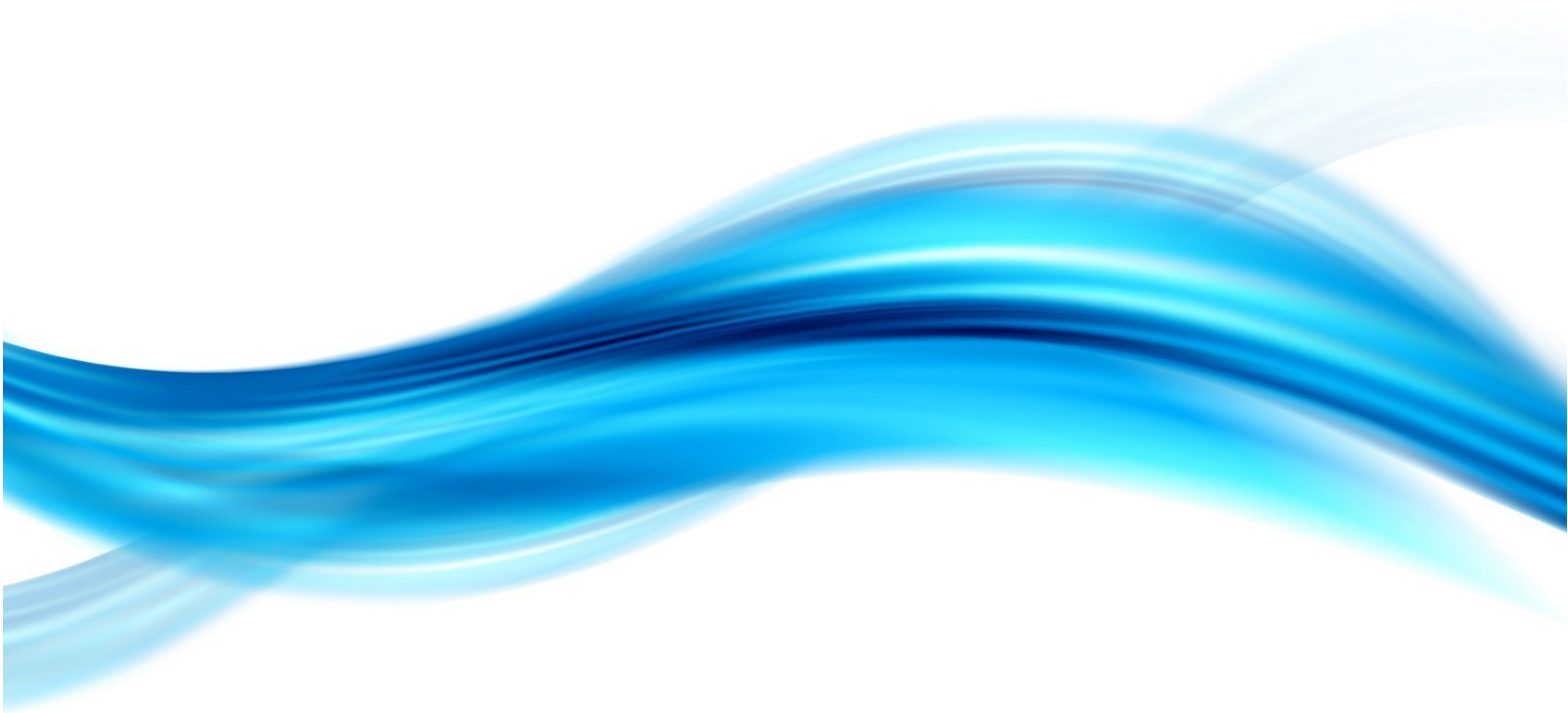




The Oberlin Group

# Lever Press Business Plan

2015-2019



## Acknowledgements

This business plan has been jointly written by:

Melinda Kenneway, Director, TBI Communications  
Mark Edington, Director, Amherst College Press  
Charles Watkinson, Director, University of Michigan Press and  
Associate University Librarian for Publishing, University of Michigan Library

With the support and input of the Lever Initiative Task Force:

**Task Force Phase 1 (2013-2014):**

Mark Christel, Director of Libraries, College of Wooster  
Barbara Fister, Academic Librarian, Gustavus Adolphus College  
Bryn Geffert, Librarian of the College, Amherst College  
Neil McElroy, Dean of Libraries, Lafayette College  
Pamela Snelson, College Librarian, Franklin and Marshall College  
Mike Roy, Dean of Library and Information Services, Chief Information Officer and Librarian at Middlebury  
Pat Tully, University Librarian, Wesleyan University

**Task Force Phase 2 (2014-2015):**

Mark Christel, Director of Libraries, College of Wooster  
Richard C Fyffe, Librarian of the College, Grinnell College  
Bryn Geffert, Librarian of the College, Amherst College\*  
Neil McElroy, Dean of Libraries, Lafayette College  
Lisa Norberg, Dean of the Barnard Library and Academic Information Services, Barnard College  
Pamela Snelson, College Librarian, Franklin and Marshall College  
Terry Snyder, Librarian of the College, Haverford College  
Mike Roy, Dean of Library and Information Services, Chief Information Officer and Librarian at Middlebury

\*Bryn Geffert stepped back during the partner selection process to avoid a conflict of interest as Amherst were invited to submit a proposal. Bryn re-joined the group after the selection of Amherst-Michigan as preferred partner.

Further information on the Lever Initiative:

<https://leverinitiative.wordpress.com/>

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

In 2013, the Oberlin Group embarked on a program of research to investigate the feasibility of establishing an Open Access (OA) monograph publishing venture, with a focus on better serving authors and readers, more innovative application of technology, and greater dissemination of knowledge. The project was christened the **Lever Initiative**. The project encompassed a program of research to evaluate the attitudes of faculty, review current and emerging OA monograph initiatives, and explore options for launching a new publishing venture. Finally, potential publishing partners were approached and appraised through an RFP process.

The Lever Initiative has been led by a team of Library Directors; drawn from Oberlin Group members. Following over a year of research and discussion, it is the recommendation of this team that the Group launch a new OA publishing venture. Library publishing is coming of age, with multiple initiatives being launched. It is critical that the Oberlin Group engage in this process – creating opportunities for dialogue at many different levels and with many different partners, and giving the library a central place at the table for influencing future publishing activities and policies. It is also important that the Group show leadership in more open and innovative approaches to publishing in the liberal arts, and demonstrate the benefits for authors and readers. Colleges can provide a model and a test-bed for nimble, innovative, sustainable, and collaborative academic publishing. Such an endeavour also supports these institutions' commitments to lifelong learning; it will promote research in the fields taught at liberal arts colleges; and it will inspire alumni, thus strengthening support for the institutions themselves.

