Texas A&M University Press Programmatic Review

February 2011

Submitted By:

University Press Programmatic Review Panel

Dr. José Luis Bermúdez, Chair
Dr. Michael Benedik
Ms. MaryKatherine Callaway
Dr. Phil Pochoda
Dr. Ron Tyler
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Executive Summary

Texas A&M University, founded in 1876, has grown into one of the nation’s leading land grant, tier one research institutions. Faculty from 10 colleges and 2 branch campuses fulfill the core missions of Texas A&M through scholarship in teaching, research and service. With over 49,000 students currently enrolled and over 250,000 living alumni, Texas A&M is helping to produce an educated workforce and creative scholars for the future.

In 1974, Texas A&M formed the Texas A&M University Press, with a commitment to disseminate publications that relate to the geographical area in which Texas A&M resides and works that are devoted to the academic areas of study for which Texas A&M is most respected. This would include scholarly inquiry of Texas A&M faculty and authors of merit from the region, nation and world. Through publishing over 1250 titles since its inception, the Press has demonstrated this commitment in topical areas such as Texas and regional history, military history, nautical archeology and natural resources.

These works and the collegial nature of the Press leadership and staff have combined to develop a loyal and ardent following of academicians, Texas historians, alumni and friends. Some have supported the Press through advocacy and philanthropy at a level seldom seen among the nation’s university presses. This public engagement with scholarly works and regional trade publications is far and away the most significant impact of the Texas A&M Press.

Like the roots of Texas A&M University itself, the Press has embraced the obligations of the land grant mission and works to publish scholarship that informs and expands the knowledge base of the citizenry. It supports the publishing needs of universities across the Texas A&M University System and through consortium, the state. Many support faculty who are reaching for stature in their fields. It has produced some critically acclaimed texts and trade books regarding the history and regional influences that are part of the heritage of the Brazos Valley, Texas and Texas A&M University.

Over time it has developed close relationships and book series with unique programs to Texas and Texas A&M including nautical archeology, analytical psychology, presidential studies and natural resources.
Despite these successes, during this moment of economic and political discourse, unique challenges facing higher education, in general and scholarly publishing, in particular, have created the need to ensure that the Texas A&M Press is properly aligned with the strategic priorities of the university, effectively managed and operationally sound. To assess this alignment, a programmatic review by a panel of external and internal voices critical to the collaborative success of modern day presses was initiated in the Fall 2010.

This report reflects the Review Panel’s belief that the Texas A&M Press is a valuable service element of Texas A&M University. In the course of the review, 5 critical challenges facing the Texas A&M Press were identified:

- Integration with academic vision of the university;
- Differentiation and appropriate communication of the service, scholarly, and trade components of the Press’s mission, now and in the future;
- Modernization of financial procedures and resource planning;
- Identification of scholarly areas, where through partnership with academic units and targeted acquisition, national prominence is plausible;
- A strategic balancing of the list; including ratios of trade to scholarly publishing and electronic to print formats.

The Panel has recommended a number of strategies that could work to address these challenges, and at a base level enhance the Press’s overall stature and capabilities, regardless of additional financial investment.

The Panel does believe however, that in its current state of philanthropic funding, sales revenue and university support, the Press can maintain a certain level of productivity in the heritage areas mentioned above, but will not achieve an enhanced reputational status among scholarly publishers. It will be incumbent upon the Provost, in conjunction with appropriate Deans, to articulate a strategic vision for appropriate aspirations and mission of the Press and then identify appropriate levels and sources of funding required meeting that vision.

Perhaps more significant than questions of financial commitment is that some of these challenges are symbolic of a Press that has created a capable niche of producing numerous quality publications, but that seems disconnected from the direction of the university and priorities of those programs with which it should be most aligned.
The Panel was particularly concerned by the lack of fit and integration between the Press’s publishing area/series strengths and the truest priorities of the institution and strengths of Texas A&M faculty.

In fairness, opaque direction and unprecedented turnover in university leadership has resulted in the need for the Press to sustain those relationships it has known best and perhaps has worked to cut off the Press from substantial long term collaboration. Throughout its history the Press has worked to enhance connections to academic priority. These efforts have not been institutionalized and have over time fallen victim to leadership transition and personal relationships.

Quality communication and collaboration will be required to fully position the Press for the future. The Panel’s recommendation is to address the identified challenges and initiate this dialogue through a number of key strategies that should be pursued in parallel academic and operational response stages.
Texas A&M Press Background
In 1974, Texas A&M University formed the Texas A&M University Press as the principal publishing unit of the university. Reporting to the Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, the primary mission of the Press is to select, produce, promote and distribute books that are characterized by outstanding quality and originality in important fields.

The Press contributes to Texas A&M’s teaching, research, service mission through dissemination of scholarly inquiry. While the Press’s stated emphasis falls in the area of scholarly publishing, books of substance and significant interest to the general public, including works that focus on Texas, the Southwest and the history of Texas A&M University itself, are also published.

Texas A&M Press is a member of the Association of American University Presses. While significantly younger than most of its peers; in size, the Press is middle tier of national presses, producing around 60 titles per year, with over 1,250 books published and annual net sales of over $1.5 Million.

Texas A&M Press facilitates the Texas A&M Press Consortium, a successful distribution arrangement for other scholarly publishers across Texas, including other Texas A&M System Universities, TCU Press, SMU Press, University of North Texas Press, and the State Historical Association. This arrangement produces additional net sales of $1.2 Million and approximately $300,000 for the Press’s budget from fees and services.

Facilitated by the editorial staff, each manuscript considered for publication benefits from outside peer review expertise followed by consult and approval for publication by a robust Faculty Advisory Committee, which represents the many disciplines of Texas A&M and is appointed by the Provost at recommendation of the Press Director.

The Press Advancement Board builds advocacy and support, including significant private philanthropy for the Press through its impressive membership of enlightened former students and friends.
**Purpose of Review**

Texas A&M, like all major public education enterprises, maintains a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability. Annual personnel and budget performance reviews, regular learning outcome assessments, semester course evaluations, as well as cyclical academic program and unit reviews provide benchmarking and data to inform administrative direction.

For the last ten years, Texas A&M has targeted continuous improvement efforts towards imperatives articulated in its twenty year aspirational plan, *Vision 2020: Creating a Culture of Excellence*. As the second decade of this plan begins, Texas A&M has embarked on a midterm assessment of progress towards stated aspirations through academic, strategic and budgetary planning processes which are framed by the current economic, political and cultural realities.

Similar realities, infused by advancing technological demands, are facing the publishing industry today. In particular, entities committed to scholarly publishing, and university presses specifically, are grappling with unprecedented questions of declining sales, aging industry leadership, an evolving business model and differentiated value in the digital age.

While the Press has benefitted from a 1990 individual assessment by Dr. David Gilbert and regular budget and personnel reviews, no holistic programmatic review had been conducted.

Recognizing the strong need to assess the Press’s strengths and weaknesses and to evaluate strategic positioning for the future, Dr. Karan Watson, Interim Provost & Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs charged a review of the:

1) organizational structure, policy and/or process utilized by the Press in achieving its purpose in service to the mission of Texas A&M University;

2) scholarly impact and commercial viability of Press publications;

3) unique opportunities for success that exist at the Press;

4) resource (human and financial) needs required for the Press to achieve and/or sustain national and international stature and recognition.
Review Panel
The review panel was purposefully assembled consisting of representatives, both internal and external, of the many voices that must collaborate for scholarly publishing at universities to be successful in the current climate.

Dr. José Luis Bermúdez, Chair
Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Texas A&M University Professor of Philosophy

Dr. Michael Benedik
Professor of Biology at Texas A&M University and Speaker Elect of Texas A&M Faculty Senate

Ms. MaryKatherine Callaway
Director, LSU Press and President Elect of Association of American University Presses (AAUP)

Dr. Phil Pochoda
Director, University of Michigan Press, Editor, University Presses 2.0, Journal of Electronic Publishing

Dr. Ron Tyler
Director, Amon Carter Museum Member of Texas A&M Press Advancement Board

We see our role as helping the Press to think constructively about how to situate itself to reflect the realities and aspirations of Texas A&M as it continues to move upwards in the realm of public universities

In that spirit we share some of the potential challenges that we have identified, as well as some of the strategies that we think might help you move either over or around them.

