Monash University seeks to improve the human condition by advancing knowledge and fostering creativity

Monash University Statement of Purpose
NUMBERS MATTER. As we are often told, numbers in context matter even more.

Let me give several examples relevant to academic publishing. In 2013, Harvard University Publishing celebrates its centenary. According to its own centennial webpage, Harvard has released ‘over 10,000 new books... over the past 100 years’. Many of them are, of course, outstanding, challenging and definitive texts.

For its part, the iconic Oxford University Press emphasises its publishing pedigree in every one of its multilingual websites and underlines its global ambit: OUP has ‘more than 6,000 employees in over 100 countries worldwide’ and publishes ‘more than 6,000 titles’ annually. Conversely, MIT Press (which celebrated its half-century last year) makes a different claim for international impact: it asserts that it sells ‘a higher proportion of [its] products outside the United States than any other US university press’. Finally, Yale University Press – which is renowned for its art-historical list, is one of the most innovative digital publishers in the university environment. For example, last year it launched a Yale Book of Quotations ‘app’ and, this (northern) spring, inaugurated the fully digitised and freely accessible Posen Online Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization.

Why are these examples relevant to Monash University Publishing? There are three reasons. The first is that, as in the above examples, this University’s publishing house seeks to emulate the best creative traditions of editing and academic publishing – both inside and outside the institution. The second is that Monash has adopted a unique, hybrid, publishing model that facilitates the fullest embrace of both traditional and ground-breaking online formats. The third is that, like its forebears, Monash University Publishing explicitly addresses a global audience and – despite its relative youth – aims to achieve a serious level of external impact.

Monash University Publishing is extremely well-led and is served by editorial committees and publishing staff of the highest calibre. In just its third year it is making a name for itself – and for its contributors – far greater than raw numbers and its local context would suggest. Its story has begun and a wonderful passage of publishing is in play.

Professor Adam Shoemaker
Chair, Advisory Committee
Monash University Publishing
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The benefits of transforming Monash University’s publishing arm from an e-press, set up to publish journals, to Monash University Publishing, a book publisher that also publishes journals, became strongly apparent in 2012, the new press’s first full year of operation.

This was a very successful year for the press, on almost all fronts.

It published a number of major works of scholarship, with some being received better than we could have hoped. The press as a whole made a very positive impact, especially in the Australian cultural and intellectual landscape. We gained widespread exposure and made considerable progress towards establishing our brand in the minds of those for whom we would most like it to be established, not only through the obtaining of reviews but through broadsheet and journal articles referencing the press itself.

We achieved a very high level of general productivity, our team of 3.8 FTE staff bringing to the world twenty-four titles (inclusive of journals). Unusually for works from presses with an ‘electronic’ heritage, systems and level of output, these titles were individually designed inside and out to a professional or ‘trade’ finish, distributed into bookstores around the world, and accrued royalties for their authors: publishing.monash.edu/books/index.html

The innovative nature of the press’s ‘hybrid’ publishing model was implicitly recognised in the appointment of myself, with the Chair of the Australian Publishers’ Association, as the two publisher members of the Book Industry Collaborative Council, set up by the Federal Government to advise it on policy in relation to this industry.

The press continued to invest in highly sophisticated but low-cost electronic publishing systems, most notably the upStage web asset statistics measurement system, and extended our collaboration in this area with the Australian National University and its E Press, initiated via a Memorandum of Understanding in 2009.

Going live in October, upStage recorded almost 7000 individual chapter downloads for Monash University Publishing’s open-access titles before the end of the year.

Editorial Boards, operating out of University faculties and research institutes, monitored standards of quality and helped to bring to fruition publishing projects of early career researchers and conference organisers, as well as more established Monash scholars, strengthening a culture amongst staff of active involvement with publishing.

Editorial Boards in Art, Design and Architecture, Arts, Education, and the Monash Asia Institute, were in 2012 joined by a new Social Informatics Board, based primarily in the School of Information Technology.

With Warwick University the press rebranded Reinvention as an international journal of undergraduate research, co-published by our two universities, and began
a conversation regarding more extensive publishing cooperation.

