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UM publishing cut draws protest

Subsidy equals \$400,000 yearly.

By Janese Silvey

Publishers and book lovers across the country are joining forces in a campaign to persuade the University of Missouri System to reverse its decision to close the UM Press.

Bruce Miller, a publishing representative in Chicago, on Monday launched the Facebook page "Save the University of Missouri Press," which had more than 670 supporters as of this morning.

"This is mushrooming," Miller said, referring to the opposition. UM President Tim "Wolfe might be sorry he made that decision."

On Thursday, the UM System released a statement announcing the press's closure as part of a strategic plan to be more efficient. The system had been subsidizing the press to the tune of \$400,000 a year.

In a statement, Wolfe said he was grateful to lawmakers who kept cuts to higher education funding at bay but wanted to show the university takes seriously its role to be "good stewards" of public funds by doing away with activities not central to the core mission.

Will the move impress lawmakers who draft next year's state budget? Probably not, some local representatives agreed.

"I wish it would, but no, because the university has been a good steward for 15 years" without recognition, said Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia.

Being fiscally disciplined is important, "but at the same time, the university is not a business, and there are some considerations, some things other than money, that need to be weighed when making decisions," said Rep. Stephen Webber, D-Columbia.

Closing the press could cost the university in other ways. Tom Strong is a Springfield attorney and MU alumnus whose book "Strong Advocate: The Life of a Trial Lawyer" is being published by UM Press this year. Strong has a plaque up in the MU School of Law recognizing past donations.

"Please remove the plaque that bears my name in a room of the law school," Strong wrote in a letter to Wolfe. "I will make no further financial gifts to MU."

Losing the UM Press could mean losing well-researched, historical books about this region, said Ned Stuckey-French, who is in the English department at Florida State University.

"One way to look at it is to look at some of the books and series that the press has published," he said. "They've published a lot of books about Missouri's landscape and nature and history and so forth."

UM Press has published the collected works of Langston Hughes, biographies of Missourians and military accounts, including a recent release by John S.D. Eisenhower, son of President Dwight Eisenhower.

"Perhaps President Wolfe doesn't recognize yet the role the press plays in maintaining the brand of the university," Stuckey-French said.

UM Curator Wayne Goode said he understands the concerns. He wrote the forward for a book on the art of the Missouri Capitol co-authored by Bob Priddy of Missouri.

"The press was a prestigious part of the university culture over the last 50-plus years, and it's a shame to lose it, but you can't just say \$400,000 isn't that much," Goode said. "If you look at the entire budget, it's a small piece, but if you look at areas where you have the opportunity to save money and reallocate money, \$400,000 becomes a pretty good-sized piece of that."

David Bradley, chairman of the UM Board of Curators, said if books are good enough, they'll be printed elsewhere.

But that's not necessarily the case, said Kris Kleindienst, co-owner of Left Bank Books in St. Louis. Commercial publishers are interested in profitable successes, not necessarily well-researched quality works, she said.

Subjects of UM Press books might not interest a wide audience, she said, but "that shouldn't matter. It never used to matter. It wasn't about profit. It was about information, ideas, analysis, discovery, theories. These are the brains of the publishing world. Important information comes out of university presses by publishing it that way."



Past efforts aimed to save press

By Janese Silvey

The University of Missouri System has spent a decade and thousands of dollars trying to help its publishing house become a sustainable operation, administrators say.

And the decision to close UM Press was not taken lightly, said Steve Graham, associate vice president of academic affairs.

“We realize the importance of scholarly publishing,” he said. “There’s no question that we see that as an important role for universities.”

The press was requiring a \$400,000 subsidy, down from larger subsidies in the past, and operating with a deficit, he said.

Discussions about how to make the press viable date back to former UM President Manuel Pacheco, who served from 1997 to 2002, Graham said. Former President Elson Floyd later hired a development officer to try to raise money for the press, an effort that was not successful, and the system has brought in consultants to try to figure out how to make it sustainable, he said. In 2009, the press’ staff was cut from 18 to 11 people, and in 2010, the UM System provided \$85,000 worth of software to help the press become more efficient. “There were earnest efforts over a several-year period of time,” Graham said.