A partnership with Amherst College Press and Michigan Publishing is proposed to realise the vision for this new venture, with the working title of **Lever Press**. Several publishers were evaluated for their ability and vision in supporting this program, and **Amherst/Michigan** emerged as the clear front-runner from a number of perspectives – financial and vision alignment, brand equity, capabilities and so on. Michigan Publishing is the umbrella name for the University of Michigan Library's Publishing Division. It incorporates University of Michigan Press, Michigan Publishing Services, and Deep Blue (the institutional repository).

Amherst will lead on editorial strategy and services, and provide the equivalent of 0.5 FTE at their cost. Michigan Publishing will provide 0.2 FTE in support of this program at their cost. The partners will also cover all overheads (space, hardware, software, etc.) Lever Press will fund a Program Coordinator (0.5 FTE), to be employed by Michigan Publishing, and cover all direct costs associated with producing Lever Press publications.

This document lays out in detail how this partnership will work, and the required funding to support it. The initial five years of the Lever Press will be supported by Oberlin Group members, with as many institutions as possible committing to contribute a small percentage of their annual acquisitions budget (or an equivalent sum from another source) to this initiative. Five years is seen as the minimum period required to achieve sufficient impact to justify this initiative.

The total funding requirement over the 5 year period is \$1,782,000. The annual membership fee will cover costs of publication and each member institution will receive a print edition of all books published, conspicuous acknowledgement in all Lever Press publicity and publications, detailed usage stats, and other benefits to be developed as the program develops. The participation fee per institution will be related to the size of each, with a tiered membership fee. This cost obviously reduces dramatically as the number of participating institutions increases. For example, an average 5 year contribution based on 20 member institutions is \$89,100 per institution (\$17,820 averaged per annum); for 40 institutions this is reduced to \$44,550 (\$8,910 averaged per annum).

This is a staged investment, requiring a combined total of \$65,000 in the first year rising to \$707,600 by year five. It is proposed that institutional payments cover the entirety of these publications costs so that **all authors will be able to publish free of charge with Lever Press, giving us a substantial competitive advantage over other OA presses which require author payments for book publication.** It is likely that some of these costs might be offset by print revenues and/or grants, but for budgeting purposes it should be assumed that the full costs of publication will need to be covered by institutional membership fees. Oberlin Group could invite wider institutional participation, helping reduce per-member contributions and expanding the initiative to cover a wider range of institutions, potentially worldwide. It is our ambition that this program will become a catalyst for wider industry change in the interests of scholarship.

The program will seek to publish really useful books that people want to read, from leading scholars from within the liberal arts, regardless of whether they are based at an Oberlin Group institution. Year one will primarily be a planning year – putting governance structures into place, more fully developing the editorial program, promoting the initiative to faculty to begin to establish the brand and build a pipeline of manuscripts. In year two we will publish 10 books, rising to 40 per annum by year five. Each year, several publications will be selected for digital innovation.

Commitments are now sought from Oberlin Group members in support of this business plan with a view to commencing the venture in late spring 2015.

## 2.0 Background

In 2013, the Oberlin Group (a consortium of liberal arts college libraries) embarked on a program of research to investigate the feasibility of establishing an Open Access (OA) monograph publishing venture, with a focus on better serving authors and readers, more innovative application of technology, and greater dissemination of knowledge. The project was christened the **Lever Initiative** and has been led by a Task Force now composed of eight Library Directors drawn from Oberlin Group institutions (<http://leverinitiative.wordpress.com/about/project-team>), facilitated by an external consultant (Melinda Kenneway of TBI Communications).

The conclusion of the research phase was that while there are many challenges to overcome in developing new models of publishing scholarship, it is also clear that new technology offers the potential for significant enhancements to the traditional monograph, which are likely to help increase and broaden readership. In recognition of this opportunity, there has been acceleration in the growth of Open Access monograph initiatives, from both established and newly emerging Presses.

Libraries are taking a more central role in the publishing process – some ten Oberlin Group members are listed in the latest *Directory of Library Publishing*, and the *Library Publishing Coalition* lists almost sixty members, composed of academic and research libraries and library consortia that have, or are considering, library publishing programs. By launching a publishing initiative, the Oberlin Group will create opportunities for dialogue at many different levels and with many different partners, giving the library a central place at the table for influencing future publishing activities and policies. At the same time, the individual member institutions will benefit from association with a program that aims to become a major, global brand – representing the very best scholarship in the arts and humanities.

It could be argued that there is a risk for the Oberlin Group in not participating actively in this shifting landscape. Core library values and the traditional skills of librarians are ideally suited to a leadership role centred on more open and collaborative forms of publishing. To stand back and leave this to others may become a disadvantage in a future where the process of publishing may become ever more integrated into institutional activities.

Following the completion of the research program in the summer of 2014, the Task Force was charged with exploring the best way forwards for launching a new OA publishing venture with the working title: Lever Press. Partnership options were explored through a pitching process and Amherst College Press/Michigan Publishing were selected. This document lays out a business plan for launching Lever Press through this partnership.

## 3.0 Market opportunity

### 3.1 Overview

Escalating costs of monographs are an increasing concern to the library community. It is felt that a disruptive model is required that will reduce costs, open up access and make better new use of new technologies.

Generally, scholars are satisfied with the current publishing system. There isn't evidence of a drive to publish under an Open Access model or for innovative new formats. Overall, attitudes remain relatively conservative – most likely due to the strong link between traditional monograph publishing and tenure and promotion. Authors still cite the prestige of the publisher as the most important factor when deciding where to publish. There is some discontent with editorial quality, distribution, remuneration and price of books, but this isn't extreme. A drive for change then is unlikely to come from established publishers who generally benefit from the current system; faculty themselves are also unlikely to demand change while tenure and promotion is still based on where you publish rather than impact of your work.

The Oberlin Group are well-placed to launch a disruptive model that will seek to demonstrate the benefits of Open Access publishing in the liberal arts with innovative applications of technology. New measurements of impact can be integrated into the program (e.g. DOI-based metrics such as book/chapter downloads, citations, social media mentions and so on), to help broaden performance assessment. At the same time, our market research indicates the requirement to provide the traditional services that authors value.

*“It would depend on the quality of editorial oversight and peer review; I would want to recognize names of people involved in the project. And I would also want my institution to formally acknowledge that innovative publishing media would be recognized in tenure/promotion.”*

Member of faculty within Oberlin Group Institution

### 3.2 Market needs

Extensive market research has been conducted as part of the Lever Initiative to appraise author behaviors, attitudes and needs. Full research results are available at:

<http://leverinitiative.wordpress.com/2014/03/13/survey-results-show-support-for-launch-of-an-innovative-new-press/>.

