms** for communicating scholarly ideas. This means:
 - Engaging with authors an earlier stage in their own research and conceptualization, in order to bring useful tools to their attention at a point when they are maximally useful.
 - Building in the creation of metadata in our workflow, to assure discoverability, cataloging, and wide dispersal in research libraries.
 - Working with developers of digital platforms to push them toward building in better support for the needs and standards of scholarly communication (citation, stable pagination/location, preservation)
 - Connecting the data derived through research, the tools for connecting datasets to narrative, and the communication of scholarship in multimodal forms in integrated, efficient, and sustainable infrastructure for digital scholarship
3. Our work must **protect authors' rights** in the work while at the same time **providing a strong signal encouraging the use, distribution, and engagement** with the work we produce. This means:
 - Developing model author contracts providing for a single, one-time honorarium payment and providing for Creative Commons licensing of the work; advising authors on the advantages and disadvantages of various forms of CC licenses
 - Encouraging authors to draw on resources and datasets that are either self-created or in the public domain
 - Partnering with commenting/annotating pathways (particularly hypothes.is) to create a community of readers who are engaged, via a common platform, in the conversation on produced work

What will we build?

No scholarly publisher can develop work in all fields. The essential function provided by publishers is the assurance of scholarly merit, and this imposes the requirement for a selective focus on a few fields of deep expertise. The principles guiding our work, and the objectives we pursue in building our work, point us toward the following guidelines in choosing how we will build our editorial program.

1. As a *digital-first* publisher we will look for fields of scholarship better served by the promise multimodal digital platforms than by the inherent limitations of print.
 - Examples that we are now exploring include ethnomusicology; art and art history (in

- partnership with the Mead Art Museum); and media and communication studies.
2. As an *open-access* publisher we will look for fields:
 - That have difficulty finding outlets for scholarship in the marketplace, yet have an engaged and productive community of researchers and a clear place in the curriculum. Examples include law and literature and critical theory.
 - That have a global community of scholars often cut off from each other by means of pay walls and the sheer cost of access to printed materials. This, too, is a focus in developing work in ethnomusicology and critical theory.
 - That might be best served by the development and support of formats other than the monograph for the communication of research and ideas. Examples here include “Public Works,” a projected series of short (25,000-word) commissioned studies or commentaries on questions in the public square authored by senior scholars in the humanities.
 3. As a publisher grounded in a *liberal-arts institution*, we will look for:
 - Studies that provide compelling, engaging introductions to basic concepts or ideas in a field, particularly in shorter forms. Examples under development include a series of short works under the general title “Why Does It Matter? The Case for Studying My Field.”
 - Works that are inherently interdisciplinary, or that are exploring new syntheses of disciplinary perspectives.
 - Work that supports the pedagogical task of the classroom. Said in different words, we are especially interested in “teachable research”—work that teaches both methodology and basic concepts, particularly to advanced undergraduate and beginning graduate students.

What is our business model?

Our business model is driven by our principles—to be digital-first, open-access, and grounded in a liberal arts institution. All of these principles have specific implications for developing a sustainable and viable model for the long term.

We feel that best way to support a pay-to-publish business model of scholarly communication—one that depends upon the support of institutions and outside funders to cover the necessary costs of assuring scholarly merit and digital production—is to build a new, bottom-up business model that reduces to the greatest extent possible the fixed costs of providing the function publishers are meant to serve. This means:

1. As a *digital-first* publisher we take on the costs of developing high-quality, multimodal, discoverable, and sustainable works. These are not insubstantial, but they are less than the costs of printing, shipping, storing, and managing printed books. Further, by focusing on the development of platforms and production pathways that can scale across use cases and author needs, we reduce the marginal costs of producing each next work.
2. Our commitment to publishing works on an *open-access* basis arises from a pragmatic assessment of how best to build a pay-to-publish business model. By shifting the financial relationship between our press, our authors, and our audience to an open-access basis, we lose traditional purchase and (most) secondary-rights revenue streams—but we eliminate

almost entirely the significant fixed costs associated with monitoring those systems of revenue. Shifting the financial relationship with our authors to a one-time, single-honorarium payment means that we free ourselves of the costs of a sales-monitoring and royalty-accounting-and-payment function. Similarly, distributing our works on the basis of Creative Commons licenses means that rights to use, copy, and share our work are granted in, and signaled by, the work itself—which substantially reduces the need to support the costs of a rights-and-permissions function within our cost structure.

3. As a publisher grounded in a *liberal-arts institution*, we represent a commitment on the part of Amherst College to expand its own understanding of its mission to encompass both the creation *and the communication* of ideas in academe.

This is, first, an expression of Amherst’s broader goal of strengthening its position as a “research college” over the years ahead. Under the leadership of President Carolyn “Biddy” Martin, Amherst has committed itself to maintaining its long-held standards of excellence in teaching and in providing an unparalleled undergraduate experience, while at the same time fostering and encouraging the active engagement of faculty at the frontiers of research in their fields. A scholarly press is by its nature a liminal space where the work of a global community of scholars meets, and is supported by, the work of the scholars in a sponsoring institution—particularly by those who take on the leadership of the Press as members of the Editorial Board.

It is also a reassertion of what we believe was the founding inspiration for academic presses in the United States—the recognition on the part of institutional leaders that the market *could* not provide a sustainable means of assuring that scholars would have a way of exchanging the findings of research, and that it *should* not be the measure by which scholarly merit was assessed. By understanding the mission of Amherst College to encompass exchange of ideas among scholars and students, the College signals its willingness to make an active contribution to the ecosystem of scholarly communication—and to actively encourage other, similar institutions to do the same through providing consortial funding for our efforts.