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Critics Attack Closing of U. of Missouri Press

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By Peter Monaghan



U. of Missouri President Timothy M. Wolfe

At a time when university presses are arguably faring relatively well, the decision of the University of Missouri System to shut down its press has angered many faculty members, authors, and supporters.

It has also drawn charges that administrators have abused the principles of academic shared governance.

On May 24, system administrators told the 10 employees of the University of Missouri Press that the publisher would be phased out, beginning immediately. It was the first that the staff members, including interim director Dwight Browne, had heard of even the prospect.

In a statement regarding budgetary restraints, Timothy M. Wolfe, who took office as president of the system in February, said he had opted to close the press completely, rather than attempt to revive it, or to continue a \$400,000 annual grant. The grant will lapse on June 30, the end of the system's fiscal year.

The press has published about 30 titles each year, many dealing with the state, its history, military history, and other standby academic-press subjects. In part because it has been paying off the cost of the building that has housed it, the press has operated at a deficit, even after staffing cuts in recent years; but insiders say it has been drawing within \$30,000 of balancing its budget.

In announcing the closure, Wolfe said he had conferred with the chancellors and provosts of the system's four institutions, among other administrators, but not with any faculty members. That has incensed many faculty members and supporters of the press. About 1,500 people have signed a [Facebook protest page](#), and more than 1,000 have signed a [petition](#) urging that the press continue to operate.

For insiders, the announcement that the press would close was startling, given that the university system had within the last year provided the press with money to revamp its Web site and update its data base. In the absence of a detailed schedule for the shutdown, staff members are fielding many calls from distributors and booksellers asking whether they will receive their orders. Already announced fall titles will appear, but little else is clear.

Also galling, for protesters, was the way the announcement was made. Jennifer Hollingshead, the system's director of marketing and public relations, said in an interview that Wolfe had not included press employees in discussions "out of respect and sensitivity for them," as their jobs were slated for elimination.

"That was inexcusable," said John M. Budd, a professor of information science and learning technologies at the Columbia campus, in an interview. "It has to be said that it was unethical. That is not the proper way to treat personnel. If there is a problem, then whoever is in charge has a responsibility to discuss it with the personnel who will be affected."

Protesters also have objected to a consolation that Wolfe, formerly a president of the infrastructure software provider Novell Americas, offered. He said the press might revive as a model of new modes of academic communication, with print and digital publications in multimedia formats. In its operations, he added, a new press might well resemble *The Missouri Review*, a well-regarded literary journal whose faculty editor works with graduate students and interns.

Hollingshead said she could not offer any specifics, other than to say that the system's campuses might be called on to lend their particular capabilities—those of, say, journalism and library-technology programs in which faculty members have been contemplating the shape of communications media to come.

Defenders of the press are skeptical. They say any discussion of depending on students and interns is an affront to the skills of professional editorial staff, particularly when the press's current editors have received no signal that they will be reassigned within the system.

In any case, faculty protesters say, a digitized, multimedia press seems at best a pipe dream at the moment. They have heard nothing to indicate that any concrete plans have been made. "If there

is a plan, it's being held very closely within administrative circles, and not shared with the faculty," said Budd.

In any case, he said, his expertise in organizational management tells him that the plan is misconceived. "In organizational terms, it is much simpler to revise an existing operation than to cease operating and then try to get it going again in some different form."

Shortcomings in the plan are everywhere, according to Budd and others. For starters, where would the university find enough students training specifically for careers in scholarly communication to put out 30 volumes a year?

As for shared governance, "I don't see any, in this regard," said Budd. The press closure is one of several areas of administrative decision making "with no faculty determination, whatsoever," he said. "I see a deterioration of putative shared governance in this institution."

In the case of the press, consultation would have been particularly appropriate, he suggested: "It is primarily not simply an administrative organization, it is a faculty service, for the greater good of scholarly communication and the intellectual life of the academy. I can only gather that this move on the part of President Wolfe demonstrated a strong anti-intellectual bent on his part." Protesters have loudly noted Wolfe's non-academic background.