Key findings from a survey circulated to Oberlin Group faculty (the results of which were broadly aligned with a survey to faculty from non-member institutions) included:

- Over half of Oberlin faculty have published a book chapter and a third at least one book; for the vast majority publishing a book, this process currently takes over 13 months;
- 60% of authors are satisfied with the current multimedia options available to them; there are generally mid-range levels of satisfaction with all key publishers' services; the highest levels of dissatisfaction were related to pricing of books, costs of books and speed of publication;
- 24% are very interested in a short-form monograph and 45% possibly interested; 20% are very satisfied with the current monograph format and a further 59% quite satisfied;
- 48% feel strongly positive, or positive towards using new media such as blogs and wikis to share their work;
- The main reason for publishing is to develop a scholar's research, followed by tenure and promotion; royalty payments are seen as least important. Prestige of publisher is the most important factor in deciding where to publish, followed by quality of editorial support and then marketing/distribution. Open Access is generally not seen as a priority;
- When asked to rank the most important features for a new publishing venture, the following score most highly (very important): high quality peer review (73%), high quality editorial support (64%), reputation of associated people/institutions (46%), and print edition available (34%).

In summary, authors place greatest value on the publisher brand and traditional services such as peer review and editorial support. There is clear interest in more progressive and open approaches to publishing:

*"Having media of varying sizes is one of the advantages of modern flexibility – I could do a lot with 100 pages."*  
Faculty member, US-based institution

*"Might create more readable scholarly content – as opposed to what's found in tomes."*  
Faculty member, US-based institution

*"Thanks for the initiative. We humanities scholars need to break free from this copyright dictatorship. It's contrary to the dissemination of knowledge."*  
Faculty member, US-based institution

However, these are seen as secondary to high quality peer review, editorial support and reputation of the publisher. Lever Press therefore needs to blend both traditional services with innovation, and over time demonstrate the broader benefits of Open Access and technologically enhanced formats on publication impact and career progression for scholars.

This analysis focuses on the most direct needs of authors, but from the library perspective, this initiative is also addressing a **broader market need for a new model of publishing monographs that ensures relevance, affordability and wide readership.**



### 3.3 *Competitive landscape*

As part of our research program, we reviewed the current OA book publishing landscape. Emerging and established initiatives were reviewed and a full summary is available at: <http://leverinitiative.wordpress.com/2013/12/17/oa-books-landscape-review/>.

The Directory of Open Access Books lists 2,753 books from 94 publishers. According to the Association of American Publishers, the ebook market accounted for 23% of publisher net revenues in 2012, up from 17% in 2011 and, 1% in 2008.<sup>1</sup> According to a Bowker Market Research report, the number of books and ebook self-published each year in the US has increased by 287% since 2006.<sup>2</sup>

In discussions with other OA publishers, most consider the finances and market complexity to be the biggest challenge for OA monograph publishing. The eBook market is highly fragmented so for wide access and discoverability it's necessary to make books available on lots of different platforms, with different software and file formats. This all demands different workflows and consumes resources. Author attitudes are also cited as a challenge: *"they want all the advantages of publishing Open Access but they still expect you to act like a traditional publisher."*

The Lever Press will compete with established presses offering both conventional publishing services and often OA options too. The University of California Press has recently entered this market with an OA monograph publishing service, and other prestigious university presses (including University of Michigan Press) are also experimenting in this area. There are also a number of small "born OA" publishers, such as Open Book Publishers and the Open Library of the Humanities, which is planning an OA book program although it is currently focused on journal publication. 34% of libraries in the 2015 *Library Publishing Directory* published at least one OA monograph but these programs are still very small.

### 3.4 *Opportunity*

There is an opportunity for liberal arts college libraries to support authors and readers better than they are supported now. Colleges can also provide a model and a test-bed for nimble, innovative, sustainable, and collaborative academic publishing. Such an endeavor also supports these institutions' commitments to lifelong learning; it will promote research in the fields taught at liberal arts colleges; and it will inspire alumni, thus strengthening support for the institutions themselves. This is also an altruistic endeavour: an attempt to make scholarship available to all, without regard to affluence,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2013/ebooks-account-for-23-of-publisher-revenue-in-2012-even-as-growth-levels/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press\\_room/2012/pr\\_10242012.shtml](http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press_room/2012/pr_10242012.shtml)

location, or ability to travel. It is envisioned that over time this work may dovetail nicely with allied work taking place in the development of Open Access textbooks. It also has the potential to become a source of scholarly literature for students enrolled in free, online classes.

Freed from old assumptions and old technology centered around the production of print publications, we can enjoy a unique chance to rethink what constitutes a “publication.” The opportunities afforded by new media—audio, video, crowd-sourcing, mash-ups—are all opportunities this venture can easily embrace.

Our research into a potential opportunity for the Oberlin Group in establishing a new OA Press suggests the following factors should be taken into account in developing the publishing program:

1. The new Press needs a strong niche – for example, a focus on a short-form monograph format in topics of broad, interdisciplinary interest would be distinctive;
2. A network of influential academics would need to be recruited to give the new Press immediate prestige; investment would also need to be made in the brand and marketing of the Press to give it a strong and credible presence from launch;
3. Advocacy work to influence tenure and promotion committees would be required to ensure that authors would feel supported in publishing with the new Press;
4. Innovation with metrics/publication performance assessment should form a central part of the new Press’s mission and services;
5. The Press should focus on commissioned publications from academics of national standing in the early establishment of the brand, combined with identifying up and coming authors writing on topics of real interest and broad relevance;
6. Key traditional publishing services should be delivered really well and through innovative new approaches: for example, editorial and peer-review services should be supportive, interactive and hands-on to help authors develop their work to the highest possible standard; workflow support should provide authors with transparency on the progress of their manuscript; advanced marketing tools should be made available to authors to help them publicise their work etc.;
7. Thoughtful use of new media should be made where this enhances the online version of the publication; a print-on-demand option should be available as an alternative to the free online edition;
8. A business model should be developed that helps minimize costs to the author – for example, via sponsorship or ‘institutional membership’ funding.

### **3.5 Differentiation**

Differentiation for the Lever Press can be built on several dimensions – firstly, we will aim to leverage the brand of our partners (Amherst College Press/Michigan Publishing – see section 5.7) and member institutions to add credibility to our program at an early

stage. Membership of the Oversight Committee and Editorial Board will also be critical, reflecting the endorsement of high profile scholars. Our focus will be on 'books that are useful' and innovation in process and format that helps link faculty with students – reflecting our liberal arts tradition. Our distinctive library-funded business model gives authors the opportunity to benefit from the broadest possible audience for their work at no cost to them as an individual.

