

# Summary of Oversight Committee and Lever Press Operations Group meeting at Amherst College (January 25-26, 2016)

This summary is compiled from the two documents where we captured notes live at the meeting. These are:

- [25-26.1.16. Lever Press Launch Meeting Notes](#)
- [25-26.1.16 Tracking document for Kickoff Meeting](#)

## In attendance:

From the Pledging Institutions:

The Membership of the Oversight Committee (Andrew Ashton, Marta Brunner, Mark Christel, Terri Fishel, Bryn Geffert, Loretta Parham, Mike Roy, Peggy Seiden)

From the Amherst College Press:

Margy Avery  
Mark Edington

From Michigan Publishing:

Mary Francis  
Charles Watkinson  
Rebecca Welzenbach

Unable to attend:

Neil McElroy, Kevin Mulroy, Marci Sortor, Dalia Corkrum

## Working Lunch (1/25 12-1 p.m.)

Overview: This session consisted primarily of:

- Introductions and discussion of participants' engagement with and vision for the Lever Press
- Review of the history and current state of the project.
- Establishing the purpose of the meeting.

Decisions: None recorded

Action items: None recorded

## Session 1: Governance of the Lever Press (1/25 1-2:30 p.m.)

Overview: this session addressed logistical and administrative questions about how the Oversight Committee will function and set out a plan for the first work of this group.

### Decisions:

- Lever Press will be pronounced the American way (with a short 'e')
- The Amherst-Michigan partnership group will be referred to as the "Operations Group"
- A simple majority of 8 votes from the Oversight Committee is sufficient to make a decision.
- After discussion about whether anyone else wished to stand, LP moved that MR serve as chair of the OC; MB seconded. A vote was held and MR was unanimously elected for a one year term.
- The OC will have the following officer roles: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer. The Vice-Chair is not necessarily the Chair-elect. In year one, MR will be Chair, BG Vice-Chair, AA Secretary, and TF Treasurer
- The next in-person meeting of the Oversight Committee will take place at the Oberlin Group meeting, October 9-12, 2016, at Williams College.
- The OC will meet virtually on a monthly basis for the next 6 months. As the press gets fully launched, meetings could become less frequent in the future.
- In general, OC terms will be three years, but to start, we will have a mix of two and three year terms to ensure that all do not rotate off at once. Secretary will be responsible for tracking terms expiring and facilitating nominations and elections.
- Members can run for re-election with no limit to the number of allowable terms to serve.
- After much discussion, LP moved that Lever Press remain open to new pledging institutions from within the Oberlin Group or (as amended by BG) qualifying as "Basic Baccalaureate" institutions until July 1, 2016. We will then institute a moratorium on new membership for 18 months (until December 31, 2017). During the moratorium, OC will develop more thorough guidelines for potential new members in the future. TF seconded. Movement passed unanimously.
- Regardless of when they join, all pledging institutions should contribute consistently and equitably to the initiative (that is, all within a certain tier should pay the same total amount). Therefore, pledging institutions joining between now and July 2016 will be invoiced for their first pledge contribution immediately upon joining, and should expect to receive a second invoice when all schools make their second payment in January 2017.

### Action items:

- **The first tasks of the OC are:**
  - **Select an Editorial Board**
  - **Communicate with pledging institutions**
  - **Consider the long-term strategy for the press**
  - **Ensure ongoing communication/alignment with Ops group.**

- **By January 31, 2016, RW will establish a schedule for virtual meetings of the Oversight Committee (done)**
- **By 2/29/16, OC members should email MR to indicate whether they would prefer a 2 or 3 year term.**
- **By June 30, 2016, MR to convene an OC working group to develop membership criteria for the future**
- **The [Lever Press Governance statement](#) will be updated to reflect all decisions made in this session, and then this summary will be added to the [leverpress.org](http://leverpress.org) website for clarity and transparency.**

## Session 2: Forming the Editorial Board (1/25 2:40-4:00 p.m.)

Overview: This session established a plan for how the OC will recruit and establish the inaugural Editorial Board of the Lever press

