

Making the Case for Lever Press

Academic libraries have a fundamental mission to make information freely available to everyone who seeks it.

Lever Press does just that. It subjects scholarship to rigorous peer review and editing, as per the standards of the Association of University Presses to which it belongs, but unlike most traditional academic publishers, Lever Press makes its publications freely available—with no charge to either readers or authors. It places scholarship produced in the public interest where everybody, everywhere, regardless of means, can access it for free on the internet.

Lever Press is a response to the for-profit model of scholarly publishing, which too often prevents libraries from fulfilling our mission to make information available. We academic institutions spend millions of dollars every year to support faculty producing research for the public good. We then give the fruits of that research to commercial publishers, without any compensation in return. Those publishers then lock the scholarship behind paywalls and charge us—the institutions, the authors, and the public for whom that scholarship is intended—millions more dollars to buy it back.

The result: most of the world lacks access to scholarship produced in the public interest. Even we in the academy can no longer afford to buy back the scholarship we give away to publishers: since 1986, the CPI has increased by around 150%; during that same period journal prices have increased by about 800%. This disproportionate increase in collection prices often forces libraries to cancel subscriptions in order to stretch their shrinking budgets.

In short, the current system of scholarly publishing is costly, inequitable, and unsustainable. It stands at odds with our libraries' and our institutions' mission.

We thus have an obligation to craft models of scholarly publishing that align with our values, models that both benefit those who need access to information and those who produce the research. Lever Press does both. It is committed to open access publishing, and to compensating authors, reviewers, and editorial board members for their work.

Some ask how a library struggling and/or unable to pay fees demanded by commercial publishers could possibly justify spending money on Lever Press. We ask, instead: How could a library unable to obtain what it needs from a system operating against its mission *not* reallocate some of its resources to support accessible, library-owned, and equitable ventures that align with its mission and obligations to its community?

– Lever Press Oversight Committee
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