And in financial terms, Monash University Publishing was able to increase revenue from book publishing sufficient to offset the loss of revenue ensuing from our having ended our publishing relationship with most of our journals in 2011. Even though journal publishing is as a rule more financially profitable than book publishing, in 2012 the press achieved its highest revenues on record, in part through moving into print-management and other services.

While total expenses for the press increased by 14.88%, and the overall financial impact of the press on the Monash budget increased by 7.23%, this increase would have been reversed were it not for a 163.43% growth in central support overheads payments made back to the University. The rate of increase of total revenue (52.37%), vastly outstripping percentage growth in total costs, clearly indicates that the overall financial direction of the press is towards greater self-sufficiency.

This financial performance was especially pleasing given the particular challenges the team faced: a very uncertain publishing landscape and well-documented challenges facing the retail sector generally and book publishers and sellers in particular; and for this year only the press had to endure a three- and in some cases four-month period without income from distributors, who pay on this schedule after initial sales are made.

The role of the press as a supporter of the broader goals and ambitions of the University means that some of its tasks, such as providing assistance and advice on publishing and printing to members of the University community, and publishing some works of a highly specialised, non-commercial nature, will impact on its ability to become totally self sufficient.

Nevertheless the team will continue to seek ways to reduce the level of support required. Monash University Publishing, moreover, increased the University’s 2012 Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) funding return through the publication of seven works by Monash authors, and gained exposure for the University, through broadsheet and other reviews, which would equate in dollar terms with hundreds of thousands spent on advertising.

The press’s confidence in the continuing relevance and effectiveness of its charter and hybrid business model remains strong. There is a growing awareness of and interest in open-access publishing, as evidenced by recent policy changes by the ARC and NHMRC, and increasing evidence that this can be combined with financial success. We know that the task of developing and disseminating a quality list is an especially important one in our age of proliferating information. And we know that this age also affords many new opportunities for profitably expanding the contribution the press can make to its University and to readers, scholars and students around the world. These are opportunities the press looks forward to exploring and embracing.

Dr Nathan Hollier
Director, Monash University Publishing
Monash University Publishing has a hybrid business model, designed to maximise both visibility and reach as well as cultural and intellectual impact, that combines professional distribution into the retail book trade around the world with open-access electronic publication. The press actively commissions publications from authors around the world but works also with Editorial Boards in Monash faculties and research institutes to select new works, ensure that the press’s rigorous requirements in relation to intellectual quality and peer-review are upheld, and strengthen a culture of publishing, within the University.

In 2012 the press also continued as publisher of two important journals: History Australia, edited by Penny Russell and Richard White, and Monash Bioethics Review, edited by Justin Oakley and Michael Selgelid.

A number of Monash University Publishing titles helped to strengthen the press’s reputation in 2012.

In February Galuh Wandita, Head of the International Centre for Transitional Justice in Indonesia and Timor-Leste, launched Helene Van Klinken’s Making them Indonesians: Child Transfers out of East Timor, at the Monash Caulfield Campus.

This work initiated the Monash Asia Series, building on and incorporating the highly regarded publishing program of the Monash Asia Institute.

Van Klinken was interviewed regarding her book on the ABC’s World Today and Connect Asia radio programs. She and her book were the subjects of a 5 March 2012 article by Lindsay Murdoch published in The Age, Sydney Morning Herald, Canberra Times, Advertiser and Courier Mail. This book was also reviewed positively in the April Australian Book Review and in The Jakarta Globe, and formed the basis of a Radio National program that led to Van Klinken taking part in other radio programs in Holland, Indonesia and East Timor.

In March Darrell Lewis’s A Wild History: Life and Death on the Victoria River Frontier was launched by Professor Tom Griffiths at the National Museum in Canberra. In a double-page review for The Australian, Nicholas Rothwell endorsed Griffiths’ assessment of this work as ‘a gift to the nation and the region’.

Towards the end of the year Rothwell nominated A Wild History as his ‘best book of the year’. It was Stephen Carroll’s ‘pick of the week’ in The Age, and received glowing reviews in, amongst other places, the Katherine Times, the Courier Mail, and Australian Book Review.

