

Memorandum of Understanding to form Lever Press

This Memorandum of Understanding sets out respective roles of Amherst College Press, Michigan Publishing, and the Oberlin Group of libraries in collaborating to launch a publishing initiative known as Lever Press. The term is from September 1, 2015 through five years from the date the Parties agree that the Financial Threshold described in Section IV has been met.

This document encompasses the **Mission** of the Lever Press; the **Collaborators** in this initiative; the **Governance** structure; a description of the **Funding Process**; and **Miscellaneous** provisions for the administration of the agreement, including termination and resolution of disputes.

I. Mission

The mission of Lever Press is, in collaboration with the nation's leading liberal arts colleges, to provide scholars with an alternative pathway toward the development and publishing of high quality works of scholarship in the humanities, arts, and social sciences. The publications developed by Lever Press will be aligned with the mission and ethos of liberal arts colleges, made available immediately open-access without payment by authors, and will fully leverage digital technologies.

II. Collaborators

The Oberlin Group ("Oberlin Group") is a consortium of libraries in the top-ranked residential liberal arts colleges in the United States. Contributions from Oberlin Group members are the principal funding mechanism providing for the revenue necessary to cover publishing costs for Lever Press works. In addition, through the appointment of an Oversight Committee, pledging members of the Oberlin Group and other aligned institutions will provide ongoing strategic oversight of the initiative.

An alliance of the **Amherst College Press** ("Amherst") and **Michigan Publishing** ("Michigan") has been chosen by Oberlin Group to serve as the publishing collaborator for Lever Press. Amherst and Michigan will share responsibilities along the following broadly drawn lines:

Amherst will provide overall editorial leadership for Lever Press and will be responsible for setting in place an editorial workflow linking acquisition, rigorous peer review, developmental editing, and copyediting. Amherst will maintain the accessible web presence for Lever Press; have principal responsibility for marketing and awareness of

Lever Press and its titles; administer contractual relationships with, and honoraria payments to, authors; identify and manage the work of peer reviewers.

Michigan will collaborate in developing the editorial program and selecting titles, will provide production services for Lever Press, and will be responsible for developing final edited texts and other file formats submitted by authors into digitally published works. This means works accessible on the World Wide Web, as well as downloadable in a variety of digital formats for use independent of the web. Michigan also will be responsible for creating a pathway for the generation of printed versions of the books published by Lever Press. It is understood that the printed versions of digital works will necessarily represent an approximation of a fully realized digital work. Michigan also will be responsible for processing pledges from colleges and financial reporting on their use, although the responsibility for recruiting such pledges will be that of the Oberlin Group

III. Governance

The **Oversight Committee** will be composed of twelve librarians or senior administrators from among pledging members, as well as one representative from Amherst and one from Michigan. Members will be nominated by pledging institutions. The Oversight Committee has the responsibility for overall strategic guidance of the Lever Press. The Oversight Committee will regularly receive reports from the editorial leadership of Lever Press.

The **Editorial Board** will be responsible for overseeing the acquisition, review, and development process through which individual titles have progressed, and to assure by its imprimatur both the scholarly quality of a work and its alignment with the editorial program of Lever Press. The Editorial Board will be composed of eight accomplished senior faculty members aligned with the vision of the Lever Press. In addition, the chair of the Oversight Committee will hold an ex officio position on the Editorial Board as will one representative from Amherst and one from Michigan. The board will meet as needed based on the burden of work.

IV. Funding Process

Prior to meeting the Financial Threshold (see below), Oberlin Group, Amherst, and Michigan will work together to create and launch a campaign appeal through which to engage the commitments of Oberlin Group libraries and institutions, as well as institutions beyond the membership of Oberlin Group. Before it starts publishing work, Lever Press will require commitments to total at least \$500,000, a “Financial Threshold” sufficient to maintain initial operations. When the Financial Threshold is met, Amherst and Michigan will implement the Amherst/Michigan Statement of Work as described in Attachment A.