The timing of the announcement—right before a long weekend, after the end of spring sessions, during months when campus faculty councils do not meet—was suspect, too, Budd said. "But we've come to expect that from the administration," he said. Because most faculty members had left campus, "it has been very difficult to mount any formal protests or response."

In any case, he said, the Columbia campus's faculty, at least, "is a very weak faculty when it comes to the politics of governance. It's been beaten down. Morale is low, and turnover high."

Budd sat on an ad hoc committee formed by Stephen Graham, the system's senior associate vice president for academic affairs, to consider technological approaches the press might take not only to "bring it into the 20th century," as Budd put it, but also to "end a stasis the press had been in."

There, closing the press was never mentioned, he said. Brian Foster, the provost of the Columbia campus, "was at every meeting I attended, and was an enthusiastic supporter of the continuation of the press, albeit in a reinvigorated form, to fit with what scholarly communication can be in the future, not just in the past.

"I agreed with him on that point. We had a responsibility to look forward, to anticipate what the needs will be."

Also "very odd," Budd suggested, was Wolfe's focusing on a \$400,000 item in a system budget of roughly \$2-billion. "To put the university press in jeopardy for such a small investment."

Another faculty member, Larry Dale Gragg, the chair of the history and political science department at Missouri University of Science and Technology, said part of the reason for an ineffectual faculty response is that the press is not associated with any one campus, and is housed off the Columbia campus.

Gragg, a historian of colonial and revolutionary America who has published books with the Missouri press, Oxford University Press, and others—"none better than Missouri," in his estimation—said he has been slightly buoyed by the response of administrators. Both Wolfe and Graham "listened to my concerns" when he spoke to them by phone after their announcement, he said. "I have no sense of what the impact of what I said will be. But they listened, at great length."

Bruce Joshua Miller is a principal in Miller Trade Book Marketing, which has long represented the Missouri press, and organized the Facebook protest page along with Ned Stuckey-French, a Florida State University literary scholar who published a book with the Missouri press last year. Miller scoffs at the notion that stresses in scholarly publishing can be remedied with multimedia technology.

"This has really got me fired up," he said. The argument for such a fix is "seductive" because "people always like to think that problems can be solved with technology. One day you'll just press a button. But that doesn't work. People are going to find out with respect to scholarly publishing that you have to have a scholarly process that costs money."

He said: "When Wolfe talks about new media, vaguely, adding other elements to books, that just sounds like it came out of an Apple advertisement."

Rationalizing the closing of the press on financial grounds is a stretch, given that the state legislature did not go ahead with a threatened 12-percent cut to the system, this year, he said. "This isn't really about that, it's about how they're allocating the money."

Among protesters' other objections is that digital publishing has proven not to save much, if any, money, and that multimedia publishing would presumably cost a lot more, with returns no more assured than for current Missouri titles—unless a far more commercial publishing model is contemplated.

In any case, multimedia publication would abruptly require academic authors to radically revise their preparation and presentation of research—not something many professors over the age of about 27 could do efficiently or effectively, if at all.

Peter Givler, the executive director of the Association of American University Presses, raises other complications. Missouri administrators will, for example, have to deal with existing contracts with authors, distributors, and others. The press has an extensive backlist, books in storage, and future orders that will have to be filled. Said Givler: "People who don't know very much about publishing think a university press is like any business—if it doesn't work out then too bad; at the end of the day, you turn out the lights, lock the doors, and walk away. But it's not that easy."

Of Missouri administrators' decision, he said: "I don't think they had any sense it was going to be this big a deal. I don't think President Wolfe had a good sense of what the faculty response was going to be."

Is it not surprising that university administrators would be unaware of such complications? "Exactly," said Givler. "But if President Wolfe is a smart guy, and I assume he is, he's going to slow down and think some more about it. I hope I get an opportunity to go out there and talk to those folks."

He said that saying the press must be closed for budgetary reasons does not ring true, even in admittedly difficult financial times. "We're doing OK in terms of how university presses are faring," he said. Some observers have suggested that academic presses are "dropping like flies, but that's simply not true. In 1997 we had 116 members in AAUP; we have 134 today. There have been some closings of presses but new presses are starting up, too, coming into the business. The association is actually stronger than ever."