-Dr. José Luis Bermudez, Review Panel Chair
Site Visit Exit Meeting

Observations
As a key element of the review, the Press staff, led by Press Director Dr. Charles Backus, completed a Self-Assessment Profile detailing 16 integral elements of the Press including planning, operations, financial management and achievement. Additional supplemental information was requested by the panel and assembled by the Press staff. All review materials can be found at https://provost.tamu.edu/university-press-programmatic-review

The Review Panel wishes to acknowledge the excellent work of Dr. Backus in preparing these materials and the thoughtful perspective shown throughout the review.
The Panel conducted a three day site visit to Texas A&M and the Press on February 20-22, 2011. Key observations included:

- Awareness of particularly unique set of political, economic and cultural pressures facing Texas A&M University
- Admiration for thoughtful academic planning underway that will enhance Texas A&M national stature over next 10 years
- Impressiveness of the Press staff, their competencies, dedication to scholarly publishing, and commitment to each other and Texas A&M
- Recognition that the Press has reacted responsibly and professionally, in light of the unprecedented period of change in scholarly publishing, through staff reduction and other strategic and tactical changes to navigate this period of economic stress.
- Acknowledgement of achievements of the press staff, such as:
  - commitment to quality publishing and high production values
  - avid support for the complex mission of a land grant University
  - embracing of technological advancements in electronic publishing, title management, and marketing
  - resourcefulness in addressing the changing publishing environment
- Unequivocal support from the many stakeholders for the Press and their commitment to assist in defining its role for the future
- Special recognition of the Press’s extraordinary success in cultivating private philanthropy. The incredibly impressive ratio of endowment dollars per dollar of turnover is critical to fulfilling the Press mission. This support is attributed to the work of the very committed Advancement Board, its quality members and stringent advocacy for the Press’s success.

As part of the review process, key stakeholders of the Press were polled for feedback and testimony as to operational effectiveness and scholarly impact of the Press. *A collection of the stakeholder submissions can be found in the appendices of this report and reflect the tremendous groundswell of support enjoyed by the Press.*
Beyond these general comments, the panel has organized additional observations according to the review charge.

**Organizational Structure, Policy and Processes**
The Press benefits from a highly productive, congenial and close knit team of 19 professional staff. Many have significant longevity with the Press which serves it well in institutional memory and state, if not national relationships.

Newer employees, particularly in marketing and sales, while possessing less experience at the Press, do seem energetic and willing to engage in direction setting dialogues. Their involvement will be critical to the integration of initiatives such as epubs, targeted acquisition and sales growth.

While the panel did not have time to gain full understanding of all processes, it would appear that some implementation of improved feedback loops with all departments during the acquisitions and planning process would be beneficial.

Despite reductions in force due to technology adoption and budgetary constraint, the Press does not appear to have reduced publication output. It has reduced one publication series during this period, but has added two, “The Peopling of the Americas” and one related to Texas music. The sustainability of the current number and variety of annual publications will prove to be a challenge.

During the review it became apparent that communication and coordination of the Press with university leadership, particularly the Deans of Colleges has been somewhat disjointed during its history. There did not appear to be Press involvement in regular academic leadership meetings or natural opportunities for regular ongoing discussion.

While reporting through the Provost makes logical sense for alignment with academic strength, the lines of communication to the academic side of the University seem to function less well than they might – and certainly less well than lines of communication to, for example, the development side of the University. Over time this is likely to supplant the Press’s connection with current academic priorities and strengths, and hence distance Press efforts from actual focal points of the University. Efforts should be made to enhance the communication from the Provost to the Press Director as well.
The involvement of the Faculty Advisory Committee is commendable and ensures continued promotion of the peer review process and its place in the academy. It was noted that the size and diversity of this group, while beneficial in review of manuscript, may not be best suited for conversation about strategic direction. Additionally, this group would not be perceived as having the ability or charge to date to provide the Press with administrative level insights into academic priority.

**Scholarly Impact and Commercial Viability of Publications**

The Press has produced a number of titles that have received acclaim in their fields. They boast an impressive list of publications that have received recognition from every Texas and regional based publication awarding entity, such as the Texas State Historical Association, Texas Library Association and Western Writers of America. Additionally, its trade publications featuring Texas and Texas A&M are favorites among readers and the Press has built a natural following in this arena. The Texas A&M University brand is significant in Texas, the nation and the world. Marketability of Press works is enhanced by this affiliation and efforts should be made to ensure the Press works are visibly tied to University marks and promoted on university websites, etc.

Popularity of singular titles can cause fluctuation in the sales forecast. Planned titles such as the biography of military and political leader, James Earl Rudder holds some promise for the Press’s revenue stream, particularly given his Texas A&M affiliation.

While the Press is known for quality publications noted for design elements, particularly photography or archival documents, there does seem to be a disconnect to the nationally defined scholarly publishing agenda that is common at Texas A&M aspirant peers.

It was noted that periodic reviews of the list including faculty from beyond the advisory committee could assist in ensuring alignment and communication of the publishing agenda.
Opportunities for Success

Apart from a continued commitment to producing artfully crafted trade publications featuring flora, fauna and mystic of Texas A&M, Texas and the Gulf Coast region, the Press is committed to producing scholarly works in fields of existing list strength and importance to the region.

While there is not a large cadre of competition nationally, its collections in nautical archeology and analytical psychology have received much acclaim. Works that showcase the diversity of regional culture and share global insights have been cited by scholars and build on the university’s commitments in these arenas.

The panel observed that opportunities to enhance scholarly acclaim would be enhanced by closer alignment with academic priorities. Deeper partnership with academic units and special initiatives such as the Texas A&M Advanced Study Institute or efforts of the Glasscock Center for Humanities, might present opportunities for impact. Discussion of 8 emerging university multi-disciplinary research initiatives that were selected through a university wide process perhaps would lend itself to the Press’s involvement, particularly those in disciplines accustomed to the book culture.

Growing academic fields were mentioned in numerous conversations during the review as having logical relationships to the Press’s existing list and priority areas of the university. Namely:

- Sustainability- in its many forms from natural resource conservation to green design and sustainable development; and
- Borderlands issues- from cross border cultural impacts to population demographics and the effects of policy and politics

More importantly than specific fields, was the often repeated refrain of the need for more strategic conversation about alignment with academic strengths.

In a different vein, the opportunity and challenges surrounding digital publishing, in particular open access and e-publication formats must continue to be a priority for the Press. The staff has been heavily engaged in aligning agreements and capabilities that best serve the press, their authors and the marketplace.
Continued partnership with the University Libraries could also yield some opportunities in this arena. While the Libraries does not currently see a direct linkage in the publishing role of the Press within its mission, it does have a strong presence in digital initiatives and further collaboration, such as the agreement on open access and the Texas Digital Library initiative should be explored further.

**Human & Financial Resource Needs**
As has been noted throughout this report, the impacts on financial and subsequently human resources of the Press have been profound over the last few years, but have mirrored the overall shifts in publishing across the world.

The Press has weathered this storm far better than many of its peers, again due to the continued, although shrinking, university investment, the effective facilitation of distribution consortium and unprecedented philanthropic support.

The Press will continue to face increasing start up technological costs as it improves e-commerce, e-publication and e-management tools that are necessary in the new publishing arena.

The Press has quality personnel in every role, but soon will face significant turnover due to impending retirements. Quality succession planning will need to be implemented very soon to ensure some consistency of the Press’s activities. Particular attention will need to be paid to editorial staff during this transition and should other focus areas be identified through discussion with academic leaders.

Additionally the review panel noted a sense of fatigue from the Press staff as they continue to operate in an environment of uncertainty. The Press Director is rightfully protective of their operations and workload in order to preserve effectiveness and impacts.

The detailed financial discussions during the review lead to some concerns regarding some of the financial procedures of the Press, particularly write down policy and inventory control.
Challenges
In the course of the review, 5 critical challenges facing the Texas A&M Press were identified:

- Integration with academic vision of the university;
- Differentiation and appropriate communication of the service, scholarly, and trade components of the Press’s mission, now and in the future;
- Modernization of financial procedures and resource planning;
- Identification of scholarly areas, where through partnership with academic units and targeted acquisition, national prominence is plausible;
- A strategic balancing of the list; including ratios of trade to scholarly publishing and electronic to print formats.