While the measure of its output will be in terms of the number of titles published by Lever Press and the impact these titles have, a linear per-title funding scheme will not provide Amherst and Michigan with adequate initial resources to build a web presence, develop outreach materials, advocate for the Press, and acquire authors. Accordingly, the funds made available through Oberlin Group commitments will be disbursed to Amherst and Michigan in regular increments throughout the five-year period after meeting the Financial Threshold, and will not be paid on a per-title basis.

Commitments to Lever Press will be collected on an annual basis by Michigan. Each payment of funds will then be divided between Amherst and Michigan as follows:

- Around 55% will be transferred to the Amherst College Press to cover the costs of its work, described in Attachment A, for Lever Press.
- Around 45% will be retained by Michigan Publishing to cover the costs of its work, described in Attachment A, for Lever Press. This funding will, in part, cover the role of a half-time Program Manager for Lever Press.

While its funding model will not depend on earned revenue, Lever Press will sell print and premium digital versions of its works where possible. Sales and licensing revenue will be divided 50:50 between the collective of pledging institutions and the Amherst/Michigan partnership. The Amherst/Michigan partnership will divide its portion of revenue equally to support investments in their publishing infrastructure.

V. Miscellaneous

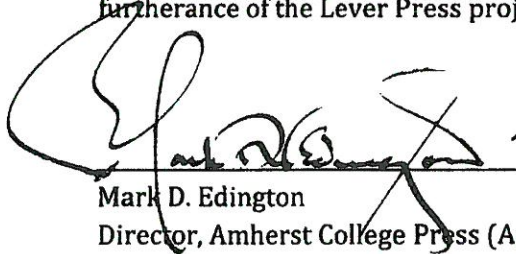
Amendment: This Agreement may be renewed or amended upon written consent of the parties.

Voluntary Termination: Any Party may voluntarily terminate its participation in this Agreement with six (6) months' written notice to the other Parties. In the case of voluntary termination, the terminating Party will reasonably cooperate with the other Parties to mitigate disruption of Lever Press activities. The terminating Party shall transfer all assets related to the activities (e.g., assignment of contracts, transfer of title) prior to the termination date. A terminating Party shall remit to the appropriate other Parties any remaining funds associated with this Agreement.

Termination for Breach: Any Party may terminate its participation in this Agreement following a material breach by another Party that is not cured within thirty (30) days of written notice of the breach.

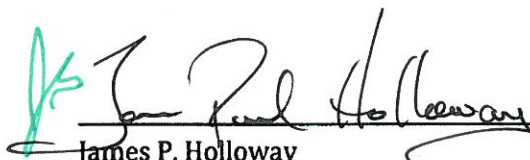
Resolution of Disputes: The Parties agree to make good faith and deliberate efforts to resolve disputes informally and amicably.

Confidentiality: Sensitive or proprietary data may be shared between the Parties for the purpose of advancing the Lever Press project. When any Party indicates verbally or in writing that information is confidential, the Parties agree not to share it with others without written permission and to not use such information for any other purpose than the furtherance of the Lever Press project.



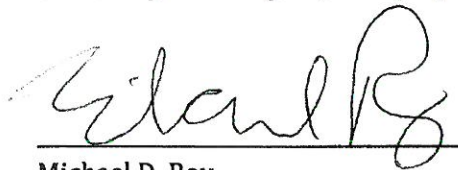
Mark D. Edington
Director, Amherst College Press (Amherst)

1.19.15.
Date



James P. Holloway
Vice Provost for Global and Engaged Education
University of Michigan (Michigan)

SEPT 8, 2015
Date



Michael D. Roy
Dean of the Library, Middlebury College
Chair, Lever Initiative Task Force (Oberlin Group)

SEP 2, 2015
Date

Attachment A: Amherst/Michigan Statement of Work

Amherst and Michigan will collaborate with the Oberlin Group to create Lever Press during a five-year period, initiated when the Financial Threshold is met. This Statement of Work includes sections on Vision, Governance, and Finances.