Monash Professor Peter Fitzpatrick’s The Two Frank Thrings was launched in August at the Melbourne Arts
A Wild History: Life and Death on the Victoria River Frontier, Darrell Lewis

‘[A] triumph of publishing: the recuperation of a well-buried past’ (Nicholas Rothwell in The Australian, naming A Wild History as his ‘book of the year’)

‘A story with which every Australian should become familiar’ (Professor Henry Reynolds)

‘An extraordinary inversion of the Australian frontier with which we think we are familiar – and a brilliant piece of mythbusting’ (Professor Tom Griffiths)

The Two Frank Thdings, Peter Fitzpatrick


‘Few books gave me more pleasure this year than Peter Fitzpatrick’s The Two Frank Thdings, not because of any particular veneration for either Frank, but because it is a superbly executed biographical account’ (Brian McFarlane, Australian Book Review)

The China Breakthrough: Whitlam in the Middle Kingdom, 1971, Billy Griffiths

‘One of the best researched and most readable Australian books this year’ (Troy Bramston, The Australian)

Race and the Modern Exotic: Three ‘Australian’ Women on Global Display, Angela Woollacott

‘... these biographies are immaculately researched, stand as exemplary models of biography in context, and complicate existing understandings about race, gender, and popular culture. And best of all, the style is engaging and highly readable – I couldn’t put the book down.’

Richard Waterhouse, Biography (US), Spring 2012

A Pedagogy of Place: Outdoor Education for a Changing World, Brian Wattoch and Mike Brown

‘A Pedagogy of Place ... has global relevance and we forecast that the book will find a place in most higher education libraries.’

Alan Hockley & Barbara Humberstone, Managing Leisure (UK), Feb 2012

Smashed! The Many Meanings of Intoxication and Drunkenness, Peter Kelly, Jenny Advocat, Lyn Harrison and Christopher Hickey

‘This important study sheds new light on the societal tensions that shape the many meanings of intoxication and drunkenness. It is a must read for scholars, medical experts, policy makers, and media personnel engaged in discussion about alcohol.’

Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries (US), April 2012

Centre by Graeme Blundell.

This event, and the book, were the subject of an Age newspaper Good Weekend feature article. Fitzpatrick was interviewed on 3AW Melbourne with Philip Brady, the Gay News Network, Phillip Adams’ Late Night Live, and Radio 774 Melbourne.

Reviews, universally positive, appeared in The Age and Sydney Morning Herald, WA Today, The Canberra Times and the Brisbane Times. Brian McFarlane identified this as his book of the year in The Age, while Ian Britain in Australian Book Review offered, alongside his fulsome praise for the book: ‘Altogether, it is an auspicious hardback debut for that relatively new kid on the scholarly publishing block, Monash University Publishing’.

In November Billy Griffiths’ The China Breakthrough: Whitlam in the Middle Kingdom, 1971, was launched at Gleebooks in Sydney by Professor James Curran.

Griffiths discussed his book on Radio National Late Night Live with Phillip Adams, The Conversation Hour with Jon Faine on 774 Melbourne, Radio National Newcastle with Jill Emerson, and Radio National’s Counterpoint with Amanda Vansone. He was quoted extensively in a full-page Australian article by Rowan Callick. In that same newspaper Troy Bramston labelled this ‘One of the best researched and readable Australian books this year’. And Tom Switzer, of the United States Studies Centre, wrote for The Age, the Sydney Morning Herald and the West Australian Today: ‘If I were to suggest a short, readable introduction to Sino-Australian relations, this book would probably top the list. It is written exceptionally well, with a concision and elegance rare in writing about diplomatic history.’
TOP SELLING TITLES OF 2012
By numbers sold and date of publication

A Wild History | March 2012
1359

The Two Frank Thrings | August 2012
787

Smashed! The Many Meanings of Intoxication and Drunkeness | January 2012
470

Peace with Justice | August 2012
466

Pedagogy of Place | January 2012
325

The China Breakthrough | November 2012
272