

UM Press/60th Anniversary (March 5, 1991)

**(Kerrytown Concert House/50-100 faculty connected to Press/
Colin Day will introduce speakers. JD" A will speak about
accomplishments of Press.)**

I am delighted to be here to help celebrate

the 60th Anniversary of the UM Press--
this most distinguished voice for our University's scholarly
discourse.

It was only four years ago or so now

that the UM Press came to a difficult turning point.

Its future was at stake quite literally

Dean D'Arms and I as Provost
began a series of consultations and deliberations
about the role of the UM press in University life.
The question had been raised as to whether
that role was important enough to justify continuance.

Why?

There were many competing demands on our resources.

We faced new challenges critical to our future

that called for large investments
including our commitment to become leaders
in information technology
In fact there were even some then who declared books
obsolete
in the wake of new technologies revolutionizing
academic research and communications.

A few argued that publishing should be left to those

who are in it to make a profit--that universities do not have a
unique stake
in publishing that would drive us to do it well.

Some felt that publishing was peripheral to our fundamental mission

perhaps an outmoded status symbol we could ill afford.

We talked to scholars in many fields,

we heard the critics out.

In the end it was no contest.

Arguments against maintaining the Press were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic supporters of the Press and its mission.

We came away with a clear and strong institutional mandate

Not only would we not abandon the UM Press

We simply had to strengthen it:

- with needed additional resources
- dynamic new leadership
- more integral faculty involvement
- and a clarified academic mission.

We were clear, too, that we wanted a “scholarly” press not a “commercial, self-supporting” venture.

Our renewed commitment to the Press

was far from a sentimental gesture to the past.

On the contrary, we saw the revitalized Press

as having a vital and integral role to play in our future.

- Stimulating and supporting scholarship on campus
- Vehicle for our participation in scholarly communication across the nation and internationally--even across generations.
- It is a foundation for faculty development
?How can we set a goal of publication for faculty and not do our part to assure the continued publication of scholarly work?

Incidentally, the Press is a fine tool for recruitment of the best and brightest faculty and students.

- It strengthens our academic reputation in many important arenas.

Finally, and very importantly, we cannot responsibly leave scholarly publication at the mercy of the marketplace.

We have an institutional interest in sustaining an independent scholarly voice in the world, ---independent of fashion, short term fluctuations of opinion--

we owe this to society and to our scholars.

In short, after all of our study and deliberation

we came to the same conclusion reached long ago by a number of our greatest research universities. where independent academic publishing was born.

As the first president of Johns Hopkin,

Daniel Coit Gilman, put it a long time ago:

“it is one of the noblest duties of a university to advance knowledge,

and to diffuse it not merely amongst those

who can attend the daily lectures--but far and wide.”

A great deal has changed in universities since Gilman’s day.

But his reasoning holds just as true now as when he spoke.

In fact, I think the need for university presses

is more clear today than ever..

For one thing there is Internationalization-

We often refer to ourselves as a “world class university”.

To give that characterization any meaning

we must sustain regular discourse with scholars in all corners of the globe.

The University Press is a vital and prestigious link to today’s world, in which intellectual interdependence and collaboration is a growing reality.

Age of knowledge

Educated people and ideas are now the engine of change
Can't predict the impact of changes brought by information technology.
But clearly universities will play a far more significant role in the information distribution system and all aspects of our work will be affected, really revolutionized is more accurate word.
We must monitor these changes closely.
The Press brings a distinctive perspective that we need. It is a view different from that of our libraries as well as from our computer people.
As Colin Day noted recently ,
"the Press brings us a perspective of the supplier who is expert at selecting work which deserves publication, who has learned to judge demand and who have learned to ask questions about markets. In the flood of new information, the need to select and discriminate becomes more and more valuable."
This is the particular strength of the University Press, where careful reviewing and editing means that the Michigan imprint carries a message consistent high standards to scholarly readers.

Dean D'Arms will be saying a few words about the many accomplishments of the Press during its first sixty years, so I won't trespass too far into his subject, except to say this.

I am deeply gratified by the enormous progress made by the University Press under the leadership of Colin Day and his colleagues along with Dean D'Arms.

Your work is bringing great credit to us you are fulfilling all our hopes for the Press.

We can't know what the next sixty years of publishing will bring.

But we can be sure, I think, that the University Press will continue to be a renowned publishing leader, and an eloquent and respected voice for our faculty and our University.

On behalf of the University I thank you and congratulate you.