Recommended Strategies & Response
 Improve integration with academic vision of the university
  – Build closer linkages and understanding of Press impacts among academic leadership
  – Benchmark Texas A&M Press to identified peer presses at peer institutions to Texas A&M University
  – Develop a governance structure that will allow for an ongoing, proactive strategic conversation between the Press and the leadership of academic units most thematically connected with it

 Identify areas of national prominence
  – Coordinate with academic leadership to determine potential areas of discipline strength that can be complemented by publishing elements, for both A&M faculty and others who author in key fields
  – Develop focused strategy for achieving Press notoriety in 2-3 key fields, that build on existing list strengths and map to strategic priorities of A&M
  – Enhance utilization of strategies for targeted acquisition including fully integrated marketing plan, use of royalties, proactive commissioning and targeted fundraising to build series.
☐ Modernize financial procedures and resource planning
  – Commission outside consultant review and benchmarking of financial health of the Press, in particular inventory projection and controls, write down policies, gross margin targets and rights and permissions
  – Create holistic pricing strategies to include electronic and print publishing
  – Develop targeted fundraising efforts which address operational excellence, nationally prominent series, and build greater university academic collaboration (symposia, faculty conferences, etc.)
  – Evaluate and improve Consortium distribution cost structures, as appropriate
  – Explore feasibility of some centralized business operations and accounting support from Office of the Provost

☐ Differentiate service value of Texas A&M Press
  – Effectively deploy Press organizational strengths, particularly marketing and sales to provide for feedback loops earlier in acquisitions and print run determination process, particularly in areas targeted for national prominence
  – Enhance editorial staff by strategic hire for area selected for targeted prominence
  – Enhance electronic marketing opportunities and utilization
  – Initiate succession planning for senior press leadership transition

☐ Strategically balance the list
  – Commission a List Review of the front and back list by subject matter and publication type
  – Determine appropriate utilization of digital publishing opportunities
  – Reduce number of annual titles published and improve number of scholarly works publishing to reflect status of premier university
Parallel Academic & Operational Response

The Panel’s recommendation is to address the challenges and initiate dialogue to position the Press for the future by pursuing these strategies in parallel stages:

Stages for academic response to the review
- Form a small strategic governance committee of Texas A&M faculty, university administration, including representation at the Dean level, (and perhaps outside publishing expertise) charged to provide oversight on direction, benchmarking and achievement that ensures the Press and University are mutually sustaining; (September 2011)
- Commission a List Review, involving faculty from Texas A&M beyond the FAC, of the front and back lists by subject matter, in order to assess the scholarly impact and strength of the list relative to other publishers in specific fields; (Fall 2011)
- Identify potential fields of strength for scholarly publishing in coordination with academic leadership of University; (Spring 2012)
- Develop a focused strategy for targeted acquisitions that align marketing, fund raising, pro-active commissioning and royalties to achieve national prominence in one or more of identified fields. (Spring 2012)

Stages for organizational response to the review
- Commission outside consultant review and benchmarking of financial health of the Press, in particular inventory projection and controls, write down policies, gross margin targets, rights and permissions, and pricing strategies to include electronic and print publishing; (September 2011)
- Review internal operations with respect to acquisitions and marketing synergies and feedback loops between the divisions of the Press – As a model, University of Michigan Acquisitions Process included in Appendix; (September 2011)
- Benchmark Texas A&M Press to identified peer presses at peer institutions to Texas A&M University (Fall 2011)
- Develop targeted fundraising efforts which address operational flexibility and excellence, identified university academic collaboration (symposia, faculty connects, etc.) (Spring 2012)
- Initiate succession planning for senior press leadership and personnel transitions (January 2011)
Summary

The first 37 years of the Texas A&M Press has been marked by measured growth and excellence in particular fields. The Press has built a considerable expertise as service to the state in distributing knowledge through peer reviewed works and enjoyment of reading through marketable trade books such as those related to useful knowledge application in gardening and titles featuring Texas, Texas A&M and regional lore.

To survive the next 10 years, Texas A&M University and the Texas A&M Press must:

- Continue to evolve business practices to ensure most effective operations in new era of publishing;

- Re-commit to alignment with truest academic priorities of the University, in order for the leadership to justify the subsidy that is intended to support scholarly works of local faculty and partnership;

- Grow advocacy for its efforts by accurately communicating its role, mission and focus to all stakeholders, on campus and off;

- Steward existing and target new philanthropic support for its mission.

Additional detail regarding the Texas A&M Press can be found by reviewing the Texas A&M Press Self-Assessment Profile that was integral to this review and can be found online at http://provost.tamu.edu/resources/university-press-2010-programmatic-review

Note: As the Review Panel was completing this report, the American Association of University Presses issued their comprehensive report on the economic vitality of University Presses across the country, Sustaining Scholarly Publishing: New Business Models for University Presses. A number of their recommendations mirror those found in this report and perhaps signal similar opportunities and challenges facing the whole of the scholarly publishing arena and university presses today.
Appendices

- Stakeholder Feedback
- University of Michigan Press Acquisitions Process
December 14, 2010

Memorandum

TO:  Chad Wooton,
     Associate Vice President for External Affairs
     Office of the Provost

FROM:  M. Jimmie Killingsworth,
        Head, Department of English,
        Chair, Faculty Advisory Committee, Texas A&M University Press

SUBJECT:  Response to TAMUP Self-Assessment Documents
          for Programmatic Review

At your request, I am writing to provide a response from the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) of the Texas A&M University Press (TAMUP) to the self-assessment documents prepared by the press’s staff, to be used in the upcoming programmatic review of the press. The FAC did not participate in the preparation of the self-assessment documents and is grateful for the opportunity to respond. Just a note on procedure: After your initial conversation with the FAC, I discussed the upcoming review with the members and staff at two more of our regular meetings this fall. Then I circulated the documents once they were available online. Several members responded with comments, the gist of which is incorporated into the following brief statement. On the FAC itself, I might note further that the committee is composed of some of the most distinguished faculty on campus, rotating on a three-year basis, and is one of the finest committees on which I have ever had the honor to serve. I’m now in my second term of service as the chair.

In general, the FAC concurs with the letter and certainly with the spirit of the conclusions and the general profile of TAMUP that emerges from the self-assessment documents. The press plays a significant role in the intellectual life of our scholarly community, especially for those of us in fields oriented to the reading and writing of books—most notably the humanities (especially history in this case), but also a number of the social sciences (archaeology and political science, for example) and some of the applied sciences (wildlife and fisheries science, and plant science, for example). Considering the commitment to advancing the arts and humanities that we find in Vision 2020 even as we maintain our traditional land-grant-university commitments to applied science and technology, we can only see the university press as a key contributor to the mission.
Within the university, a number of key areas of excellence gain specific support from TAMUP. The press’s strong reputation in military history parallels the long-time scholarly investment of our Department of History in this field. The high-profile focus of the Department of Anthropology in nautical archaeology is likewise supported by an award-winning book series from TAMUP. In addition to these traditional strengths, new efforts at diversity within the TAMUP Consortium—such as the Frontera Series, which mirrors the program in border studies in the History Department—and the initiative on the Archaeology of the Americas—reflect more recent developments among our faculty’s research interests. The press even helps with the university’s teaching mission by hosting internships for graduate and undergraduate students interested in publishing careers.

Within the region, TAMUP helps to meet our commitment the state of Texas. To this end, we need mention only the outstanding recent publications in Texas natural history and Gulf Coast studies, which draw strongly on local research and extension-education efforts to further environmental understanding and best practices in everything from home gardening to sustainability policy. Moreover, the TAMUP Consortium helps to support book publication and distribution throughout the state.

Nationally and internationally, the press has developed a number of publication alliances and extended the reach of the university community (recently engaging, to name a few organizations, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Parks Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Navy, and the Sand County Foundation). For every book of local and regional interest (including big-selling gift books and special-interest “Aggie” lore), the press balances its list with works of international scope and far-ranging appeal—whether in archaeology, military history, political science, or natural resources studies. Recent initiatives in digital publishing represent some of the latest and most promising efforts in collaboration (as well as efficiency and effectiveness).

In short TAMUP elevates the impact of scholarship in a number of areas deemed important to the scholarly community at this university, it assists in the mission to serve the state on a variety of fronts, it actively advances and projects a positive image of our intellectual community, and it creates a point of pride for those of us who have a hard time imagining a Tier-One or Flagship University with a strong research mission but without a prolific and well-supported university press.