Some have argued that \$400,000 is not significant in the university operating budget, which is about \$1 billion.

“I could recoup this amount of money by eliminating two upper-level administrative positions somewhere on our four campuses,” said Gary Ebersole, a history and religious studies professor and chairman of the UM-Kansas City Faculty Council. “Should we close the libraries as well, since they are not income-producing units?”

UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said the amount is significant to the university’s budget. “The idea that the press has unfairly been targeted without efforts to save it is false. Cuts are taking a variety of forms from vice presidents to the press,” she said, referring to two system-level associate vice president positions that also have been cut

The Consequences of Closing University Presses

May 30, 2012, 12:33 pm

By Frank Donoghue

In a story covered by the *Chronicle*, but not widely in extracurricular news venues, it was announced that the University of Missouri would phase out its press beginning this July. As the article's author, Jennifer Howard, points out, "Such announcements about other university presses have often spurred protests and attempts to save them, but so far at least, the news about the Missouri press has been greeted quietly." This is, in itself, is quite remarkable. While not Harvard or Chicago, we're talking about the press of a major public flagship state university. It publishes about 30 books a year, and is home to the collected works of Langston Hughes, Mark Twain, and Harry Truman.

The rationale: "Although the Missouri legislature did not cut its budget for higher education this year, Timothy M. Wolfe, the university system's president, said it was essential 'to be good stewards of public funds, to use those funds to achieve our strategic priorities, and to re-evaluate those activities that are not central to our core mission.'" Apparently, the press isn't central to the university's core mission. Howard wonders whether the Missouri story isn't "still too fresh, noting that there were howls of protest when Louisiana State tried to shut down its press in 2009, and when the University of Arkansas tried to shut down its press in 1998, or when, in 2010, Southern Methodist University suspended its press's operations, promising to resume in another form.

"In another form" might immediately bring to mind a digital solution, a list of e-books that will simultaneously increase access to the press' list and reduce costs. But as Jennifer Crewe, editorial director at Columbia University Press, explained presciently nearly a decade ago, digital publication isn't a panacea, because most of the labor in publishing a monograph is still human:

The time it takes to evaluate the field and get to know the author; assess the value of the book and its potential market; solicit peer review; judge the book's suitability for a press's particular list and its contribution to the field; publicize it, by sending review copies to journals, preparing press releases; pitching it to book-review editors, perhaps booking the author on public radio shows or book tours and entering the book in prize competitions; announcing the book in

catalogs and flyers; exhibit it at conventions; advertise it and pitch it to buyers at wholesalers and chains and the independent stores.

She adds that “the switch to wide-scale electronic publications would also entail new costs: ‘the cost of coding the book in XML, of paying for a Web developer’s time, and of selling subscriptions to libraries.’” (*Profession* 2004). She estimated that, in 2004, the average academic monograph (even those that were well reviewed) lost nearly \$18,000, and that such losses would not be significantly curbed by the switch to a digital format.

More proof of the notion that digital publication is not a panacea for university presses can be found in an earlier *Chronicle* article by Jennifer Howard. She wrote in 2010 that Rice University planned to close its digital press. The scenario confirms all of Crewe’s suspicions:

Closed once before, in 1996, the press was reborn in 2006 as an all-digital operation. But it had proven too expensive to sustain even in its new form, according to a statement by Eugene Levy, a Rice professor of astrophysics who stepped down as the university’s provost in June. As provost, Levy authorized the money for the press’s rebirth four years ago.

‘The hope was that, without the burden of having to maintain a print inventory, the press might sustain itself largely on revenues from print-on-demand book sales,’ Levy’s statement said. ‘Unfortunately, book sales remained very slow, and projections discouraged the anticipation that revenues would, in the foreseeable future, grow to a level that could materially cover even minimal costs of operations.’