Supporters work to save University of Missouri Press

University of Missouri plans to shut down 54-year-old publisher.

By **BLAKE URSCH**

Nancy Hill's jaw dropped.

Officials had just announced that the University of Missouri Press, which has produced more than 2,000 titles over five decades, would be phased out beginning in July.

The future of her almost-completed book, a biography of powerful but little-known 20th century activist Grenville Clark, was up in the air.

Still in a daze, Hill, an administrator at UMKC's Diastole Scholars' Center, sat at her desk, which had once belonged to Clark himself, and wrote a letter to University of Missouri President Tim Wolfe.

"I do urge you to strongly reconsider this decision," she wrote. "Shutting the UM Press sends a bad signal about the quality, sophistication, and priorities of our University. Working, researching, publishing professors, students, and scholars like myself will be harmed."

Then she posted it to Facebook.

Now the "Save the University of Missouri Press" Facebook page has more than 1,300 "likes" so far as supporters take the fight to their keyboards.

"I see this as an attack on everything that I care about," said Bruce Miller, who created the Facebook page on Memorial Day. "It's an attack on publishing, scholarly publishing, editors, authors and ultimately the citizens of Missouri."

Miller, a publisher's representative based in Chicago, sells titles from more than 25 university presses around the Midwest to bookstores.

Since its founding in 1958, the University of Missouri Press has published books on world history, philosophy and literary criticism, among other scholarly topics, but it may be best known for works about important regional figures: "Tom's Town," about Kansas City political boss Tom Pendergast, the entire collected works of Missouri native Langston Hughes, a biography of Cardinals baseball legend Stan Musial and several books about Mark Twain.

In 2009, the press published "They Were Just People: Stories of Rescue in Poland During the Holocaust," by former Star columnist Bill Tammeus and Kansas City area rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn.

In a statement, officials said the university has provided a \$400,000 annual subsidy to the press, but even after several cost-saving measures (including laying off eight of 18 employees in 2009), the press still operates at a deficit. The university has not released an exact date for the closing.

"Unfortunately in this economic time, the current model of the press is not sustainable," said spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead.

Several university presses throughout the U.S. have suffered budget troubles recently. For example, after trying an online only version, Rice University Press closed in 2010, and Louisiana State University Press narrowly managed to survive budget cuts in 2009.

Still, the University Press of Kansas, founded in 1946, continues to represent all six state universities in Kansas, focusing on history, political science and social and political philosophy. Truman State University Press, established in 1986, in Kirksville, Mo., narrowly focuses on American studies, early modern studies and poetry.

Because most university presses are nonprofit and subsidized by their schools, they can afford to publish material that many trade publishers would ignore, said Greg Michalson, publisher and editor of Unbridled Books and former managing editor of The Missouri Review, a quarterly literary magazine at the University of Missouri. This includes regional books that would have a limited audience in other areas.

"If those kinds of things aren't published, ultimately what happens to the body of knowledge that we have?" Michalson said.

Ned Stuckey-French, an English professor at Florida State University, has been working with Miller in his campaign to save the press, writing letters to Wolfe and the media.

"I've been up to my gills in it," said Stuckey-French, whose book "The American Essay in the American Century," was published by the University of Missouri Press last year. "I have other things to do, but this has been a priority for me." His father was a Mizzou alumnus.

"Dad was a lifelong Mizzou football fan, but I know he would question the priorities of a university system that shuts down its press to save (according to the University's press release) a \$400,000 annual subsidy, while paying its head football coach \$2.7 million a year," Stuckey-French wrote to the Columbia Missourian, referring to Tigers coach Gary Pinkel.

In a letter released last Friday to those who have expressed concern about the press, Wolfe reaffirmed the university's commitment to academics, saying the university is "exploring dramatically new models for scholarly communication."

But Nancy Hill thinks the administrators don't understand how important the press is to so many people.

"I think and hope maybe that it's just an educational issue and that maybe through all of this hubbub maybe hopefully the value of the press will become more apparent," she said this week. "For the community's sake."



