Collaboration is king. It’s a value, a benefit, an answer to limited resources, a carrot on a stick, or, if it doesn’t go well, sometimes it’s just the stick. Librarians in particular value collaboration, and naturally so. Libraries are in the sharing business, and some of their most important infrastructure (interlibrary lending, cataloging) depends upon cooperative, cross-institutional work. In my library’s recent strategic planning efforts, our brainstorming sessions frequently brought forth numerous calls for collaboration (sometimes without a clear objective — but that’s what brainstorming is for).

University presses provide an interesting counterpoint. Presses do form business partnerships and collaborate in professional ways through the Association of American University Presses. But in general they understand each other as potential competitors for sales and manuscripts, not as resource sharers. In spring 2007 the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation announced a call for proposals to support collaboratively-based university press publishing for first time authors in underserved fields. That call ultimately yielded four very interesting collaborative publication efforts involving over a dozen presses, focused in the fields of Slavic Studies, American Literatures, South Asian Studies, and Ethnomusicology (see http://www.aaupnet.org/news/press/mellon12008.html). One story circulating, perhaps apocryphal, has it that the first reaction among many in the community involved collective head-scratching: Collaborate? What do you mean? True or not, it’s a useful reminder that both partners need to understand each other as potential competitors and understand their approach.

In the essays that follow, Raym Crow (SPARC) outlines a new SPARC guide, Campus-based Publishing Partnerships: A Guide to Critical Issues, that provides readers with some practical questions to ask when exploring new library-publisher partnerships. Crow points out that both partners need to understand and share the risks and rewards of collaboration, and that the distinct business cultures, missions, and market relationships will inflect how these factors are perceived and lived. The full SPARC guide includes more case studies of some of the projects discussed in this issue.

Catherine Mitchell (California Digital Library) and Laura Cerruti (University of California Press) discuss the history of collaboration between two organizations, moving from experimental projects to a more formalized strategy based on deep research. As they explain, a clearly articulated set of needs doesn’t make it simple to define a new publishing services partnership. But they also report on their initial pilot efforts and the strategy underlying their approach.

Monica McCormick (New York University Library), alone among our contributors, can refer to both the press and library in the first person. As Digital Scholarly Program Officer she reports to both the press director and the dean of libraries and functions as a collaboration hub in a very decentralized environment. With a background in both publishing and libraries, McCormick is in a position to bridge cultural gaps while remaining sympathetic to the core values of her colleagues.

Terry Ehling (Cornell University Library) and Erich Staib (Duke University Press) detail a partnership formed across organizational and institutional boundaries to support Project Euclid, an already established journal aggregation. Their discussion points to some of the distinct benefits that a business partnership can bring to a market-oriented library-based publishing program, and highlights the resource challenges facing new publishing services.

Sylvia Miller (University of North Carolina) writes about a multi-party collaboration, Publishing the Long Civil Rights Project. Funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, this fascinating program brings together a university press, university library, and two different research centers, one based in law and the other in history. The effort is potentially quite challenging logistically, but the common focus on an emerging area of research promises to create unique types of scholarship.

Patrick Alexander (Penn State University Press), my co-editor and colleague, writes about the unique assets — both tangible and intangible — that university presses can bring to a partnership with a library, and which the press should emphasize to its host university. Working together, he suggests, can enable both organizations to leverage not only their expertise, but their brands to help drive users to original scholarly content and to collections.

Patrick’s essay developed in part through work we have undertaken together at Penn State, where we share responsibilities as co-directors of the Office of Digital Scholarly Publishing, a joint effort of the University Libraries and Penn State Press. As at NYU and other universities, the press reports up to the library, but a reporting line is not a collaboration. Some of the groundwork for our partnership was laid by our predecessors, our dean, and the press director. Indeed, several publications detailed projects with fast approaching deadlines were waiting for us when we joined Penn State, about two years ago. Implementing these projects, which included an open-access monograph series, journal back files, a reprint publication series, and a conference proceedings publication service, presented a crucible in which cultural, business, and process distinctions reared their head. The collaborative projects — which required resource commitments from both the press and the library — gave us as newcomers a different perspective with which to assess our base organizations, including the strengths, interests, and capacities of our staff and colleagues. It also allowed us to quickly try out theories about the collaboration and the problems it could solve, continued on page 14
both on campus and more widely.