University presses have been an essential component of research institutions since the founding of Johns Hopkins, venues where scholarly knowledge could be dispersed to an admittedly small but interested intellectually interested community. It is, I admit, hard to imagine major universities without presses. But one has to at least consider: Have those various intellectual communities become too splintered, specialized and small? Have the monographs that university presses produce become so costly that individual scholars can’t purchase them? And, thus, have university presses outlived their time? If they have, there are even more dire professional consequences, which I will take up next time.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Save the University of Missouri Press

By Joan Frank

May 31, 2012 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

An open letter to University of Missouri System President Timothy Wolfe:

I write today to implore you to find any other tactic, rather than close the University of Missouri Press.

I owe the Press the official launch of my life as an artist: It accepted and published my first book of literary fiction "Boys Keep Being Boys: Stories," thirteen years ago.

Though I came to my writing life comparatively late, it has been a life-changing gift — for my readers, I dare hope, as well as for myself — and the Press' validation is fixed securely at its heart.

"A service to the fiction community," was how the Press' then-editor termed its embrace of my work. My story collection went on to be nominated for several fine awards and was reviewed glowingly in the New York Times Book Review.

The hard fact of present-day literary art is that it's the small, independent and university presses who are single-handedly rescuing new and emerging writers from the chaotic neglect of what few major publishing houses remain. These small, independent operations shine as the sole, brave curators of art that matters. We must ensure they will continue as such, informing and illuminating successive generations of American writers and readers.

Please do not let this vital light die.

I owe the foundation of my life as an artist to the Press and its excellent staff. Please do not cut them off. This will be a true tragedy — and you will always be remembered as that tragedy's author and instigator. Please let the Press continue to make necessary, important work — and to pull new and emerging American writers into the lifeboat of legitimacy.

Joan Frank is a full-time author who lives in Santa Rosa, Calif.



Alden thinks Missouri is in better place

Athletic director confident SEC is right move.

By Dave Matter

DESTIN, Fla. — As he sat on a plane Monday alongside his wife and teenage son, Missouri Athletic Director Mike Alden found a moment to reflect on what's been a wild year. A year ago this week he was in Kansas City for the Big 12 Conference spring meetings and left there feeling secure about the league's future and Missouri's place there. The Big 12 had survived the 2010 exodus of Nebraska and Colorado and seemed back on solid footing.

"I remember thinking, 'Shoot ... we're set. We're solid. Everything's set to go,' " he said.

Instead, faith in the Big 12's future soon crumbled, and a few months later, Missouri began following Texas A&M into the Southeastern Conference. That's what led Alden here this week, to the SEC spring meetings, with a sense of nostalgia, anticipation and confidence.

Reality set in as Alden, wife Rockie and son Jake, flew here from St. Louis as Missouri takes the final steps toward a new era.

"You were much more in the moment," he recalled thinking. "Here we are."

Back home in Columbia, what Alden described as a nine-month blur is coming into focus. SEC logos now adorn Faurot Field. Sweeping facility renovations will soon be presented to the UM Board of Curators. Coaches are preparing scouting reports for a slew of unfamiliar opponents. But as Alden looks forward to life in college athletics' most successful and competitive conference, he's secure in the direction Missouri has taken under his watch, from its fledgling days in the Big 12 when the Tigers languished by most competitive measures.

"When we went into the Big 12" in 1996, "we were ill-prepared to compete academically, competitively, facilities-wise, budget-wise, recruiting-wise. ... We cannot allow ourselves that hiatus from investing in an athletic program like we did for so many years at Mizzou," he said. "We took a hiatus. We took a 13-year — maybe more than that — we took a 25-year hiatus from investing in facilities, in budgets, in coaches, all these types of things we were trying to do. We cannot afford that, otherwise we're going to gravitate back to mediocrity. And we don't want to ever see that again."

Though Missouri's current spending trails most of its new peers in the SEC, Alden believes MU is past the days of settling for mediocrity. Missouri's \$53.2 million athletics budget in 2010

would rank 11th in the new 14-team SEC — ahead of Mississippi, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt — but MU figures to generate more revenue from several sources, including new suites and other renovations to Memorial Stadium, changes that MU will unveil publicly after getting curator approval. Alden will present a master plan for athletic facility makeover to the board at its June 26-27 meetings in Columbia.