AP Associated Press

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

MU vet surgeries will switch from dogs to pigs

By Janese Silvey

A University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine lab will switch from using live dogs to using live pigs next year to teach students how to operate on animals.

The change is three years in the making, and in part, it is the result of a new partnership between the college and the Central Missouri Humane Society that allows veterinary students to spay and neuter shelter animals, said John Dodam, chairman of the veterinary medicine and surgery department.

For years, MU has used dogs to teach students the basic skills for surgeries including spaying and neutering. The practice is legal and regulated and is not uncommon among veterinary programs.

"The bottom line is that these surgery labs expose students in veterinary medicine to the demands they will face as practicing veterinarians and offers a realistic teaching experience," Dodam said. "Upon graduation, our students have to be immediately ready to practice veterinary medicine. They have to be trained and proficient in a variety of surgeries and techniques. Clients have every right to expect a veterinarian to not operate for the first time on their animal."

MU's College of Veterinary Medicine gets the dogs, typically hounds and beagles, from a breeder who breeds them for that purpose. University regulations prohibit animals from being used for surgery more than once. Dogs are euthanized while still under anesthesia to prevent them from suffering post-surgery pain and discomfort, Dodam said.

The partnership with the Humane Society now gives students that hands-on experience and "really changed the need for the surgery course as we currently teach it," Dodam said.

But the course and operating on live animals is still needed to teach basic surgery skills, such as delivering anesthesia, handling tissues and performing other types of surgeries, he said.

The class is taught to third-year students before they're allowed to work, under clinical supervision, in the college's medical teaching hospital. Students have the option of using cadavers if they're uncomfortable operating on live animals, but few take that option, Dodam said.

Pigs are less expensive than dogs, but Dodam said the main reason for the change was because of the shelter partnership and because the college wanted to move away from using dogs.

The switch also comes on the heels of a records request People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals made last month seeking information about the college's use of live animals. Dodam said the timing is coincidental because the college has been talking about phasing out the use of live dogs for at least three years.

Another animal rights group, Animalearn, part of the American Anti-Vivisection Society, investigated the use of animals in vet schools two years ago. The group now advocates switching to alternative teaching models.

"It's great the university is ending the dog lab, but a lot of people care about other animals as well," Director Nicole Green said after learning of MU's plans to switch. "Society as a whole views pigs as food animals and might see it as an appropriate alternative, but we wouldn't see it that way."

Green said she would think surgeries on the shelter animals combined with MU's teaching hospital would provide enough experience. "That would be the better and most humane way to acquire skills."



Open Up: Software Analyzes Tongue for Health

Open up and say “ahhh.” Researchers at the University of Missouri have developed a system that merges a 5,000-year-old Chinese medical tradition with a modern medical technique. The coupling could serve as a pre-screening tool to help with preventive medicine.

For centuries, the Chinese have used a technique that checks the appearance of the tongue to gauge the overall health of the body, or *zheng*.

Doctoral student Ratchadaporn Kanawong and his colleagues modernized this approach by writing software that works with a camera to image the tongue and then analyze it. Like the ancient tradition, the modern system is designed to check the tongue's coating and color in order to find signs of hot or cold *zheng*.

“Hot and cold *zheng* doesn’t refer directly to body temperature,” said Dong Xu. “Rather, it refers to a suite of symptoms associated with the state of the body as a whole.”

For example, a red coating on the tongue indicates hot *zheng*, which could point to an immune problem. A white coating represents cold *zheng* and could indicate a hormonal problem.

The team tested the imaging software on 263 patients known to have gastritis and 48 healthy volunteers. The group with gastritis had previously been classified in the traditional way as having either of the two *zhengs*. This gave the researchers a baseline for the software. The software’s accuracy in determining whether patients had a hot versus a cold *zheng* -- that is a yellow versus a white tongue coating -- was 85.89 percent accurate when the whole tongue was analyzed and 84.68 percent accurate when the software examined only key features of the tongue.

The hope is that with more testing this software can be used in homes using a webcam or a smartphone app to monitor individual *zheng* for early signs of illness.