We have both been thinking critically about how to move the collaboration further down in our organizations via other projects, not necessarily product oriented, that we couldn’t ordinarily undertake alone. Cross-marketing each other and our content is one possibility. Involving the press in program assessments of the library’s services to campus might be another, especially as the library begins exploring larger-scale digital services to the campus. But we have both tried to think carefully about what assets we have to bring to the table. As a short counterpoint to Patrick’s essay, I will respond briefly with three library assets, which are discussed in various ways throughout the other essays in this issue.

Collections
Why did Google knock on the library’s door? To gain access to millions of books. As their proposed settlement with the Authors Guild and the American Association of Publishers shows, they (and their plaintiffs) stand to make a tidy sum by aggregating and licensing access to that content back to libraries and individuals. This is a great reminder about the value of the collections libraries have amassed. Fortunately, Google doesn’t have rights to it all, and library special collections can be mined not only for digitization and online presentation, but also as a source for original scholarship and publications in a variety of forms. The Long Civil Rights Project presents one such case where this will be crucial.

Connections
The librarian’s focus on service brings them into closer contact with researchers at early stages of a project. Their understanding of their client’s preferences and scholarly practices can help the press understand their authors and their work cultures and services. For one thing, age doesn’t define our relationship to technology and change: attitude and aptitude do. Many of today’s students will be as conservative and hesitant as many of today’s faculty. Instead, I hope that in five years we will have normalized the range of activities that fall under the rubric “scholarly communications” and begin to think of them as ingrained in our everyday services.

Michael Furlough

BORN & LIVED: Columbia, SC.

EARLY LIFE: Grew up in Myrtle Beach, SC. Spent high school selling LPs and cassettes. Attended University of South Carolina and hung out with the wrong crowd. Went to grad school at the University of Virginia, joined an even worse crowd. Began working at UVA Library and ended up on the straight and narrow.

FAMILY: Married to Ellie Goodman. Two cats.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I am really a humanist by training and joined the library community because it allowed me to explore the way that knowledge is created in many different fields. At UVA Library I got to experience the earliest waves of digital services (including publishing services) in libraries, and that has colored my whole professional life. Currently I am serving on ACLS’s Scholarly Communications Committee, and I’ve been active in DLF and Edudcuse as well.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE: Guitar, recently ukulele, previously the presidential election.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Magazines and newspapers.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Questionnaires.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I hope that in five years we can stop focusing on generational differences, especially as they relate to library work cultures and services. For one thing, age doesn’t define our relationship to technology and change: attitude and aptitude do. Many of today’s students will be as conservative and hesitant as many of today’s faculty. Instead, I hope that in five years we will have normalized the range of activities that fall under the rubric “scholarly communications” and begin to think of them as ingrained in our everyday services.

What Will Our Organizations Become?
For many of our colleagues, this question goes to the very heart of the threat that collaboration can bring: a challenge to existing expertise, knowledge, and identity, based on a rigorous path of credentialing and dues payments. It’s now commonplace to state that libraries and presses will be very different in ten years, and that if they are not they will not survive. Our skills are well defined, complementary, and allow us to capitalize on unique strengths, but we cannot assume that these same skills will serve our community well in the future.

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These types of collaborations alone probably won’t be enough, but working together at the very least exposes new skills, and can support the hybridization of staff. Assuming we both will need ever more specialization, can these early collaborations at least help us visualize where we are headed?

Finally Are These Collaborations Revolutionary and Disruptive, or Evolutionary and Responsive?

Library based electronic publishing, and the institutional repository movement, began with clarion call to dramatically change the landscape of scholarly communications. I don’t believe that this has really happened, and I am doubtful that even together we have the necessary capital to make it so. As Terry Ehling and Erich Staib suggest in these pages, bringing an alternative publishing channel online takes significant investments. Though there have been some shifts in stance and postures among libraries and publishers after ten years of advocacy and experimentation, I can’t think of a commercial academic publication put out of business by an open-access or alternative publication. Ultimately we won’t change that landscape: researchers will. It may be that the disruption won’t be wholly systemic, but localized, enabling both organizations to become more agile in light of their fluid market and information environments. This in itself is ambitious.

Such questions can’t be answered only at our individual campuses. But working together, the presses and the libraries may find new ways of carrying out their missions and in responding to, even anticipating, the needs of their changing client base. Or they may decide that there is not enough common cause and go their different ways. At the very least, however, these collaborations are challenging our assumptions about our historical relationships to scholarship and the points of contact that make up those relationships among the scholar, the publisher and the library. Let’s use the opportunity well.

Endnotes