CC: José Luis Bermúdez, Dean of Liberal Arts; Chair, Review Committee
February 18, 2011

Dr. Karan L. Watson  
Interim Provost and Exec. V.P. for Academic Affairs  
Texas A&M University  
Rudder Tower 9th Floor  
1248 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-1248

Dear Dr. Watson,

Thank you for your letter of February 11, 2011, regarding Texas A&M University Press. As Series Editor for The John and Robin Dickson Series in Texas Music, a collaborative project involving our Center for Texas Music History at Texas State University-San Marcos and Texas A&M University Press, I am more than happy to relate my experiences and observations regarding Texas A&M Press.

Actually, my relationship with A&M Press goes back many years. I became quite familiar with the A&M Press catalog as a student more than twenty years ago. I noticed then that the Press had a very broad and important presence in academic publishing, and many of my professors used A&M Press publications for required reading in their courses.

As a professor myself, I often use A&M Press publications in the classroom, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. This is because I have always found books from the A&M catalog to be of high quality and to cover a variety of topics often not addressed by other publishers. Examples of some of the A&M Press books I have used with great success in my classes are Manuel Peña’s Música Tejana, Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr.’s Tejano Proud, and Lawrence Clayton and Joe Specht’s The Roots of Texas Music. All of these books, and many others I could list, are well-researched, well-written, well-produced, and offer important scholarly information not found elsewhere.
My personal relationship with Texas A&M Press began in 2002, when I was asked to write the introductory chapter for Lawrence Clayton and Joe Specht's book, *The Roots of Texas Music*. During that process, I worked closely with Charles Backus, Mary Lenn Dixon, Thom Lemmons, and several other staff members at A&M Press. Each and every one of them was a pleasure to work with. It was evident from the beginning what a conscientious, caring, and professional group of people they are. It quickly became clear to me why the quality of their publications is so good.

While working with Mary Lenn and the rest of the A&M Press staff on the *Roots of Texas Music* book, we began discussing the possibility of my writing a more comprehensive history of Texas music. We also discussed establishing a new series in Texas music. These talks resulted in my 2008 book, *The History of Texas Music*, which was the first in our John and Robin Dickson Series in Texas Music. Among other accolades, the book was selected by the Smithsonian Institution to be featured at a national exhibit on Texas history and culture in Washington, D.C., during the summer of 2008.

The second book in the Dickson Series, Alan Govenar's award-winning *Texas Blues*, is now widely recognized as the most comprehensive and scholarly study ever conducted on the history of blues music in Texas. We are currently working on other books in the Dickson Series that will undoubtedly earn national recognition for their high scholarly standards and their broad public appeal.

The Dickson Series is just one example of the important work Texas A&M Press is doing to provide high-quality scholarship on a variety of important topics. In the field of Texas music history, the Dickson Series has been especially significant, because it is documenting aspects of our state's uniquely diverse musical heritage that have never been fully examined. In fact, in my estimation, A&M Press is producing better scholarship in the area of Texas music studies than any other publisher in the nation.

I believe that Texas A&M Press serves a very important role in providing some of the most solid scholarship available in a variety of academic disciplines. Its pioneering work in the field of Texas music history is especially impressive and will no doubt continue to reinforce the Press's already excellent reputation in the academic world.

Thanks, and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Gary Hartman, Director
Center for Texas Music History
www.txstate.edu/ctmh
10 March 2011

Dr. Karan Watson  
Office of the Provost  
Texas A&M University  
Rudder Tower, 9th Floor  
1248 TAMU  
College Station, TX 77843-1248

Dear Dr. Watson:

Thank you for your letter asking me to comment on the Joseph V. Hughes, Jr. and Holly O. Hughes Series on the Presidency and Leadership. I have been the Hughes Series since its founding, and I am proud of the quality of the books we have published. From the first book in the series, published in 1998, to those now in production, we have published serious scholarship by junior, up-and-coming authors as well as senior, well-established scholars. The Hughes Series thus supports the Texas A&M Press mission of publishing books of “outstanding quality and originality in carefully chosen, important fields.” Needless to say, the U.S. presidency plays an important role in the overall governance of the nation, and the State of Texas has been home to three recent U.S. presidents.


In addition to our academic authors, we have published several books by presidential insiders – books that are not merely personal reminiscences but analyses of historic events from participants with first-hand knowledge of presidents. Of particular relevance to the State of Texas is the Hughes Series decision to keep Joseph Califano’s book, *The Triumph and Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson*, in print and available in a soft cover format. Roman Popadiuk, one of George H.W. Bush’s senior aides, wrote *The Leadership of George Bush: An Insider’s View of the Forty-first President*, an insightful, first-hand account of President Bush. David Abshire played an important role in the Reagan White House when he returned from Europe to organize President Reagan’s investigation of the Iran-Contra Affair. His book, *Saving the Reagan*
Presidency: Trust is the Coin of the Realm, provides an important, historical account of this crucial period of the Reagan Presidency.

The recent publication of Russell Riley's book, Bridging the Constitutional Divide, presents the oral history insights of those who personally conducted the relations between recent presidents and Congress. Their accounts and analysis constitute important historical records of the relations between our first two branches of government in politics and policy making. Mordecai Lee, who published a previous TAMU book on U.S. administrative history, is just completing a careful, archive-based book project on President Nixon's attempts to reorganize the executive branch of government. This will be the first book-length account of that important historical episode in U.S. governmental history. A recent book on the "unitary executive" theory of the constitutional separation of powers by Ryan Barilleaux and Christopher Kelley takes up an important, current challenge to traditional constitutional law in the United States.

The key to the success of the Hughes Presidency Series has been TAMU Press Editor-in-Chief, Mary Lenn Dixon, who earned her doctorate in Political Science and who is an extremely competent professional. (And I have worked with many editors in many academic and commercial presses over the past three decades.) She is central to the success of the Hughes Series, and any plans for the future of the Hughes Series (and indeed of TAMU Press), will have to entail careful succession planning.

The books mentioned above merely illustrate the types of valuable contributions to the historical record and scholarly analysis of the American presidency that the Hughes Series has contributed. Of course, I am personally disposed to favor the Hughes Series, but I think that any neutral evaluation of the scholarship in the series will confirm my sense that Texas A&M University and the TAMU Press have benefitted from the high quality of scholarship that has been made available through the generosity of Joseph Hughes, Jr. and Holly Hughes. In turn, this published scholarship contributes to the broader understanding of United States history and governance.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

James P. Pfiffner
Dear Chad,

I am happy to respond to the request for information about TAMU Press. I began my affiliation with them when I was asked to publish a book through them on a report I had written for The Nature Conservancy of Texas on the Laguna Madre in the late 1990s. Shortly after that I was asked to consider a book series for TAMUCC, so we developed the Gulf Coast Series, now Gulf Coas: Books, in 2001, which has 19 books listed. That series was so well received and appreciated that we developed a second series for the Harte Research Institute in 2007, which now has 6 titles. I am currently General Editor of both.

Regarding Provost Watson's specific questions:

1) I have always been impressed with the books generated by TAMU Press over the decades of my career, particularly those regarding the natural sciences and those related to Texas. Their books on the natural history of Texas and Gulf of Mexico subjects (eg. marine mammals of the GoMx) have always been very helpful and well done. Our two TAMUCC book series now continue that tradition.

2) Stepping outside of my usual modesty, I think our current two book series at TAMUCC are being widely used and accepted by academia, state and federal agencies, and the general public for some titles.

3) I have been very impressed with all the various departments or programs at TAMU Press. The staff there has always been very responsive to requests for information or guidance. They are also very pleasant to deal with at all levels. The only weakness I see is the fact that the two editors I generally deal with (Shannon Davies, 95%; and Mary Lynn Dixon, 5%) always seem to be overbooked and overworked. I do NOT say that in a negative way, as they both are tops in their fields and VERY helpful to me in anything I ask regarding publishing at the Press or beyond. This is perhaps the mark of leaders in all fields, however, as they are in demand for their talents and knowledge by so many. Shannon is one of the best professionals I have ever dealt with in any field...always informative about the questions at hand, but always gracious in her dealings with me and other authors.