MISSOURIAN

MU conference explores the science, politics, economics of climate change

Thursday, June 7, 2012 | 8:44 p.m. CDT

BY Calder Cleavelin

COLUMBIA — A three day conference hosted at MU is taking a multidimensional look at how the global community can not only adapt to climate change but profit from the experience as well.

"Adapting to Climate Change: Gaining the Advantage" was organized by MU Extension, which dedicates itself to making university research relevant and accessible to the public.

Panelists from the fields of climate science, economics, agriculture, social science and public policy took seats to discuss how climate change might affect the health and vitality of the Missouri region, as well as the nation at large.

"It's one of those issues you have to get people engaged with," said Conne Burnham, public outreach panelist and evaluation development specialist with MU Extension. "If you can't mitigate it, you have to look at preparedness."

Other panels Thursday discussed potential policy changes the public can anticipate with climate change, as well as the economic opportunities brought about by mounting interest in climate and environmental issues.

Anthony Lupo, an MU atmospheric science professor and "Research Priorities" panelist, said a major component of the symposium is simply to encourage experts across multiple disciplines to coordinate their research efforts.

"Some of the problems that have been highlighted here is that people in the university are not talking to each other, just because there's an emphasis on independent success in research," Lupo said.

He called climate change response a "multifaceted issue that requires a multifaceted approach."

The symposium began Wednesday and ends with two keynote addresses Friday morning.

MISSOURIAN

Elderberry production growing in Missouri

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Terry Durham and other farmers and researchers are building up the elderberry industry. Durham is a partner in the River Hills Harvest Elderberry Producers, a cooperative that buys elderberries from farmers and processes them into juice, cordial and jelly.

BY Teresa Avila

COLUMBIA — The 37 acres of elderberries growing northeast of Hartsburg are no accident. Neither are the 11 acres growing about 10 miles north of Mexico, Mo.

And don't dismiss the small field growing at MU's Southwest Research Center in Mount Vernon, southwest of Springfield.

These three fields, and the people who cultivate them, are part of a burgeoning industry making elderberries a specialty crop in Missouri.

The largest elderberry farm in the country can be found in Hartsburg at Eridu Farms, where an annual elderberry festival will be held this weekend. Grower Terry Durham works with Deni Phillips and Rodger Lenhardt to manage the elderberry cooperative operation called River Hills Harvest Elderberry Producers.

Durham's confidence in the berries' possibilities has spread to people such as Gary Littrell, who began growing them five years ago with his brother, Terry Littrell, on their farm near Mexico.

A support team can be found in researchers such as Andy Thomas and Patrick Byers at the Southwest Research Center. Thomas has studied the cultivation of elderberries for 15 years and is a major player in organizing MU's elderberry symposium, scheduled for 2013.

"We are building a new commercial crop," Durham said. "It's Missouri's super-fruit. We owned it."

Tiny berry with big potential

The elder bush has long been found in ditches and along streams in Europe and eastern and midwestern North America. It blooms in large bunches of small, white flowers, which become a dark purple, almost black, berry about a third the size of a blueberry.

The berries don't have much commercial success in their raw form. More commonly, the berries are used to make sweet pies, jellies, wines and juices. They can also be used medicinally, made into pills, syrups and lozenges.

Elderberries are part of the area's cultural memory, Durham said. People can recall a childhood that included gathering wild elderberries for homemade pies and jellies, Durham said.

Elderberries also have a history in health care. Durham referenced the Greek physician Hippocrates, who called the elder plant his medicine chest.

The berry is reputed to be useful in treating a long list of ailments, including colds, rheumatism, sore throats and sinus congestion, Durham said. It's high in vitamins A and C and is a good source of calcium and iron, published studies have shown.

Durham and Littrell are willing to back up thousands of years' worth of history with their own experiences.

"I drink the berry juice daily, and you really see the benefits," Littrell said. "I just don't get sick. That's all there is to it."

However, scientific evidence for these claims would be required, Durham said.

That's why researchers are working to discover the science behind the berry's healthfulness.

MU's Center for Botanical Interaction Studies in Columbia is researching elderberries grown in Thomas' field at the Southwest Research Center. The focus is on the berry's potential in combating cancer, stroke and infectious diseases such as E. coli, Thomas said.