### Decisions:

- The faculty recruited to serve should reflect a mix of qualities: we need some senior scholars who bring prestige and gravitas. We need some who are committed to new modes of scholarship. We are committed to recruiting a board that is diverse in its representation of race, gender, and disciplinary focus, and background. While editorial boards typically include tenured faculty only, in the changing academic environment, the most interesting and knowledgeable scholars may not (may never be!) tenured. It is unlikely that any single member will represent all qualities; the goal is to represent a strong range.
- OC will identify desired faculty from the nominees, but then should enlist the support of Provost/Dean at the person's institution to extend the formal invitation, signalling support from the institution.
- Editorial Board to serve 3 year terms, renewable annually. After the initial period, members will be invited to serve 3 and 4 year terms to ensure there is a staggered approach. Meetings will happen virtually. Chair of the Oversight Committee would be voting ex officio

### Action Items:

- **By 1/31/ 2016, MA and MF will develop a "[job description](#)" outlining what we'll expect of editorial board members (done)**
- **By 1/31/ 2016, OC will issue another invitation to all pledging institutions to submit nominees for ed. board, to close by mid-February (done, nominations to close 2/26)**
- **By 2/29/26 The OC will winnow the list to 15 folks to whom extend an invitation**
- **By [XX/XX/XX] The OC will draft an invitation letter for Provosts to distribute on behalf of Lever Press**
- **By [XX/XX/XX] OC will contact Provost or equivalent at those institutions to seek their help in inviting/recruiting the faculty.**

- **By 2/29/16 LP will bring to the OC meeting a proposal for a Lever Press advisory board of supporters (This action item postponed in order to concentrate on Editorial Board selection)**

## Session 3: Beginning an Editorial Program (1/25 4:20-5:45 p.m.)

Overview: This session opened a discussion about how our three commitments (Platinum OA, digitally native, and aligned with the mission and ethos of liberal arts colleges) and our three hypotheses about what it means to align with the ethos of the liberal arts college (interdisciplinary, social engagement, research and teaching blurred), guide us toward a distinctive editorial program.

Decisions:

- Although *editorial board members* will be recruited from pledging institutions, it is key to the credibility of the press that we not restrict *authors* to particularly pledging institutions or LACs. We are open to authors from anywhere.
- Although quick publishing timelines are a clear desideratum, until we have solid workflows and practices in place, we should not promise a specific abbreviated timeline (e.g. 3 months, 6 months, etc.) to authors. We don't know yet how much labor these titles will require.
- Remaining open to very high quality student work/writing *in close collaboration/under the oversight of faculty--and crediting the students as contributors/authors--* is one way that Lever Press can be distinctive
- The Association for the Advancement of Liberal Arts Colleges (that was Mellon 23) would be a rich source of series editors says PS and MR.
- These works will be high quality. But it is not our responsibility for, nor can we make any promises, about how T&P committees will evaluate these works.
- Regional meetings where faculty from nearby pledging institutions could meet with Lever Press Outreach could be a good way to start recruiting content/authors. To start, Macalester (via TF) and Morehouse & Spelman (via LP) will host visits in spring 2016.

**Action Items:**

- **By 2/29/16, RW to set up a structure in Google Drive for organizing and planning more regional hub meetings (in fact, ME and MA have started on this)**
- **MF and MA to approach authors and develop ideas, in parallel with our work of getting the Editorial Board off the ground (i.e., Spring 2016)**

## Dinner

Overview: Dinner was largely social, though discussion of the press abounded.

Decisions: None recorded

**Action Items: None recorded**

## Session IV: Planning the “chief vision officers” meeting (January 26 9-10:30 a.m.)

Overview: CW, ME, and MR have worked with consultant Robert Weisbuch and Neal Abraham from Five Colleges to pitch a proposal to the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation. This grant, if funded, would support a meeting (probably in New York City in Spring 2016) of top thought leaders focused on the evolving liberal arts college. These folks may or may not all be currently associated with pledging institutions (some may be retired, for example), though some may be. The grant proposal as submitted is available here: [\[LINK\]](#)