4) I think the continued focus on Texas, Texas natural history and history, as well as the military focus is what TAMU Press is known for. I think sticking to that mission and continuing to move in the direction of new publishing technology, as they are doing, is right or track. In my field of marine science and oceanography, I selfishly say the Press should continue to capitalize and focus on the Gulf of Mexico, our backyard, and a strong focus of TAMU for decades.

 Regards,
Wes Tunnell

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From: Office of the Provost [provost@tamu.edu]
Sent: Friday, February 11, 2011 4:50 PM
To: Tunnell, Wes
Subject: Texas A&M University Press Programmatic Review

Please see the attached correspondence from Dr. Karan Watson, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs re: the programmatic review of the University Press.
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Dr. Karen L. Watson
Interim Provost
Texas A&M University
1248 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843

Dear Dr. Watson:

Thank you for this opportunity to answer your questions regarding Texas A&M University Press. In my capacity first as Director of Publications for the Texas State Historical Association (2003-2006) and now as Executive Director of the TSHA (2008-present), I have worked closely with the TAMU Press, except for a two-year stint as Director of the Scholarly Publishing Program at Arizona State University (2006-2008). As someone who has spent a career in scholarly and educational publishing, I can say at the outset that I have a great deal of regard for TAMU Press. The people are dedicated and wonderful to work with, and they believe wholeheartedly in the value of what they do. I look forward to working with them for a long time to come.

Before I address specific questions about TAMU Press, I will begin by acknowledging that I have followed the various crises taking place in scholarly publishing over the years:

- the disconnect within academia between requirements for promotion and the declining support of university presses by their host institutions,
- the impact on academic libraries of rising journal costs and declining budgets for monographs,
- the need for scholarly publishers to find new revenue streams through trade publishing and the impact of concomitant issues such as steep discounts, returns, and competition with trade pricing,
- the complications in trade and academic publishing brought about first by the rise of large chain bookstores and then by the development of online booksellers such as Amazon.com,
- the impact of the recession on endowments and book buying,
- and, finally, the vast and rapid changes brought about by the digital revolution and the accompanying changes in expectations on the part of libraries, scholars, and readers.

I admit that, like Cathy N. Davidson, writing in the Journal of Scholarly Publishing in April 2004, “I am not interested in propping up the fragile university press publishing business if what they offer is simply a watered-down version of trade publishing.” I believe, as she does, that “at present, university press publishing provides the most careful, impartial, and efficient system of brokering, networking, evaluating, editing, publishing, and distributing serious scholarship.” The question becomes, then, not how well do scholarly publishers compete in the trade publishing or textbook publishing business, but how well do they serve the needs and purposes of the academy. Over the last couple of decades, TAMU Press has been a leader in the university press community not only in serving the needs of scholars, but also in working in a
collaborative way to figure out what the future of scholarly publishing will be. In a very recent report of the Association of American University Presses Task Force on Economic Models for University Presses dated March 2011, TAMU Press was acknowledged in the category of “New Approaches to Scholarly Publishing” for making all titles published in the field of analytical psychology available online and in that of “The Importance of Collaboration” for its distribution arrangements with partner presses (which began with the TSHA in 1981) and for its experiment in collaboration funded by the Mellon Foundation, the Archeology of the Americas Digital Monograph Initiative. TAMU Press has long seen the value of collaboration and has been a significant member of the national and international university press community.

Regarding the press’s scholarly contribution to a particular discipline, I am aware that the press publishes in many, including military and aviation history, nautical archaeology, natural history, and analytical psychology. The discipline with which I am most familiar, of course, is Texas history, and I can say without reservation that TAMU Press is the most significant publisher of scholarly Texas history in the state. Unlike many states of which I am aware, Texas has numerous publishers of Texas history, including the Texas State Historical Association and a number of other university and trade presses. Many of these presses have chosen to be distributed by TAMU Press Consortium because they appreciate the seriousness with which the press takes this part of their mission. State history is not an afterthought or an effort simply to generate revenue through regional trade publishing. It is rather an integral part of the press’s mission, and as such it makes a significant scholarly contribution to Texas A&M University and to the State of Texas.

As far as particular publications that in my opinion have had a significant relevance to the academy or to my particular field of expertise, there are, of course, many. The one that I will acknowledge for the purposes of this report is Beyond Texas through Time: Breaking Away from Past Interpretations, edited by TAMU Professor Walter L. Buenger and Arnoldo De León of Angelo State University, and published in March 2011. This collection of historiographical essays is an important update on the state of the field that builds on the previous collection, Texas through Time: Evolving Interpretations, edited by Buenger and Robert A. Calvert and published in 1991. The latter book has shaped the direction the research, writing, and interpretation of the field for two decades, and the new book will have a similar impact on the field for a new generation of scholars. This is just a small example of the kind of contribution the press had made to the field of Texas history.

Over the years, TAMU Press has shown particular strength in terms of its flexibility and ingenuity in navigating the turbulent waters of academic publishing. Declining sales in the 1980s led to the consortium strategy of which TAMU Press was a national leader. With the development of large bookstore chains and simultaneous decline in university support, the press pioneered in the realm of regional trade publishing, learning firsthand about the pitfalls involved in applying trade standards in terms of pricing, discounts, royalties, and returns to the university press model, which includes very small press runs and very high fixed and incremental costs associated with each title. Creatively, the press has sought to counter the difficulties of trade publishing by increasing its number of titles through the consortium strategy, primarily by appealing to publishers of Texas history, both trade and academic. As someone who has worked in three different state historical organizations that had distribution agreements with three university presses, I can say that TAMU Press is by far the best of the three. TAMU Press is responsive to the needs of the presses for whom it distributes and creative in finding solutions to the many issues that arise when one press distributes books for many. Over the years, I have seen the press accommodate the needs of presses to have their own identity
within the seasonal catalogs, to use the press’s resources to create their own catalogs, and to find new avenues outside the chain bookstores, such as gift stores and big box stores such as Walmart and Cosco. In recent years that have involved declining budgets and staff cutbacks for TAMU Press, I have never known the press to waiver in its support of its consortium members.

Since TAMU Press has a long history of being flexible and creative, I believe it will continue to be a leader in figuring out the new business model for scholarly publishing. As I mentioned earlier, the press is already playing a leadership role. At our last consortium meeting, which took place a TCU in January, I noticed that the press’s ebook strategy had come a long way from the previous meeting in College Station in August. In a very short time, the press had developed sophisticated pricing strategies and worked out agreements with the confusing array of ebook distributors, including Amazon and Google. I was very impressed with the progress that had been made, and I believe that TAMU Press, with just a few more resources, could not only lead the way in this area for smaller presses, but also provide services that could lead to greater revenue for all down the road.

As you can tell, I am a big fan of Texas A&M University Press, and I encourage the university to continue to support its efforts as a leader in the field of scholarly publishing. Scholarly publishing is at a crossroads, and it is up to presses like TAMU Press to lead the way into the future. Again, as Cathy Davidson wrote in the article referred to earlier, “What we need is acknowledgment that scholarly publishing costs more than we are spending on it. It requires substantial subsidies and new ideas about where those infusions of capital might come from and how costs might be dispersed more equitably among those who benefit most from scholarly publishing—namely, scholars themselves.” This work is going on within AAUP and many other academic organizations, and I am proud to be associated with a press that is at the heart of these efforts. Now, more than ever, it is important that TAMU Press continue its work on behalf of the university, Texas, and higher education.

Please let me know if you need additional information. I am glad to discuss the press with you more as needed. Thank you for this opportunity to provide my comments.

Sincerely,

J. Kent Calder
Executive Director
Texas State Historical Association
kent.calder@tshaonline.org
940-369-5200

Cc: Charles Backus
Dear Mr. Wooten,

I am following up on Karan Watson’s letter. Although I am not an academic, I work closely with the Press as the director of product marketing here at the Wildflower Center.

In answer to your main questions:

- The Press has done a great job advancing the cause of the environment—and native plants in particular...and engendering interest in their use and benefits. Excellent books on the flora and fauna of the state, useful for the layperson....not just the expert.

- We have carried all such books in our store and have had excellent sales on nearly every title the past 20+ years. Our many author signings and talks for these books have drawn many people and much enthusiasm.

- I am convinced that TAMU Press is stronger than any Texas publisher I’ve worked with in marketing (all aspects) and in being open to exploring and evaluating new title ideas. They are a great group—friendly, enthusiastic and most of all knowledgeable. I honestly haven’t seen any weaknesses from my involvement with the Press.