Vision

Lever Press is envisaged as a publisher of scholarly work supported by a consortium of academic libraries. Guided by an editorial board of distinguished senior faculty, and supported by the libraries of the nation's leading liberal arts colleges, Lever Press will seek to identify, publish, and support authors of path breaking scholarship in the humanities, the arts, and the social sciences.

Lever Press is distinguished by three commitments. It will be:

- **Aligned with the mission and ethos of liberal arts colleges.** The research libraries that are the core supporters of the work of Lever Press are situated in the top liberal arts colleges in the country. These colleges are places of excellence in teaching and research. Faculty in these institutions are frequently counted among the most influential researchers and authors in their fields, and their published work often shows the hallmarks of their accomplishment in conveying ideas to young minds of all ages.

In selecting titles for our program, Lever Press will look for works that offer path-breaking ideas and communicate them with clarity and creativity. Like the colleges supporting our mission, Lever Press will focus on works that deeply explore intellectual connections across lines of academic disciplines and divisions. Inspired by the close collaborations between faculty and undergraduate students that exist at liberal arts colleges, we are also committed to blurring the lines between research and teaching, producing publications that “teach what they know”— distinguished by the accessible way in which content is written as well as its delivery.

- **Platinum OA.** Lever Press is an open access press. The open access approach to publishing assures authors of the heightened access to their ideas and expression.

While a number of scholarly publishers are moving toward open access models, many of them depend on funds from the author. Lever Press is committed to a

“platinum OA model”—in which all the costs of acquiring, editing, developing, and producing the work are borne by library collaborators.

Platinum OA considers works with regard to scholarly merit and not the ability of an author (or an author’s institution) to subvent the cost of the specific author or work. But because Lever Press will take on all the costs of producing the work it selects (including costs such as indexing and permissions clearance usually borne by the author), Platinum OA means one thing more—that the work Lever Press produces is of the highest quality, and has been selected exactly because it is worth investing in.

- **Digitally-native.** While works may appear in print form, Lever Press approaches publication with a “digital-first” ethos. For authors, this will mean a rapid production timetable once final versions of works are approved by the editorial board. For libraries, it will mean immediate availability of emerging work, accompanied by rich cataloging records. And for researchers, it will mean access on a global scale to the best emerging scholarship.

Unconstrained by legacy publishing processes and leveraging the opportunities for reuse facilitated by an open access business model, Lever Press will welcome projects of digital scholarship not well served by scholarly conventions limited to print-only outcomes. Lever Press will work in partnership with an emerging community of scholars in the digital humanities who are linking together narrative analysis and datasets from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and using new tools for visualization and reader engagement.

Governance

Governance of the Lever Press is divided between the *Oversight Committee*, which takes strategic leadership of the initiative, and the *Editorial Board*, which takes responsibility for selecting individual titles. The work of recruiting and developing manuscripts is divided between staff at Amherst and Michigan, *Editorial Leadership*, who will select and work with *Series Editors* consisting of faculty selected from within the pledging institutions and beyond. Series Editors will function as acquisitions editors, taking responsibility for recruiting authors and titles in their area. Editorial Leadership will coordinate this effort and serve as developmental editors for each manuscript. Production and distribution of titles will be the responsibility of Michigan Publishing Services, guided by Editorial Leadership.

Financial Outline

Expense projection

Lever Press is committed to transparency and the estimated expenses below are broken down at an activity level for each title produced. “Regular” titles have the familiar characteristics of a printed book while “Innovation” titles include enriched digital components. The titles selected for publication will clearly vary in scope and complexity, but the publishing program will be managed so as to achieve a balance that approximates to the estimated costs shown, with the understanding that there will be financial adjustments between lines as true costs become apparent.