## 4.0 Program outline

### 4.1 *Objectives and principles*

**Key objectives for this program are as follows:**

- Build a world-leading brand in the front rank of arts and humanities publishers
- Enhance the reputation of participating institutions
- Encourage active participation by faculty and students
- Accelerate innovation in publishing processes and formats
- Demonstrate the long-term viability of Open Access
- Increase collaboration amongst like-minded institutions and individuals
- Increase the value and impact of library collection expenditure
- Position the library as content creators as well as collectors and curators
- Champion new methods of evaluation for scholarly monographs

**Our guiding principles are:**

- Publish selectively, with an overriding focus on quality of research, writing and ideas
- Be creative in tracking the emergence of new topics and disciplines
- Pay attention to production values to ensure the best possible experience for readers
- Work collaboratively and transparently with authors
- Give authors choices on formats and license agreements
- Encourage inclusion of multimedia materials and experimentation with technology
- Market energetically to ensure wide exposure for the author and their work
- Actively experiment with new forms of publishing and measure and share results widely

### 4.2 *Mission, vision and value proposition*

**Mission and vision**

The vision of the Lever Press is to inspire excellence and innovation in the selection and presentation of scholarship; and to accelerate Open Access in the arts and humanities. Our mission is to publish exciting scholarship and make this accessible to the broadest possible audience. Our values are excellence, openness, collaboration, innovation, and care.

**Value proposition**

We will offer our authors the traditional publisher experience they value (high quality editorial support and production standards), together with the benefits of unrestricted access to their work that Open Access provides. We will build deeply supportive

relationships with our authors, helping curate their work to the highest standard and offering them innovative choices on formats and presentation. We will work quickly and responsively — making best use of technology to increase workflow efficiencies, reduce costs and improve services to authors and readers.

We will focus equal attention on the performance of authors' work after publication, providing them with unparalleled marketing support and access to a range of metrics about how their books are being used. We will use our expertise as librarians to enrich publications with valuable additional metadata to increase its discoverability — particularly outside of niche disciplines. Our brand partnerships will give the Lever Press immediate prestige, as will the people we recruit for our Oversight Committee and Editorial Board, together with the authors we carefully select for our initial publications.

In short, **we will offer a personal service and wide dissemination for authors, coupled with the best possible experience for readers.**

#### **4.3** *Scope and formats*

Form should follow substance, and should not dictate it. In a digital open access environment form matters less than ever. This is a golden opportunity to open the door to the best academic writing irrespective of precise length and form. There are, of course, costs associated with editing and composition, which will affect decisions about what to publish. But in theory there should be no distinction drawn between a monograph of 100 pages and one of 700 pages. The only relevant question for the publishing staff of the Press should be its scholarly quality. Paramount importance should be attached to establishing an academic list of real pedigree. Reputation will flow from that.

We currently envisage publishing 10 books by the end of year two, rising to a likely maximum of 40 per annum by year five. We envisage a mix of long and short-form publications. Specific projects will be selected for digital innovation based on the appropriateness of the subject matter, interest of the author, etc. These will be treated as case studies, with measures of interest/effectiveness put into place so that the impact can be measured. We will widely promote these activities, and also the effect of Open Access publishing on readership and revenues — as part of our drive not to only to publish great scholarship, but also champion wider changes within the industry.

#### **4.4** *Business model*

The initial five years of the Lever Press will supported by Oberlin Group members, with as many institutions as possible committing to contribute a sum equivalent to a small percentage of their annual acquisitions budget to this initiative (we realize the commitment may come from other discretionary funds).

The annual membership fee will cover costs of publication and each member institution will receive a print edition of all books published as well as other exclusive benefits.

**Authors will be able to publish free of charge with Lever Press, giving us a substantial competitive advantage over other OA presses which require author payments.**

The PDF, ePub and browser-based editions of each book will be freely available online (CC-BY as default, but we won't dictate this if an author prefers an alternative open license, e.g. CC-BY-NC). Print on Demand (POD) will be available for all books. Revenues from POD sales would be divided jointly between our publisher partner (Amherst/Michigan) and Lever Press – to be used to offset future institutional membership costs and/or sponsor particular initiatives; the Oversight Committee will agree upon a final policy relating to this.

It is also envisaged that we may apply for separate funding to support digital innovation, or partner with others who have funding that we might be able to tap into for specific projects that the Lever Press wishes to initiate.

During this initial five year period we will explore business models for the future that look to transition Lever Press to a full or part self-financed model.

See section 6.2 for details of funding requirement from participating institutions.

## 5.0 Program delivery

### 5.1 Partner selection

Our research program highlighted the value authors continue to place on traditional aspects of the publishing process such as commissioning, reviewing and marketing. Rather than replicate these functions, an early conclusion of this project was that the Oberlin Group should partner with an existing Press with a commitment to integrating Open Access into their program together with the capabilities to offer the highest production standards, online hosting, marketing, distribution and preservation.

We propose to form a true partnership with a like-minded Press who can demonstrate a shared commitment to innovation and scholarship. In return, we will share editorial control, and the Publisher partner will have representation on our Oversight Committee.

Discussions have been held with a number of potential partners and a shortlist was agreed. A *Request for Proposal* document was circulated and responses reviewed by the Task Force, with presentations made via Webex to allow for further discussion. Each proposal was assessed against pre-agreed criteria and a combined partnership between Amherst and Michigan emerged as the clear leader – from a range of perspectives including cost, reputation, ability to innovate, experience, attitudes towards Open Access, and distribution capabilities.

### 5.2 Partnership roles

It is proposed that the Oberlin Group will have the following role in this partnership:

- Interfacing with the Amherst/Michigan partnership, providing representation for Oberlin in the joint governance structures we propose to create and giving substance to the stake Oberlin has placed in the success of this work;
- Helping to recruit authors for the press – who may well but necessarily be faculty members of Oberlin institutions – and creating opportunities and incentives for scholars to choose this pathway for the development and distribution of new knowledge in the humanities;
- Advocating for the acceptance of open-access humanities scholarship among key academic decision makers in the institutions they represent.