- Opportunities? There isn’t any Texas publisher that is doing as much in the environmental and nature field, as far as I know, as your press. I would think this is an area in which you can continue to excel, especially if you connect the conservation and preservation of our surroundings with the preservation of our history, of which most Texans are so proud.

Those are my brief thoughts I hope they are helpful. Thank you for asking.

Sincerely,
Joseph Hammer
Director of Product Marketing & Licensing
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
Austin, Texas
February 18, 2011

This is in response to Dr. Karan Watson’s call from key stakeholders of the Texas A&M University Press (hereinafter TAMU Press) to provide input toward a programmatic review of the Press. The University of North Texas Press (UNT Press) is a longtime member (since 1989) of the Texas A&M Press Consortium and has enjoyed a fruitful and healthy relationship with TAMU Press for more than two decades.

I have been asked to comment on the following questions:

1) Your personal observations of the Press’s scholarly contribution to a particular discipline, Texas A&M University and/or the State of Texas.

UNT Press publishes in several subject areas that TAMU Press also publishes in, including Texas history and military history. Year after year I am envious of the fact that TAMU Press publishes fine volumes of Texas history that win more awards from the Texas State Historical Association, the Texas Institute of Letters, and other state organizations than any other press in Texas, it seems to me. This is a testament to the fine quality of publications emanating from TAMU Press in the field of Texas history, first and foremost.

I have also noted over the years a number of excellent military history titles from TAMU Press that have received numerous positive reviews in scholarly journals, titles I wish that I wish I had published after reading the laudable comments from reviewers.

Beyond these two fields, the most notable strength I associate with TAMU Press is its nautical archaeology program, surely the pre-eminent program in this field housed at Texas A&M.

2) Description of particular publications from the Press that you believe have had a significant relevance to the academy or your particular field of expertise.

As per above comments, titles published by TAMU Press that I have noticed garner wide attention from academics and from award committees include (in alpha order):

*Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics in World War II*

*From a Watery Grave: The Discovery and Excavation of LaSalle’s Shipwreck*

*The Ghosts of Iwo Jima*

*Lone Star Past: Memory and History in Texas*

*Texas Flags*

I know that TAMU Press has also won awards in other fields such as presidential studies, but the above fields are the ones I am engaged with in my work at UNT Press and have seen accolades to TAMU Press accordingly.
3) Particular strengths you observe in the Press and/or conversely particular weaknesses.

The key strength of TAMU Press for me is its power of distribution, that many years ago it took on the service to smaller academic institutions in Texas to distribute and market their publications to a worldwide audience. We could not reach this audience with our limited resources. TAMU Press has distributed our publications admirably for more than twenty years (ten years under my administration at UNT Press) with an excellent infrastructure of warehouse space and marketing and order fulfillment personnel.

Twice a year we hold Consortium meetings to further our collaborations with TAMU Press in key areas of sales, promotion, exhibits, and electronic publication, for example. The sum total of our collective wisdom and marketing power allows all the presses in the Consortium, under TAMU Press’s leadership, to exert a more forceful marketing presence in exhibits (witness an entire Consortium tent at the annual Texas Book Festival when other publishers have only smaller booths within a tent with others) and with key vendors to elicit discounts through collective bargaining.

As far as any weakness, the only thing I had noticed in the last decade was a slow adoption of electronic publications (ebooks), which plagued most university presses nationwide. TAMU Press had a robust system in place for print publication distribution for Consortium members like UNT Press, but not an electronic distribution system, which forced us to go forward alone with contracts and negotiations with ebook vendors. Within the last couple years, however, TAMU Press implemented the Firebrand electronic database for all Consortium publications and has aggressively been pursuing new ebook agreements with outside vendors. In the near future Consortium members may benefit with renewed collaboration with TAMU Press in this area.

4) Unique opportunities you think the Press and Texas A&M should explore in fulfilling our mission?

The number one issue going forward would be collaboration on electronic publishing initiatives as outlined above. The same collective wisdom and bargaining power of seven presses in a Consortium that has given us advantages with print publications could now serve our electronic publications as well.

Ron Chrisman
Director
University of North Texas Press
(member of the Texas A&M Press Consortium since 1989)
Dear Chad:

I was asked to give you my thoughts on the TAMU Press.

I am a long time member of the Press Advancement Board.

I think the Press adds a great deal to the academic stature of TAMU...It serves as a beacon of scholarship in the external world of letters and ideas...

The Press is a vibrant, strong organization which continues to produce very high quality books which enrich the cultural fabric of Texas and of the Nation.

I think we should become THE press for the universities in the Southwestern US, and that they should all look to TAMU for leadership in scholarly publishing.

I volunteer my time because I believe in Charles Backus, and his team, and in their mission.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Wainerdi

Richard E. Wainerdi, P.E., Ph.D.
President and Chief Executive Officer
Texas Medical Center
2450 Holcombe Boulevard, Suite One
Houston, Texas 77021-2040
(713) 791-8500 (Office)
(713) 799-8220 (Fax)
REW@texasmedicalcenter.org
Please visit us at www.tmc.edu
MAVIS P. KELSEY, SR., M.D.
#2 Longbow Lane
Houston, Texas 77024-5722
(713) 686-3768

December 20, 2010

Mr. Chad Wooton
Associate Vice President for External Affairs
Provost's Office
Texas A&M University
Rudder Tower, 9th Floor
College Station, TX 77843

Dear Mr. Wooton:

This letter is sent as information for the upcoming External Review of the Texas A&M University Press.

I graduated from Texas A&M in 1932. I am a retired physician who organized the Kelsey Seybold Clinic on Houston in 1949. I have published twenty books and made a large collection of Texana and Western Americana which is now housed in the Cushing Memorial Library at Texas A&M.

I have known the Texas A&M University Press favorably since it was organized years ago. I have known all the Press directors since Frank Wardlow who was the first. The Press has published three books I have written or co-authored: Texas Courthouses, A Guide with Donald Dyal, 1993; Twentieth Century Doctor, House Calls to Space Medicine, 1999; and Engraved Prints of Texas, 1554-1900 with Robin Brandt Hutchinson, 2005.

I have been on the A&M Press Advisory Council for ten or more years. I know the Press has a dedicated, stable staff of highly qualified people for all levels required for printing a worthwhile book. Considering the size of their budget, the staff of the Press is a highly productive organization.

I consider the A&M Press to be a very important part of the Texas A&M University. The Press has a national reputation for publishing great books of lasting value. The Press has published many useful books which add to our knowledge of Texas and American history and which add to the popular knowledge of many sciences. Their books are fine examples of the printing art. The Press is one of the university presses which serves an important function of publishing books of educational value that the popular or commercial media fails to publish. All of this adds to the prestige of the University.

The A&M Press is one important part of the University in its goal of providing higher education and scholarship on the campus and to the state of Texas, as well as its national and international market.
In the many years that I have collected books, those of A&M Press are among my most cherished books. It’s a pleasure to state my high regard for the Texas A&M University Press. It is amazing to me the number of worthwhile books it produces. It is recognized as one of the best.

Sincerely,

Mavis P. Kelsey, Sr.
Class of 1932
24 February 2011

Dr. Karan Watson
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
Rudder Tower 3rd Floor
1248 TAMU
College Station, Texas 77843

Dear Dr. Watson:

Thank you for compiling the programmatic review of Texas A & M Press and soliciting certain thoughts relative to the publishing of scholarly works, history books, and other studies.

Texas A & M Press has consistently maintained high standards for publications that attribute to their titles' success and more particularly, their long shelf life. The rigorous checks and balances they put a manuscript through tend to make many of their books instant classics or cornerstone pieces of research. Such self-examination and cautious title choices have built an impressive repertoire. This work ethic attributes to the press' prestige, which in turn, enhances the prestige of the university.

The only weaknesses I perceive, that are at the same time opportunities, are relative to marketing books upon their publication. There are many constraints placed on their marketing program, much if due to lack of funding and staff. But careful placement of advance copies, cultivation of book reviews in major periodicals, and author appearances in the media and at book signings would help sales in a crowded market. The press should seriously consider making some titles' content available through ebooks as well.

