

## What Needs to Be Done

In our interviews we detected significant detachment from administrators about publishing's connection to their core mission; a high level of energy and excitement from the librarians we consulted about reinventing their roles on campus to meet the evolving needs of their constituents; and a wide range of responses from press directors, from those who are continuing to do what they have always done, to those who are actively reconnecting with their host institutions' academic programs and engaging in collaborative efforts to develop new electronic products. Many press directors have a sense of what needs to be done to jump-start their new enterprises, but lack the financial capital, technical staff, and technological skills to pursue this kind of agenda. Librarians and press directors acknowledge that they have limited experience in collaborating effectively with one another and operate on different business models that make collaboration challenging. At the same time, we found that they have an appreciation for the unique skills and experience that each brings to the table.

Administrators, librarians, and presses each have a role to play (as do scholars, though this report is not directed at them). The vision put forward in the full report is unlikely to materialize without leadership from these three constituents, particularly from presidents and provosts. Due to the siloed structure of universities, real collaboration is difficult to enact without impetus from the top. We encourage senior administrators to embrace the fact that in this digital era, publishing, broadly defined, is an integral part of the core mission and activities of universities, and to take ownership of it. They should take inventory of the landscape of publishing activities underway within their universities to understand how resources are currently being used. They should work with librarians, press directors, IT directors, and faculty to develop a strategic approach to publishing, encompassing what publication services should be provided to their constituents, how these services should be provided and funded, how publishing contributes to their institution's reputation, how publishing should relate to tenure decisions, and what their position on intellectual assets should be. Finally, they should create the organizational structures necessary to implement this strategy and leverage the resources of the university. These parties should work together to create a shared electronic publishing infrastructure that will save costs, create scale, leverage expertise, innovate, extend the brand of US higher education, create an interlinked environment of information, and provide a robust alternative to commercial competitors.

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## ENCOURAGING PUBLIC COMMENTARY ON THE ITHAKA REPORT

by Maria Bonn, Director, Scholarly Publishing Office, University of Michigan Library

On July 26, 2007, Ithaka released "University Publishing in a Digital Age."<sup>1</sup> The academic community has received the report with great interest and lively discussion.

Coincidentally, that same week, the Institute for the Future of the Book released CommentPress, an online textual annotation tool with great promise for promoting scholarly discussion and collaboration.<sup>2</sup>

At the Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library<sup>3</sup> we have watched both of these developments with keen interest. Our work as online scholarly publishers, our role as publisher of the *Journal of Electronic Publishing*,<sup>4</sup> and our close affiliation with the University of Michigan Press through our joint initiative, digitalculturebooks,<sup>5</sup> direct us to pay close attention to both the conditions and tools of scholarly publishing.

The happy simultaneity of the release of the Ithaka report and CommentPress prompted us to view the report as ideal material with which to experiment with CommentPress. With the cooperation of the authors of the report, we have created a version of "University Publishing in a Digital Age" that invites public commentary and that we hope will serve as a basis for further discussions in our community.

We are watching this experiment with interest. In the first three weeks that the Ithaka report was available in CommentPress, this version of the report was viewed thousands of times. We received dozens and dozens of e-mails and verbal reports from members of the academic community noting their enthusiasm for the projects. And yet, the discussion the report invites has been relatively quiet. We look forward to seeing if the level of discussion remains constant or increases and to performing some analysis to see what this experiment can teach us about the appropriate alignment of content, user communities, and technology.

The Scholarly Publishing Office's version of the Ithaka report is available for comment at <http://scholarlypublishing.org/ithakareport/>. We welcome your feedback, both on the report itself and on the value of its expression in CommentPress.

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Brown, Rebecca Griffiths, Matthew Rascoff, "University Publishing in a Digital Age," Ithaka Report, July 26, 2007, <http://www.ithaka.org/strategic-services/university-publishing/>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.futureofthebook.org/commentpress/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://spo.umdl.umich.edu/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://journalofelectronicpublishing.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.digitalculture.org/>