It is proposed that Amherst/Michigan will provide the following services:

- Building an editorial plan capable of attracting high-quality work in the humanities of particular value to liberal arts education, guided by and with input from a standing Oversight Committee of Oberlin Group representatives;

- Acquiring this work for the Lever Press imprint through the work of Oberlin’s librarian representatives, faculty engaged in the initiative as series editors, and the work of the editorial leadership of Amherst and Michigan;
- Convening a Lever Press Editorial Board comprised of intellectual leaders from Oberlin Group institutions, nominated by Oberlin’s leadership and capable of generating crucial credibility for this initiative through the weight of their own scholarly reputations;
- Providing the services of a title management system to works acquired for the Lever Press;
- Managing the progress of works through review by peers in traditional, peer-to-peer, and open systems;
- Implementing capable developmental editing, strengthening and focusing arguments along with rigorous copyediting, assuring a consistent level of accessibility in language and approach;
- Providing design services for both digital (web and download) and printed outputs of Lever Press titles;
- Utilizing Michigan Publishing’s platforms for digital publishing—both the current DLXS system and an under-development system extending the Hydra/Fedora platform to this purpose—for the creation of web-accessible and downloadable digital versions of the works developed;
- Creating and managing a pathway for the creation and distribution of printed outputs of titles sold at market rates to create an ancillary revenue stream;
- Ensuring the broadest possible impact of works developed through the Lever Press initiative by means of traditional marketing programs, social media, and collaborative outreach initiatives with Oberlin Group institutions;
- Engaging with interested Oberlin member libraries in order to help expand their capacities for engaging in publishing activities fit to the needs of their own institutions;
- Ensuring that works produced through the Lever Press initiative are conceived *ab initio* for inclusion in major repositories of digital scholarship, building on our team’s founding relationship with HathiTrust.

### 5.3 Governance

An **Oversight Committee** will be appointed to take strategic leadership of the initiative. An **Editorial Board** will take responsibility for selecting individual titles and will be composed of disciplinary faculty nominated by library directors at individual Oberlin Group institutions. What will distinguish the Lever Press, and enable it to succeed where others have stumbled, will be the maintenance of a sustained conversation between librarians, publishers, and disciplinary faculty on these questions throughout the life of the initiative—and the translation of that conversation into practice by the Amherst/Michigan partnership.



The overarching questions of business model, editorial program, and policies are the responsibility of the Oversight Committee. The Editorial Board will be a working board, consistent with the role of editorial boards in all scholarly presses. The primary responsibility of this group will be to oversee the editorial process through which works developed by this initiative are proposed, reviewed, and produced. Importantly, it will not direct the policy choices of the initiative or assure clarity of expectations and performance by members of the partnership; these higher tasks are the responsibility of the Lever Press Oversight Committee.

### **Oversight Committee**

*Responsibilities include:*

- Decisions on subject area focus
- Suggestions/recruitment of excellent series editors
- Translation of principles into policies guiding the business model
  - ✓ Use of Creative Commons licenses
  - ✓ Education of authors on contracts
- Integration of Lever Press outputs with Oberlin member libraries and curricula
- Nominates disciplinary faculty to serve on Editorial Board
- Outreach efforts on behalf of the initiative and titles published through the Press in and beyond Oberlin Group institutions

*Membership:*

- Representatives of Oberlin Group (*eight members*)
- Editorial leadership from Amherst College Press and Michigan Publishing (*two members*)
- Two faculty representatives nominated by Oberlin Group

### **Editorial Board**

*Responsibilities include:*

- Reviews editorial process and content
- Early involvement with authors, especially of “digital innovation” projects
- Confer disciplinary credibility to the output of the press
- Vote to accept or reject individual projects

*Membership:*

- Chair of the Oversight Committee (*ex officio*)
- Eight faculty representatives, nominated by members of the Oberlin Group
- Editorial leadership from Amherst College Press and Michigan Publishing (*non-voting*)

## Editorial Leadership

*Responsibilities include:*

- Lead responsibility for identifying/acquiring work
- Lead responsibility for interfacing with series editors
- Principal point of contact for authors sending queries and proposals
- Implementation and monitoring of business plan
- Monitoring of production process, incl. developmental editing, copy editing, design
- Outreach efforts and marketing

*Membership:*

- Aaron McCollough and Rebecca Welzenbach\*, *Michigan Publishing*
- Mark Edington, *Amherst College Press*

\*Rebecca Welzenbach will be employed by Michigan Publishing to work directly on behalf of the Lever Press with the title Program Coordinator, with particular responsibility for liaising between Amherst/Michigan, the Oversight Committee and Editorial Board, and participating member institutions. See section 5.10 for further information.

### 5.4 *Editorial program*

We envisage three broad areas of work that the Lever Press might choose to pursue:

- **Traditional monograph-length works** in which an engaging recounting of scholarly findings is accompanied by a narrative of the research process itself, a description of methods and the ways in which they were implemented, and an extension of the author’s conversation with readers through the full implementation of commenting and annotating tools (e.g., hypothes.is).
- **Shorter, focused works**—basically, extended essays—that we conceive as “conversation starters.” Written by senior scholars, these would, in our vision, become the sorts of works adopted as campus-wide reads by Oberlin Group institutions. They would take on critical issues confronting our public square, and see those questions through the lenses of one or more disciplinary perspectives—suggesting not an agenda for action, but a set of questions for conversation and engagement.
- **Study guides**, or digitally enhanced roadmaps to the study of specific disciplines or fields of inquiry. As research and instruction librarians take on a greater and more significant role in teaching information literacy to a rising generation of students, we see these works as weaving together the once-indispensable resource of the bibliography with the new possibilities inherent in digital publishing (imagine an online bibliography of a given field with title entries linked to the works in HathiTrust, for example). We can imagine works of this sort co-edited by disciplinary faculty in a given field and librarians with research and subject-matter expertise in

that field. We see this as a strong potential expression of an editorial program offering great utility to the needs and teaching mission of liberal arts libraries.

These early suggestions will be further researched and discussed with Oberlin Group leaders as part of shaping a firm program in the first months of operation.

### **5.5** *Commissioning and reviewing*

Consistent with our expectation that scholarly communication in an Open Access era will evolve in ways characteristic of commons-based peer production, we will activate networks of faculty colleagues in Oberlin-affiliated institutions to identify and engage potential authors. It is anticipated that the organizational characteristics of scholarly publishing will shift toward the functions of engaging with authors on challenges of digital research and publication, and retain the traditional function of providing rigorous review and copyediting—while the role of acquisitions editors can increasingly be taken up by a more commons-based approach to identifying and recruiting authors.

Another way to say this is to imagine the traditional role of acquisitions editors being, in a sense, divided—lifted up toward faculty more deeply involved in the work of scholarly publishing as series editors and “talent scouts,” and simultaneously pressed down toward professional, highly qualified developmental editors managed by the Amherst College Press. The work of the leadership of the Lever Press—both librarians and publishers— will be to manage and grow this commons.