Texas A & M Press has a fine tradition and I am honored to serve on its board. The valuable work of its editors and staff put the press in the higher realms of quality, comparable to nearly any fine publishing house across the nation, while still serving the interests of Texas, its history, and interests. There is much more to be done to push Texas A & M Press upward in visibility and renown. It is an exciting time to be in publishing and with the right choices and efforts to stay current and vital, this press will continue its long and proud legacy of quality and importance.

Thank you again for performing this study and inquiring with those who volunteer.

Best regards,

Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson
270 Genesee Road
San Antonio, Texas 78209
February 22, 2011

Ms. Karen L. Watson, Ph.D., P.E.
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President
for Academic Affairs
Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President
for Academic Affairs
1248 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-1248

Dear Ms. Watson:

I am most pleased to respond to your request for opinion on the A&M University Press. Over a lifetime I have served on many boards but the Press has been the one I most appreciate and enjoy. This Board has the spirit of the student body. They are cheerleaders for Texas A&M. They all take the role of board member seriously. They read and discuss the offerings. It’s quite an education being among them. I enjoy the time spent not only with the Board but also all of the staff. They have accepted and cooperated with all of my suggestions. They are great.

The evolution to digital books is not for me and I’m positive I’m not alone. A book smells good, reading it, laying it down or discussing it, holding it or being able to see it in the bookcase - all of those feelings won’t come from a “Kindle”. The Press may do some of it, but I want the Press to select and publish good books. A new and creative marketing approach to do just that will be needed.

Sincerely yours,

J. David Bamberger
February 23, 2011

Dr. Karan L. Watson
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
Rudder Tower 9th Floor
1248 TAMU
College Station, Texas 77843-1248

Dear Dr. Watson:

I am a relatively new member of the Texas A&M Press Advancement Board and the opportunity to serve in this regard is a fulfillment of a long held admiration and appreciation of the outstanding work of the Press.

Although budgetary constraints are the norm both at Texas A&M and statewide, I firmly believe it essential Texas A&M continue to fund and support the Press and thereby continue to value the publishing of scholarly research for academic and general readers.

As a compliment to its growth as a major research university, Texas A&M has always remained connected to its roots - the people, the land and the history of Texas. The Press is in a unique position to tell the Texas story, whether it be through award winning military history, detailed studies of the physical Texas, its rivers, mountains, coastline, plants and animals or the inspiring stories of its leaders, past and present. These are books the average Texan can appreciate, enjoy, be inspired by, or stick in his or her backpack and get dirty while exploring the regions this great University seeks to serve. These are books connecting the people to Texas and the Southwest and thereby connecting them to Texas A&M.

A fundamental attribute of Texas A&M has always been the willingness of its graduates to share the abilities learned in school by service to the communities in which they live and work, whether that be charitable organizations, local government or volunteer organizations.

I can think of no better way for Texas A&M to contribute to the people it serves and fulfill that same legacy of service at the university level than by continuing to make the personal connection and contribution so uniquely accomplished by the work of the A&M Press.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts and thank you for all you do for Texas A&M.

Very truly yours,

STEVEN & RAU
A Professional Corporation

George H. Rau, Jr.
Dear Dr. Watson and Mr. Wootton,

My name is Amy Bacon ’91 and I’m a member of the Texas A&M University Press Advancement Board. I have had the privilege to serve on the board for two years and it is a pleasure to share my thoughts as your team works to compile the findings of the programmatic review.

As an institution, Texas A&M University has benefited greatly from having its own academic press and I believe without it, the university would not have achieved the national scholarly recognition and prestige it enjoys today. As a member of the Association of American University Presses, publishing over 60 new titles each year, with a total of 1,250 titles in print, TAMU Press is a vital part of the university's mission of teaching, research, public service, and dissemination of the results of scholarly inquiry. Although it is one of the youngest among the nation's top twenty public university presses, TAMU Press is a beacon for the university through the quality works it selects, produces, promotes, and distributes each year. Without an academic press, I believe Texas A&M's stature and reputation as a world-class institution would be significantly lessened. Texas A&M University has positioned itself to be a top-ten university through the Vision 2020 initiative and I believe supporting the Press in its endeavors would be a vital part of that goal.

Along with being a board member, I am also the author of the book Building Leaders, Living Traditions: The Memorial Student Center at Texas A&M University (Texas A&M Press, 2009). When writing my book about the history of the MSC, the staff at the Press was exemplary in every aspect of the publishing stages. My manuscript went through the peer review process and following some revisions, then onto the Faculty Advisory Committee for their review. Every step of the way, Charles Backus, Mary Lenn Dixon, Thom Lemmons, Diana Vance, and numerous other staff members were of the highest quality, both professionally and personally. I could not have asked for a better experience than the one I enjoyed with this staff. The book was exquisite in its print quality as well as the reproduction of all the historical photographs. I could never have envisioned a better product, meeting the highest of standards indicative of the Texas A&M name.

Since 2009, I have given numerous presentations and book signings for the MSC book and in doing so, I have found that many among our broader community of former students, A&M stakeholders, and supporters, such as the A&M Clubs and Aggie Moms Clubs, are often surprised that the university has an academic press. I believe that more can be done to spread the word of the thousands of works the Press has produced, along with its achievements as an asset of the university. One suggestion might be to feature specific TAMU Press book titles/covers that relate to various academic departments (i.e. History, Architecture, Horticulture, Military History, Anthropology, Agriculture, etc.) or other university areas (i.e. Corps of Cadets, Student Activities, the Memorial Student Center, etc.) on those specific websites, having a link on the book cover photo which then takes the user directly to the TAMU Press site to order that particular book or learn more about the Press in general. The Nautical Archaeology website does list its works from TAMU Press and has a direct link back to the Press website. Every copy of the books produced by the Press reinforces Texas A&M's stature and reputation. Therefore, whatever can be done to increase the visibility and awareness of these works, as well as get them into the hands of fellow scholars, formers students, current students, parents, and other persons of interest, further spreads the name and influence of Texas A&M University.
For over ten years, I had the dream of writing a book about the history of the MSC and its impact on the development of Texas A&M University. The Press helped me make that dream a reality and I'm extremely grateful for that opportunity. Yet, as a member of the Advancement Board, I have come to gain a better understanding of the integral role the Press plays in advancing scholarly works, as well as books of interest to the general public focusing on Texas and the Southwest, as well as works chronicling the history and character of Texas A&M itself. I believe in the mission of Texas A&M Press and without a doubt, I remain committed to supporting it with my time and gifts. Texas A&M University is a stronger academic institution because of the Press and it is my hope that through this programmatic review, the university will reaffirm its commitment to helping the Press continue its important mission for many years to come.

Sincerely,
Amy Bacon '91
Howdy Chad,

My name is Ted Paup, and I am a proud member of the Texas A&M University Press Advancement Board.

In answer to the four questions in Karen’s letter:

1. My Mother, Chan Driscoll, was one of the original members of this group when Texas A&M started its Press in the early 1970’s, so we have been aware and involved in its activities for many years. We have had the pleasure to review so many of its books and works over these years.

2. Their strengths are many. Among authors, it is a “go to” type of Press. It is well respected among academicians, and those of who want to read excellent literature and first-class books. Everything is done in a very professional manner. The University Consortium is also an important feature that helps other presses throughout the State.

3. Texas A&M has many strengths and it would be to its advantage to “tap into” some of these valuable resources at the University Press on a consistent basis.

4. I volunteer my time for the University Press due to the value it serves not only for the University, but also as a citizen of the Great State of Texas.

Please let me know if you should desire additional information.
Thank you for all that you do for Texas A&M.

Sincerely and Gig’em,
Ted Paup ’74

Ted Paup
5601 Byers Ave.
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

817-731-2019
tedpaup7@cs.com
February 14, 2011

Dr. Karan L. Watson
Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dear Dr. Watson,

Truly, I am honored to have the opportunity to express the genuine and enduring regard and consistent pride, which I have felt for the Texas A&M University Press. Those feelings began almost four decades ago, when I (as the first Dean of Faculties here), received a truly surprising call from President Jack Kenny Williams to “stop what I was doing, and go over to the new Holiday Inn, to meet Frank Wardlaw, the deeply respected Director of the University of Texas Press and give him a tour of our campus.” In the next sentence, Dr. Williams informed me that he had “hired Wardlaw to create a Press for Texas A&M,” and that I was to be the Chairman of the Press Advisory Council, so “who should he appoint to serve in that group.”