The elderberry's potential health benefits are part of the reason Durham is confident in the demand for elderberry products and in getting involved in the industry.

Filling a niche

Traditionally, 95 percent of the U.S. elderberry market has been imported from Europe. For people like Durham and Littrell, it looked like an empty niche that could be filled by American farmers.

"That intrigued me," Littrell said. "Being a farmer, I always wanted to have something that was in demand."

The idea of mass-producing elderberries came to Missouri thanks to John Brewer of Wichita, Kan., Thomas said. He began selling high-quality elderberry wine about 15 years ago, but he had to pick his berries from bushes growing along the railroad because he had no commercial growers nearby, Thomas said.

Thomas and Byers decided to look into the idea of a domestic elderberry for the Midwest.

"Over the years, this thing kind of evolved, and we started getting some grants," Thomas said. Durham got involved in 2005, pushing things even further along.

"He saw the writing on the wall and jumped all over it," Thomas said. "He's a very shrewd businessman and a very good farmer." Durham, Thomas and other growers and researchers worked to turn wild elder plants into something farmers could use.

North America already had domesticated plants from New York and Nova Scotia, but they didn't do as well in Missouri's climate.

"We knew we had really good native elderberries that grew all over here," Durham said. "They really hadn't been explored."

Thomas and Byers took about 68 selections of elder bushes and whittled them down to two varieties: the Bob Gordon and the Wyldewood. Research is still being done, but these varieties seem ideal for a large operation, according to the research.

It's common to have a bush or two growing in someone's backyard, but it's a different story when 37 acres of elderberry rows have to be cultivated and harvested, as is the case on Eridu Farms.

There's been plenty of experimentation, Durham said.

"What Terry is doing is still fairly risky because we don't have all the answers," Thomas said. "He's kind of out there on the fringe."

Thomas fulfills his job to help Missouri farmers by researching basic information such as how to properly prune elder bushes, deal with pests and ensure soil fertility.

A growing idea

These days, Durham is in the fields less and in the public sphere more. He hosts workshops on growing elderberries and has persuaded more than one farmer to give them a try.

"I've known Terry Durham for quite a few years and when he got involved, he started talking to me about it, and I got interested," Littrell said. "We bought our first elder plants from him."

Getting elderberries established is a long process. Currently, Littrell has one acre of elderberries in full production and uses the berries to make wine.

He anticipates high returns in the next few years and hopes to sell his wine in stores.

"I really am enjoying it," Littrell said. "It's something different than anything I've done before."

River Hills Harvest Elderberry Producers, as a cooperative operation, ensures that involved growers have a buyer for their product.

It's often difficult for elderberry farmers to process their berries on a large scale. It gets especially thorny when one considers that the elder stems, leaves and twigs can be toxic if ingested.

Farmers can avoid the liabilities by selling their berries to Durham, who turns them into juice, cordial and jelly. The farmers get one third of the revenue.

So far, the cooperative operation has 125 acres.

"There's no commercial sources, so the farmers actually have some control," Durham said. "If we stay organized and we market our stuff together, then we can maintain that price."

Durham envisions pods of three or four elderberry growers who share a de-stemmer, which can help double the crop's value by removing the berries completely from the stems. He's been working to make that happen by meeting with farmers in Missouri and states such as Texas, Arkansas, Iowa and Wisconsin and teaching them the basics of growing and processing elderberries.

"We plan by 2014 to have a multi-state approach," Durham said.

He also hopes to move into producing elderberry ice cream, yogurt and soft drinks.

Gathering places

Thanks to public attention and endorsements from such public figures as Dr. Oz, the demand for elderberries is growing. Durham has already sold all that he can produce next year.

The 2013 international elderberry symposium at MU, touted as the first such event, will centralize all available elderberry research in a volume of up to 50 scientific papers. There will also be an elderberry wine competition.

This weekend, Durham will host the third Elderberry Festival on his farm. Guests can enjoy music, food and drink and learn more about how to grow elderberries.

A 12-page guide, "Growing and Marketing Elderberries in Missouri," will debut at the festival.

As of Sunday, Durham said, more than 500 tickets to the event had been sold.