Mark Edington and Aaron McCollough will serve as coordinators of this effort, identifying areas of opportunity and regularly communicating with the Oversight Committee.

### **5.6** *Platform*

Commissioned publications will be hosted initially on Michigan Publishing’s DLXS platform. Again, as a general rule, Michigan Publishing will have principal responsibility for the production of titles for the Lever Press, encompassing typesetting and markup, design, indexing, and then distribution and sales support for the print versions.

Coordination of the work of the two partners will be the responsibility of the editorial leadership of each press and the Program Coordinator, enabled by regular communication and a shared digital space for monitoring workflow.

In 2017, Lever Press will benefit from the rollout of Michigan Publishing’s new digital publishing platform. Conceived as an extension of the widely implemented open-source Hydra/Fedora toolkit for digital asset management in research libraries, this new publishing platform will offer the possibility of tremendous progress toward the goal of seamlessly integrating the digital infrastructures on which research and publishing increasingly depend.

## 5.7 *Branding*

It is envisaged that this publishing venture will be a stand-alone brand endorsed by Amherst College Press and Michigan Publishing – helping provide credibility and value at an early stage. Lever Press is the current ‘working title’ for this initiative, but this should be reviewed and other options explored. Legal steps would need to be taken to check availability of the chosen name. A typical way of communicating this brand hierarchy might be:

Book Title

From the Lever Press

Published in partnership with Amherst College Press and Michigan Publishing

An acknowledgements page would include details of supporting member institutions:

Lever Press is a joint venture, supported by:

Albion College

Amherst College

Bucknell University

Colorado College etc.

In addition, relating to sales activities for the print edition via the University of Michigan Press’s rep network (see section 4.6), Lever Press will be described as being distributed by the University of Michigan Press.

## 5.8 *Sales and marketing*

Simply making works universally available as Open Access scholarship is not sufficient to ensure that they will find audiences searching for them. We will build our works with a view to discoverability and ease of use; utilize the network of faculty and librarians we build through the envisaged commons of the Lever Press network to raise awareness of the initiative, the critical role of library sponsorship in making it possible, and the scholarship it is producing; and draw on existing marketing capability in our two presses to alert audiences in specific disciplines through traditional means, social media, and such means as the New Books Network.

Amherst College Press will take the lead in generating publicity for the electronic versions of the books with a focus on social media and electronic marketing while Michigan Publishing will ensure exposure of print copies of the books in regular sales channels through the activities of its national sales reps, through seasonal catalogs, through conference displays, and other activities already engaged in to advance the University of Michigan Press imprint. Lever Press books in this context will be described as “distributed by the University of Michigan Press” which articulates the relationship in a form familiar to retailers and other buyers. All publicity will indicate that electronic versions of the books are available Open Access.

## 5.9 *Measuring impact*

An important element of open access publishing for authors, publishers, and sponsors lies in good measurement of impact. DLXS and its successor platform both offer rich metrics including COUNTER-compliant download counts together with Google Analytics and Altmetric.com impact measures. In creating the Hydra/Fedora platform Michigan Publishing is focused on providing dashboards by which these metrics can be easily accessed, and regular email updates provided to users choosing to sign up.

## 5.10 *Staffing*

The Lever Press relies on staff already available within Michigan Publishing and Amherst College Press and on freelance contractors. No charge will be made to the Lever Press for the provision of Amherst/Michigan human resources (estimated value of this staff resource is \$329,162 – excluding overheads – over a five year period). The one exception is the role of Program Coordinator – the costs of which are budgeted for directly within the funding requirement at \$40,000 per annum for 0.5 FTE. The Lever Press Program Coordinator is a critical and substantive role, supporting the editorial work of Lever Press, and representing the Press to a number of its stakeholder constituencies. This role will be employed by Michigan Publishing on behalf of the Lever Press.

Staff allocations are proposed as follows:

Name	FTE	Cost over 5 years*
<b>Amherst</b>		
Mark Edington	0.2 FTE	
Web Developer	0.3 FTE	
		\$239,387
<b>Michigan</b>		
Watkinson	0.05 FTE	
McCullough	0.05 FTE	
Welzenbach	0.5 FTE	
Colman	0.1 FTE	
		\$297,976
	<b>1.2 FTE</b>	<b>\$537,363</b>

\*Costs to be covered by Michigan-Amherst with the exception of Welzenbach at \$208,201 over 5 years.

Key staff from Amherst/Michigan who will work on the Lever Press program include:

**Mark D. W. Edington**, Director of the Amherst College Press. Edington arrived at Amherst in January of 2014 as the founding director of the new Amherst College Press.

Prior to this he served for fifteen years in a number of senior administrative roles in Harvard University, in the Divinity School, Central Administration, and the Kennedy School of Government. Edington's publishing experience encompasses directing the publications program of the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, an independent, non-partisan research institute in national security and foreign policy, and for five years acting as an editor at *Dædalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Edington is a member of the committee on Copyright and Intellectual Property of the Association of American University Presses, and a trustee of Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan. A *summa cum laude* graduate of Albion College (an Oberlin member,) Edington also holds the M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School and the M.A.L.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University. Edington will provide strategic leadership for The Lever Press and will take the editorial lead.

**Charles Watkinson**, Associate University Librarian for Publishing at the University of Michigan and Director of University of Michigan Press. Watkinson is well known as a leader in the library publishing movement, serving as a co-PI on the pathbreaking IMLS-sponsored research report *Library Publishing Services: Strategies for Success* and an initiator of the Library Publishing Coalition. Prior to moving to Michigan in June 2014, Watkinson was Director of Purdue University Press and Head of Scholarly Publishing Services in Purdue Libraries for five years. He was previously Director of Publications at the American School of Classical Studies in Princeton, New Jersey, and prior to that ran a distribution services for small European academic publishers in Oakville, Connecticut. He holds a M.A. from the University of Cambridge, where he studied Archaeology and Anthropology at Pembroke College (a learning and residential community similar to a Liberal Arts institution), and an M.B.A. from Oxford Brookes University. Watkinson will provide strategic support to the initiative.

**Aaron McCollough**, Editorial Director, Michigan Publishing. McCollough acquires titles in technology, culture, media, and modernities for University of Michigan Press (approx. 25 titles per year). Additionally, he oversees the acquisitions editorial department of the press, including the review process from commissioning through development and formal peer review. McCollough has been actively engaged in shaping Michigan Publishing's in-creasing commitment to digital work and open access scholarly publishing since he began working in the U-M Library's Scholarly Publishing Office in 2009. He was the subject liaison librarian for English Literature at U-M from 2010-2012. He holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Michigan, and an M.F.A. in creative writing from the Iowa Writers' Workshop. He did his undergraduate study at Sewanee, the University of the South—also an Oberlin member. McCollough will collaborate with Edington to provide editorial leadership for the initiative.