Throughout the years since that memorable time, I have been grateful to be able to work in any manner to assist our Press. During those decades we have seen this Press increase its well-earned reputation for quality and service. That success has added a great quantity to our institution’s true reputation for academic achievement and service. Surely, it reflects the depth and breadth of TAMU’s reputation and recognition, among scholars and other citizens who have praised the image this Press has fashioned with so much effort and success.

From the first months of Wardlaw’s service here, there has always seemed to be a consistent dedication to his theory that a real University Press “should have at least two subjects of emphasis in its publications: volumes that relate to the geographical area in which the Press is located, and works that are devoted to the academic areas of study -- for which TAMU is most respected. Surely, neither he, nor anyone after him has thought that this pair of topical emphases should not be considered the limit of the TAMU Press’s efforts, nor have they been so.

Another strength of our Press has been those tireless individuals who have served here, for so many years, especially in leadership, editorial review, marketing, and now, the essential effort to attempt to use what I will identify as “computer technology,” to extend the potential endeavors of our Press to become near the front-line of scholarly publication, service and distribution.

Finally, I am proud that while I served as the campus CEO at the University of Texas at El Paso and the University of Missouri, each of them had Press. So, I am honored to also assure you that I am convinced that our Press is worthy of the funding which it has expended so carefully, and the reputation it has earned with so much diligence. I have the honor to serve, still, on the Press Advancement Board and as an “ex officio” member of the Faculty Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,

Haskell Monroe

Dean of Faculties Emeritus – TEXAS A&M U. U. OF MISSOURI - Chancellor Emeritus
Haskell Monroe, Dean of Faculties Emeritus at Texas A&M U., former President of the U. of Texas at El Paso, and Chancellor Emeritus of the U. of Missouri, has devoted his professional life to teaching and leadership in public higher education. He returned to his true academic home at A&M in 1997, where he began as a temporary Instructor in 1959, following a brief summer assignment at Schreiner Institute, and served for twenty-one years. Still a newcomer, as Secretary to the A&M Aspirations Committee, he drafted the report which recommended some key changes in the early 1960's -- including co-education, non-compulsory membership in the Corps of Cadets, racial integration, and higher admission standards. Later, as the first Dean of Faculties, he was part of the 1970's administrative team which laid the basic foundations for today's TAMU.

After working to collect and preserve the memories of key A&M leaders of the past: students, faculty, staff, administrators, Board Members, community leaders, friends, and/or spouses -- so that the development of the institution could be more clearly understood -- he now is concentrating on community service, travel with family and friends, and possible completion of some long-postponed research.

With BA and MA degrees from Austin College and a PhD in Southern history from Rice University, he came to College Station, where his colleagues selected him for the Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching, the first year he was eligible for that honor. After leaving A&M in 1980 as Dean of Faculties and Professor of History, Dr. Monroe served as President of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) from 1980-1987, when he became Chancellor of the University of Missouri (MU), where he and Jo certainly enjoyed a decade in Columbia.

Under his leadership, both institutions reached record numbers in total enrollments, minority students, National Merit Award winners, and realized new levels of quality in student achievement. MU moved from fourth to first place in student quality among Big Eight campuses during his tenure. At UTEP, he led the effort that increased the number of Hispanic students from 34% to 52% in total enrollment, and at MU the minority total went up by one-third. Research volume, measured by grant and contract totals, also reached new highs at both schools.

In his years at UTEP, financial contributions from alumni and friends increased almost threefold. Private gifts doubled at Missouri, where Dr. Monroe led the first comprehensive capital campaign in MU's history -- a fund drive that brought in more than $150 million, including what was then the largest cash gift in the University's history.

Throughout his two decades as a full-time administrator, Dr. Monroe continued to pursue his first love -- teaching. While Dean at A&M, President at UTEP, and Chancellor at MU, he taught an American History survey course every Tuesday and Thursday morning at 8:00. In addition, his research in Southern history earned him a number of recognitions, including the Centennial Medallion from the U. S. Civil War Centennial Commission and the Founder's Award from the Museum of the Confederacy. In his last semester at MU, the Council of Greek Organizations selected him the "Outstanding Teacher on Campus."

An active community citizen, listed in Who's Who in America; Board of Directors for 17 years, of Southwestern Bell (next SBC Comm. Inc., now AT&T); as well as many other civic and business groups: including the Salvation Army, Boy Scouts of America, United Way, and Rotary - to demonstrate that higher education and business leaders must work together for local, state, and national progress.

A native Texan, Dr. Monroe and his wife, Jo, who grew up in North Carolina, are members of the First Presbyterian Church in Bryan. Their four children are all Texas A&M graduates: now in San Antonio; El Paso; Columbia, MO; and Dallas, TX -- with two GRANDkids at each location, a total of four boys and four girls. He collects everything printed relating to 3 great Texas artists: Jose Cisneros, Tom Lea, and E. M. "Buck" Schiwetz; bricks from historical sites; picture postcards from towns where he and Jo have lived; and books with eyewitness descriptions of life in the Confederate States during The War.

Haskell Monroe, 1005 Sonoma Cir, College Station, TX 77845 979-693-8240
Library caree Email - hmonroe@tamu.edu Cell phone - 979 - 324 - 4546 FAX 979 - 694 - 7344
University of Michigan Press Acquisitions Process
Submitted by Review Panel Member, Dr. Phil Pochoda, Director, University of Michigan Press

1. We have a weekly (actually, three times a month) acquisitions approval meeting, at which the editors submit proposals for books that they want to develop as UMP projects. Before the meeting they circulate a packet on each book which includes a cover sheet describing the project; the author; external reviews (if they've been solicited at this stage); sales performance of analogous books; and a P & L statement (profit and loss) for the book (which is easily generated through the Firebrand press-wide database).

That P & L includes 2 years of projected sales and revenues; cost of production (derived from scales that are uploaded annually into the data base by the production manager; copyediting costs; permission costs; etc. We insist (except in rare cases) on a gross margin percentage of 60%. (Note that TAMUP has an overall gross margin of 42% -- including back list books)

Marketing and sales attend that meeting along with the editors. The sales manager has to sign off on the amount of sales projected for the book as well as for the pricing and discount. Marketing weighs in on whether the sales projected makes sense to them as well. If a book gets approved at that meeting, it often receives an "advance" contract (which doesn't commit the press until it is later approved by the faculty executive board), or just a signal to the author that there is enthusiasm for the project.

2. Once a month we have a pre-exec. meeting which consists basically of review of the materials on each project that will go to the faculty executive committee the following week. All such projects have already been through the acquisition approval meeting. But since there can a time lag of anything from 1 week to several years between the times a specific project goes through acquisition. Approval and before it is submitted to the exe board, the editor works out a new P & L which reflects changing publishing environment; sales levels through standard channels, etc. Again, the sales manager has to approve the revised P $ L.

3. Once a week we have a transmittal meeting, which includes books that have gone through the previous two meetings and are now entirely ready to be handed off to production. (Depending on particular projects, and how much rewriting was necessary after a project was approved at the executive board level, the time for a particular project in being transmitted and having been approved at the Faculty Exec. Board meeting can be as short as a month and as long as several years. Though the meeting is primarily centered on the scrutiny of the production and copyediting departments of the project (and their assessment of costs and timing), the sales manager once again has to approve the P & L that the editor has submitted with the project.

4. Finally, just before the project goes to the printer (which is generally a year or so after the transmittal meeting), the sales manager sets the initial print run for the book. He now aims for a printing that will cover what he deems to be likely sales (and free copies) for only the first 6 months to 1 year of sales (though expecting to reprint digitally one or more times in the first two years, and, in the best case, to meet or exceed the 2 year estimate of sales as incorporated in the P & L for the book.
5. When it comes to reprinting a book when the stock is low: the decision about price and quantity and whether the reprint is done digitally short run or through "conventional" web press processes is made by the sales manager and our production reprint manager — though I sign off on all reprints as well.

6. At least once a year, the sales manager re-prices the whole backlist — generally raising prices to whatever he thinks the market can bear.

7. Lastly, I haven't mentioned eBook production (formats, pricing etc.). That is largely under the control of our assistant director/digital manager and the editor, but that decision is discussed at the transmittal meeting as well (and we have just added a column in the P & L for every book that pertains only to digital costs and projected revenues. (Of course, with ebooks the issue is not print run, but whether to produce an ebook at all; how to price it, etc.)