Year	Who?	Year					Notes	
		1	2	3	4	5		
Total titles/year		-	10	15	15	20		
Regular titles/year		-	8	12	11	16		
Innovation titles/year		-	2	3	4	4		
Book Costs						Per Title		
Series Editor Honoraria	ACP	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$500	Per regular title contracted
Reviewer Payments	ACP	\$0	\$8,000	\$12,000	\$12,000	\$16,000	\$400	2 reviewers per regular ms, 50% accepted
Editorial Board Travel	ACP	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000		
Project Mgmt: Editorial	ACP	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$500	
Project Mgmt: Production	MPS	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$500	
Developmental editing	ACP	\$0	\$64,000	\$96,000	\$96,000	\$128,000		\$20 pp x 320 pp/book
Copyediting	ACP	\$0	\$16,000	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$32,000		\$5 pp x 320 pp/book
Typesetting/ Markup	MPS	\$0	\$11,200	\$16,800	\$16,800	\$22,400		\$3.50 pp x 320 pp/book
Indexing	MPS	\$0	\$14,400	\$21,600	\$21,600	\$28,800		\$4.50 pp x 320 pp/book
Design	MPS	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$10,000		\$500/book
Outreach / Publicity	MPS	\$0	\$1,500	\$2,250	\$2,250	\$3,000		\$150/book incl. catalogs, leaflets, direct mail

Platform	MPS	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000		Flat rate (incls. hosting of innovative projects)
Extra Programming	MPS	\$0	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$5,000	Additional programming for innovation projects
Author Honoraria	ACP	\$0	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$1,000	
Permissions Allowance	ACP	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$10,000	\$500	Per book
Cost/book			\$17,610	\$17,077	\$17,410	\$16,810		
Program Travel	ACP/ MPS	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000		
Program Publicity/Events	ACP/ MPS	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000		E.g., author guide
Staff: Program Coordinator		\$40,000	\$40,800	\$41,600	\$42,500	\$43,400		
Total		\$65,000	\$221,900	\$307,750	\$308,650	\$389,600	\$1,292,900	
	ACP	\$7,500	\$121,500	\$180,500	\$178,000	\$237,000	\$724,500	
	MPS	\$57,500	\$100,400	\$127,250	\$130,650	\$152,600	\$568,400	

Revenue Projection

Lever Press will be funded primarily by contributions from member libraries – initially within the Oberlin Group, but potentially also from aligned institutions acceptable to the Oberlin Group but not part of the consortium. The fee structure outlined below was designed with two principles in mind:

- **Manageable level of annual commitment:** The four tiers reflect the large range of library collections budgets across the Oberlin Group, and acknowledge libraries’ different levels of ability to participate. Prospective members will be classified into one of four fee tiers, based on their library’s annual acquisitions budget. The maximum annual contribution is \$8,000.
- **Simple budgeting and accounting:** Rather than (re-)calculating each library’s annual commitment based on that year’s collection budget, or ramping up the contribution each year to reflect increased Lever Press production, project costs are distributed over the five years of the project, so that partners and Lever Press staff alike can plan for a known flat contribution each year for the five years of the project.

Tier	Collection budget	Annual Fee	Five-year Commitment	Total # of schools	Projected uptake	Projected annual revenue in each tier
1	<\$500K	\$2,000	\$10,000	10	4	\$ 8,000
2	\$500-\$750K	\$4,000	\$20,000	11	5	\$ 20,000
3	\$750K-\$1.5M	\$6,000	\$30,000	20	10	\$ 60,000
4	\$>1.5M	\$8,000	\$40,000	39	19	\$ 152,000
					Projected annual revenue	\$ 240,000
					Projected five-year revenue	\$ 1,200,000

NB: The discrepancy of nearly \$100,000 between the projected costs and projected revenue for the first five years of Lever Press acknowledges the intention that additional funds will be sought from other philanthropic and funding organizations.