**Jason Colman**, Director of Michigan Publishing Services, Michigan Publishing. Colman is dedicated to improving the speed and efficiency of digital scholarly publishing in order

to ensure its sustainability. Colman has managed the production of online journals and open access monographs at Michigan Publishing since 2012, and is continuing to develop a coherent full-service publishing offering for scholars at Michigan. Previously, at the California Digital Library, he managed the digitization of more than a million books from the University of California's collections and their inclusion in a new Print on Demand service developed with Hewlett-Packard. He began his studies in Medieval European History at Kalamazoo College (an Oberlin member) and the University of Michigan, later returning to Michigan to earn a Master's in Information Science with a specialization in Digital Preservation. Colman will lead production support for the initiative.

**Rebecca Welzenbach**, Program Coordinator, Lever Press. Welzenbach currently coordinates Michigan Publishing's journals program, with a particular focus on acquiring new projects and developing new services. It is proposed that Lever Press will fund her role as Program Coordinator (50% FTE) for Lever Press, employed by Michigan publishing. Welzenbach will represent the Lever Press to a number of its stakeholder constituencies, with a strong relationship to the Editorial Leadership of Lever Press. Through her current role at Michigan, Welzenbach has experience of maintaining relationships with the editors of almost 40 humanities and social science journals. She is also the outreach librarian for the Text Creation Partnership, a large consortial effort to fund the transcription of tens of thousands of early English books. Welzenbach earned a bachelor's degree in English from Illinois Wesleyan University and a Master's of Science in Information from the University of Michigan.

In addition to this team, the Amherst College Library is currently in the final stages of searching for a **Web Developer** to enhance its capacity to support the publicity and elements of the production aspects of the initiative

### **5.11** *Timetable*

The Lever Press will initially be set up with a 5 year commitment from participating institutions. The following is a high level schedule of our proposed activities each year:

#### **Year One**

Agree and appoint the Oversight Committee and Editorial Board. Engage in research and consultation to form a detailed prospectus for the Lever Press. Presentations on Oberlin Group campuses, initial publication opportunities explored and a pipeline established.

#### **Year Two**

Website launched and initial proposals reviewed and progressed, with an anticipated 10 publications produced, of which 2 would be selected for digital innovation.

#### **Year Three**

It is anticipated that 15 publications will be produced, of which 3 will be selected for

digital innovation. We will benefit from Michigan's new publication platform.

**Year Four**

We will aim to publish 25 titles, of which 5 will be selected for digital innovation.

**Year Five**

We will aim to publish 40 titles, of which 5 will be selected for digital innovation. A critical milestone of this fifth project year will be the June meeting of the Oversight Committee, which will take the form of an initial assessment of the project's impact, success, and future directions.



## 6.0 Financial plan

### 6.1 Five-year summary

The following table lays out anticipated costs for the provision of this program:

	Who?	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>Total titles</b>		-	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>40</b>
<i>Regular</i>		-	8	12	20	35
<i>Digital innovation</i>		-	2	3	5	5
<b>Book costs</b>						
Series Editor Honoraria	ACP	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$12,500	\$20,000
Reviewer payments	ACP	\$0	\$8,000	\$12,000	\$20,000	\$32,000
Editorial board travel	ACP	\$0	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Project mgmt. editorial	ACP	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$12,500	\$20,000
Project mgmt. production	MPS	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$12,500	\$20,000
Developmental editing	ACP	\$0	\$64,000	\$96,000	\$160,000	\$256,000
Copyediting	ACP	\$0	\$16,000	\$24,000	\$40,000	\$64,000
Typesetting/Mark up	MPS	\$0	\$14,400	\$21,600	\$36,000	\$57,600
Indexing	MPS	\$0	\$14,400	\$21,600	\$36,000	\$57,600
Design	MPS	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$12,500	\$20,000
Outreach/publicity	MPS	\$0	\$1,500	\$2,250	\$3,750	\$6,000
Platform	MPS	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Extra programming	MPS	\$0	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Author Honoraria	ACP	\$0	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$40,000
Permissions allowance	ACP	\$0	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$12,500	\$20,000
<b>Cost per book</b>			<b>\$17,930</b>	<b>\$17,397</b>	<b>\$16,970</b>	<b>\$16,355</b>
Program travel		\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000	\$0	\$5,000
Program publicity/events		\$10,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Staff: Program Coordinator		\$40,000	\$40,800	\$41,600	\$42,500	\$43,400
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$225,100</b>	<b>\$312,550</b>	<b>\$471,750</b>	<b>\$707,600</b>
<b>5-year total</b>						<b>\$1,782,000</b>

**Print sales:** Revenues from print sales are anticipated but not included in these projections, as the income needed to fund the Lever Press in the start-up period is expected to come entirely from institutional commitments. We do propose to sell print editions of the works published by the Lever Press, but not to monetize downloadable electronic editions. Because the future of print formats for scholarly work seems uncertain to us, we would regard any revenue from such sales to be ancillary. Revenues from such sales will be divided 50:50 with the Oberlin Group, with the portion for

Amherst/Michigan covering the distribution and sales costs associated with the production of print editions as well as returning a small surplus for reinvestment in their systems and processes.

**Series Editor Honoraria:** Rather than relying on acquisitions editors, the Lever Press will work with excellent academic series editors from Oberlin Group member institutions to build its editorial program. As well as reducing overhead, we anticipate that the reputations of these individuals will provide early credibility for the imprint. For each title contracted in a series, the series editor who recruited the manuscript would receive an honorarium of \$500.

**Reviewer Payments:** Each manuscript would be reviewed by two outside specialist reviewers. Each reviewer would receive a payment of \$200 for review of a full manuscript, less for a proposal. We anticipate an acceptance rate of 50% because materials would have been preselected by a series editor. Reviewers of innovation titles would receive the same payment, even if the nature of their review might be different (e.g., involve assessment of data as well as narrative).

**Editorial Board Travel:** We anticipate that most of the meetings of the Editorial Board (the group drawn from pledging Oberlin Group institutions) would happen remotely, but it feels important to us that the group meet in person once a year to ensure that there is a common understanding of the scope of the joint endeavor. This is particularly important since we anticipate term limits with new members joining every few years.

**Project Management:** We would use freelance labor for editorial, typesetting, design, and indexing and have assumed a per-title project management fee of \$500 per book. This covers various staffing and materials expenses related to preparation of manuscripts, correspondence, trafficking of proofs, etc. Edington would be in charge of editorial project management while Colman would be in charge of production management.