### Decisions:

- Ideally the meeting will be held between May and mid-June 2016 (May is difficult with graduations, but after mid-June folks are scattered for the summer)
- NYC is the ideal location, but need to identify a space. Possibilities: Metro Library consortium, Century Club, Data and Society Research Institute, NYPL?
- The meeting should be guided by a facilitator who can articulate the goals of the meeting and share the right information in advance to start the conversation
- The “Why’s” of this meeting:
  - To get their input on our alignment with the mission of liberal arts colleges
  - To get their endorsement for the Lever Press, and their support as champions and ambassadors
  - Having a space to hear and practice fielding “the hard questions.”
  - Articulate the unique value add of Lever, what sets us apart from other UPs/not-for-profit publishers
  - To clarify what is happening with digital scholarship on campuses and how Lever can help/support
  - To get the point of view of teacher/scholars as well as librarians
  - To understand scholarly communications issues as they play out specifically at liberal arts colleges
  - Getting these folks on board as recruiters of pledging institutions is no longer \*as urgent\* as we initially imagined
- Lots of questions remain:
  - Who to invite--pull together suggestions into a long list, and invite feedback (to what extent should representation from the 40 pledging institutions happen?)
  - How to choreograph and structure the meeting
  - What should the final outcome of the event be? A report? Proceedings? Video testimonials for the Lever Press website?
- Conversation began to drift towards marketing/publicity plan for all of Lever Press, and what form that might take

### Action Items:

- **RW to Assemble the the full list of potential invitees and circulate to oversight committee (done by Mark and Charles)**

- **Oversight Committee to consider and prioritize the list**
- **Invites to go out in February**
- **For general outreach/promotion/publicity: Develop calendar of learned society meetings, chart out priority targets and deadlines**

## Session V: Lever's Digital Presence

Overview: Kelcy Shepherd--digital programs, Aaron Coburn--programmer, David Hamilton--CIO, and Bethany Seeger--digital programs, all staff of Amherst College Library, joined us to advise on a plan for supporting the Lever Press's digital presence, in particular, transforming the campaign website to the true front door of a press, and how that site should be hosted and maintained.

### Decisions:

- ME reintroduced the current brochure website, a Wordpress site hosted on a personal dreamhost account. We need to transition to a site that achieves the following:
  - a functioning press
  - distributed governance
  - social media message
- The site will need to be pretty radically re-designed/re-built to accommodate a catalog of work, when that exists. In the meantime, focus on updating the current site and begin to make plans/lay groundwork for a more substantial re-build a year or so out. For now, focus on improving the information architecture--which information is prioritized--rather than. Desired functions in site 1.5 are:
  - a path for authors
  - a clear sense of supporting institutions
  - more obvious fresh/new content
- Dave Hamilton recommended transitioning away from the personal Dreamhost account to an Amherst-managed Amazon Web Services space
- Examples to look at:
  - Open Humanities Press
  - Luminos
  - Springer

### Action Items:

- **MF and ME to clarify the existing leverpress.org WordPress site, with (a) get authors easily to the information they need; (b) convey credibility by clearly communicating LP's association with institutions and individuals; (c) refreshed content via news and tweets**
- **UX expert at Amherst to assess information architecture and recommend revisions; work with Mariel to determine if social media widgets can be embedded in the current theme**
- **Michigan will drive conversations about development of Hydra/Fedora platform (i.e., how Lever Press publications will look)**
- **To get away from personal Dreamhost hosting, under an Amherst owned account, stand up a new virtual machine within the Amazon Web Services**

## Session VI: Working Lunch, Web Conference with other OC members

Overview: This session was mainly an opportunity to touch base with all Oversight Committee members, including those who could not attend the meeting in person. The discussion consisted largely of recapping the earlier sessions of the meeting.

Decisions: No new decisions recorded other than the creation of the action items noted below.

### **Action Items:**

- **RW will create a contact list of OC members, pledging institutions, etc. and circulate to the Oversight Committee**
- **Follow-up report on this meeting to be circulated among Oversight Committee and (pledging institutions)**
- **MR to work on agenda for February Oversight Committee meeting**