"Mike and the university have been really good about being committed to what we talked about" with facility upgrades "when we made this move," football Coach Gary Pinkel said yesterday.

Meanwhile, Missouri continues to meet other challenges in other areas. To reach the destinations in the SEC, MU projects to increase its travel budget by 20 percent, an annual increase of about \$750,000, senior associate athletic director Tim Hickman said. Roughly 25 percent of MU's trips to away games will switch from bus travel to flights, Hickman said.

Basketball takes a backseat in the football-mad SEC as proven here yesterday at the Sandestin Hilton, where reporters tripped over themselves to swarm the league's football coaches while basketball coaches, including Kentucky's recently crowned national champion John Calipari, walked freely through the hallways. For second-year Missouri Coach Frank Haith, there's still plenty to learn.

"It's a talented league, just like the Big 12," Haith said. "But I do think there's going to be an adjustment period. ... We had a chance to watch Georgia early in the year in the CBE Classic, and they have some athletic young bigs. The Tennessee team is very physical and they play a very physical brand, which is unique in the SEC. We'll know what" former Kansas State Coach "Frank Martin will bring to South Carolina, a very hard-nosed physical team. Alabama is extremely athletic and stretches the court defensively."

As the league's presidents and chancellors were set to arrive here today, discussions about the league's schedules will continue to lead the conversation, as well as the SEC's stance on national topics, including the football postseason structure. All the while, Alden and MU's contingent will bask in the SEC's promises and stability and tackle the new challenges.

"One of the things we want to come out of this with," Alden said, "is a better understanding and purer understanding of what it means to be a good neighbor within the SEC. ... What's it like to be a good, solid teammate in the SEC? And how do we see that going forward?"

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

No MU mention

Why college graduates matter

BY TIM LOGAN • tlogan@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8291 | Posted: Thursday, May 31, 2012 5:30 am

There was a good story in the New York Times Wednesday about Dayton's struggles to keep college graduates.

The Ohio city has actually seen its share of the population with a bachelor's degree fall in the last decade, from 24 percent in 2000 to 23 percent in 2009, and it's one of a growing list of metro areas that are falling behind in an ever-more-important measure of economic health.

The Times piece traces how a region's educational attainment increasingly corresponds to its economic vitality in this post-industrial age. And how that trend can become self-reinforcing. Cities with strong knowledge economies attract more smart people, and those smart people help create more jobs. The results, the Times notes, are striking:

The recession amplified the trend. Metro areas where more than one in three adults were college-educated had an average unemployment rate of 7.5 percent earlier this year, compared with 10.5 percent for cities where less than one in six adults had a college degree, according to Edward Glaeser, an economist at Harvard and the author of "Triumph of the City."

And separate research by the economic development group CEOs for Cities has suggested that increasing a region's share of college graduates by one percentage point can boost annual economic output by \$763 per person per year. In other words, the smart get wealthier.

This begs the question: Where does St. Louis fit in to this picture of economic haves and have-nots. The answer (as is usually the case it seems): Right in the middle.

2010 Census estimates suggest 29.9 percent of adults here have at least a bachelor's degree. That's a bit above the national average of 28.2 percent, though below the 32 percent average of U.S. metro areas cited by the Times.

St. Louis' figure has improved, from 25.3 percent in 2000, and at a pace a bit faster than the U.S. as a whole. And that number should continue to grow with time. Among St. Louisans age 25 to 34, 35.4 percent have a college degree. Among people 65 and up, just 20 percent do.

But while St. Louis is in better shape than Dayton or Bakersfield, Calif., it's still a good ways behind the best-educated regions, places like San Francisco, Washington, Boston and - in the Midwest - Minneapolis. And it's no coincidence those are among the most affluent regions in the country.

There are people around St. Louis who are working on this issue, whether by trying to keep more graduates of local universities in town, or by trying to help the estimated 400,000-plus adults here with some college to finish their degree. Stories like the one Tuesday about Dayton on Tuesday emphasize why that's so important.