**Developmental Editing:** Acquisitions editors in conventional presses play two main roles; recruitment and development of manuscripts. The recruitment role in the Lever Press would be played by academic series editors, supported by the labor of our staff members (Edington, McCollough, Welzenbach). However, we believe that a full service to authors also requires the type of manuscript reorganization and shaping that is often described as “developmental editing” which would be accomplished by expert freelance workers, paid up to \$20 per page.

**Copyediting:** Consistency, grammar, spelling etc. checks are commodity services that can be performed by freelance copyeditors. We estimate \$5 per typeset page, which is standard for a moderate level copyedit. Along with the developmental editing, copyediting will be coordinated by Amherst College Press.

**Typesetting/mark up:** While the term “typesetting” originates in the print age, the activity described here involves a variety of types of formatting which could be different depending on the eventual medium in which a title would be expressed. Our estimate of \$4.50 per typeset page is based on the workflow adopted at Michigan Publishing for transformation of a copyedited Word manuscript into a richly-tagged XML version that can be represented online in HTML, converted into a range of ebook formats, and output as a print-ready file.

**Indexing:** Most publishers’ contracts place the burden of preparing an index on the author, offering at best to charge back the creation of an index. This is a sore point with many authors and we suggest that the Lever Press might be differentiated as “author-centric” if it paid for indexes as a matter of course. The \$3.50 per typeset page rate is a standard freelance cost.

**Design:** This \$500 per book charge is for production of a cover design, and represents a standard freelancer cost.

**Outreach/publicity:** While the marketing of Lever Press books would be substantially the responsibility of the web developer included as part Amherst’s cost share, an allowance is made here for the costs of production of ancillary materials to advertise both individual books and the full collection.

**Platform:** We anticipate that Lever Press titles may be some of the first to appear on the Hydra Fedora-based multimodal publishing platform being developed at Michigan Publishing as a successor to our DLXS system. We will be working with a business consultant to determine the actual cost per publisher of using this hosted platform, so the proposed figure of \$10,000 a year is something of a placeholder. However, this seems to be a reasonable estimate based on comparable services (e.g., Digital Commons implementations for single publications), although those are mostly geared to journals. We anticipate that the fee would be constant irrespective of number of titles hosted.

**Extra Programming:** Determining the nature and scope of “innovation projects” will be an important activity for the Oversight Committee. Since the Hydra Fedora platform is being designed with digital scholarship in mind, we believe that many currently-envisaged innovations (such as the presentation of companion audio or video files) could be accommodated relatively easily.

**Author Honoraria:** We have made the assumption that authors will be willing to accept an “up front” payment of \$1,000 per book and will waive the rights to continuing royalties. This will substantially reduce continuing financial management expenses. Experience at Michigan Publishing shows that it is unusual for authors to earn more than \$1,000 in royalties over the lifetime of an academic monograph, but we are realistic about the way in which hope and experience do not always mesh. Should a

contract based on honoraria not prove realistic, we still believe that the sums expressed on this line would be more than sufficient to cover royalty payments.

**Permissions Allowance:** Like indexing, the cost of clearing third party permissions (mostly for visual materials) are generally articulated in contracts as the responsibility of the author. We propose that it would align with the concept of Lever Press as being uniquely “author-centric” if we were to provide a limited fund to subsidize permissions fees for each author. We would also propose to work with the Copyright Office at the University of Michigan and copyright experts around the Oberlin Group to push for Fair Use determinations whenever possible.

**Program Travel:** This is to support the needs of Lever Press champions to both recruit more institutional pledges and identify key series editors at Oberlin Group institutions. Every alternate year would be seen as a period of consolidation, with less travel needed.

**Program Publicity/Events:** As well as promoting individual books, some budget will be needed for building interest in the entire program. We anticipate that event funding would leverage other support from Oberlin Group institutions where the Lever Press initiative was being promoted.

## 6.2 Funding requirement

This business plan requires funding to the value of \$1.782 million over a 5-year period. This would need to be provided through an institutional membership scheme through which members of the Oberlin Group (and potentially institutions too from outside the Group) would make an annual payment – equivalent to a small percentage of the annual acquisitions budget.

Year	Investment requirement	Cost per institution based on 20 members	Cost per institution based on 40 members
1	\$65,000	\$3,250	\$1,625
2	\$225,100	\$11,255	\$5,628
3	\$312,550	\$15,628	\$7,814
4	\$471,750	\$23,588	\$11,794
5	\$707,600	\$35,380	\$17,690
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,782,000</b>	<b>\$89,100</b>	<b>\$44,550</b>

The costs shown above are averaged; we propose a tiered pricing model in which smaller institutions would be expected to make a smaller contribution than much larger institutions. The exact required contributions will be calculated once an initial assessment is made of which institutions wish to participate in this initiative.

It should also be noted that these costs represent a maximum amount to be covered by the institutional membership fee. Costs may also be offset by grants and or revenue from print sales, although the Oversight Committee may decide to reinvest this in additional digital innovation projects, for example.

The payment would be made annually, but a firm commitment to the five-year program is required. As part of membership, each institution will also receive a print edition of every Lever Press book as well as other exclusive benefits to be determined.

Authors will not be required to make any payments directly, regardless of whether they are attached to a member institution or not. It's an important principle of this program that we publish widely, on behalf of scholars from any institution.

## Appendix A: About Amherst College Press and Michigan Publishing

**The Amherst College Press** was launched in January of 2014 by Amherst College as a response to what liberal arts colleges increasingly experience as an untenable ecosystem for scholarly communication producing work characterized by high cost, restricted access, and limited utility to faculty and students in a liberal arts setting. Accordingly, the Amherst College Press (situated in, and supported by, the Amherst College Library) seeks to create a sustainable alternative to the current system for scholarly communication by developing a non-market solution with outputs that will be digital-first, open access, and developed with a view to the curricular needs and research priorities of liberal arts colleges.

**Michigan Publishing** is the hub of scholarly publishing at the University of Michigan, and is a division of University of Michigan Library. Michigan Publishing supports the creation and distribution of scholarly and educational materials in a range of formats for wide dissemination and permanent preservation, provides publishing services to the University of Michigan community and beyond, and advocates for the broadest possible access to scholarship everywhere. The flagship imprint of Michigan Publishing is the University of Michigan Press, founded in 1930, which produces around 100 books a year, many award-winning. The majority of these titles are scholarly monographs in the humanities and qualitative social sciences; the Press also publishes best-selling English Language Teaching (ELT) materials and has expertise in textbook development. There is also a regional list, focused on the history and culture of the Upper Midwest.