Six years in the making, this began with an email exchange in July 2010 (almost exactly six years ago)
Two Directors with similar ideas – Barbara Fister, Gustavus Adolphus and Bryn Geffert, Amherst College

These are excerpts from an email July 28, 2010 by Bryn Geffert to the Oberlin Library Directors after Barbara’s initial proposal
If one considers our role as supporting student and faculty production of new ideas, and our growing role in disseminating their research, this is a natural fit for academic libraries. Some of us do it through our institutional repositories, some publish open access journals, some institutions, such as Amherst, have started their own press. And this refers to research libraries, and we are liberal arts colleges. So, still, one might ask, what exactly is the problem that needs fixing?
What exactly are the problems we are trying to address?

Image from Bryn’s presentation to the Annapolis Group in 2012. Some see scholarly publishing is in crisis.
Crisis or Pressure Points

- **Academic Library Budgets** – shrinking, flat, or very limited growth
  - Increasing journal costs at the expense of book budgets, but all formats have increased in costs
  - Fewer monographs purchased annually

- **University Presses** – shrinking number while there has been a consolidation of major commercial publishers
  - Decreasing outlets for humanities and social science publications
  - Declining numbers for print publications
Estimates now are about 200 copies for first runs
These changes in publishing have an impact not only on library budgets, but also our younger faculty who are seeking publishing outlets for the books in order to obtain tenure
Email was shared in July, in October the directors met and approved a taskforce. Sharing for the purposes of those individuals new to their institutions. This has been a six year journey and many leadership changes along the way. Report issued in March 2014 provided several options for Oberlin Directors to respond to. Decided to pursue the option of forming a new publishing
editorial plan: We will propose a process for establishing the initial editorial focus for the Lever Press. This process will provide an opportunity for faculty on our campuses to participate in the creation of monograph series that will feature materials broadly of interest to our campuses.

governance plans: We are creating governance documents for both the editorial program and overall planning and oversight of the press. This too will provide an opportunity for interested librarians and faculty to play a role in shaping the direction of the press going forward.

business plan: a five year financial plan that will allow the press to establish and sustain itself.

The Lever Press will not all by itself change the face of scholarly communication, but we are increasingly convinced that it represents an excellent opportunity for us to collectively intervene to help transform this system, and to provide a platform for innovation in the liberal arts.
“Disruption through example”

“The Lever Press will not all by itself change the face of scholarly communication, but we are increasingly convinced that it represents an excellent opportunity for us to collectively intervene to help transform this system, and to provide a platform for innovation in the liberal arts.”

Lever Initiative Update, June 2, 2015
https://leverinitiative.wordpress.com/2015/06/02/update-june-2015/

Charles Watkinson calls this “disruption through example” – Inside Higher Ed, Jan. 8, 2016
In the meantime, other initiatives have developed
And some of us are supporting multiple OA monograph publishing initiatives – so how is our initiative different?

Other Initiatives, just a few

- Luminos – shared cost model
- Knowledge Unlatched – libraries share costs
- Open Monograph Press – Public Knowledge Project, open source platform
- Open Humanities Press – cooperative of scholars
- Open Book Publishers – libraries support through membership
- Open Library of Humanities – library partnership subsidies
- OpenEdition – French, supporting membership
- Unglue.it – pledges
- Ubiquity Press – British, author pays BPC (book publishing charge)
How is our effort different?

- No charge for authors
- Authors receive a small payment
- Born digital, all works are openly accessible and free
- Cooperative by academic liberal arts colleges – [more than 40 institutions] - funded by library budget
- Collaborative partnership — the Oberlin Group, the Amherst College Press, and Michigan Publishing
- 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.” [Lever Press Business Plan]

No charge for authors nor their institutions
Authors receive a small payment after work is accepted for publication
All works are openly accessible and free to anyone with an Internet connection
Cooperative by academic liberal arts colleges, funding is from library budgets based on size of acquisition budget
Partnership — the Oberlin Group, the Amherst College Press, and Michigan Publishing
Focus is on liberal arts – emphasis on humanities and social sciences
AND

“Librarians and faculty at the participating institutions will be involved in setting the agenda and defining the identity and the future of the press.”

A frequent complaint by faculty is the lack of editorial support they now receive. It is critical that the press achieve a status that will be accepted for faculty tenure and promotion.
Next five years

- **Oversight Committee** met Jan. 25 & 26, 2016 in Amherst for the Kickoff
- **Editorial Board** – 12 faculty members
- **Summit of Stakeholders Meeting** June 22 at Annapolis

Goal:
- 10 publications in Year 2
- 15 publications in Year 3
- 25 publications in Year 4
- 40 publications in Year 5

Oversight committee – librarians and faculty
Editorial Board – Karil is a member and speaking next
Becky shared information on the new platform, entitled Fulcrum. Which is a fitting piece that connects to the name chosen for our press – Lever.

“Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.”

Archimedes
So from our not so modest proposal that asks us to imagine:
“that the Oberlin Group decided to become a leader in the open access movement.
that we shifted our energy from complaining about that state of academic publishing, and banded together to transform it.
that we conceived of academic libraries as institutions that no longer limit themselves to collecting and distributing knowledge, but...produce knowledge...”

We have launched a press with the hopes of changing the publishing world as well as sharing our scholarship to change the world.
Thank you

More resources follow this page if you are interested in reading more about the development and progress of the Lever Press.
Additional resources

- Lever Initiative – background - [https://leveninitiative.wordpress.com/](https://leveninitiative.wordpress.com/)
- Geffert, Bryn. “Lever Initiative,” Annapolis Group Presentation, June 19, 2015 - [https://youtu.be/9lm2k8k1MjI](https://youtu.be/9lm2k8k1MjI)
- Eddington, Mark. The Commons of Scholarly Communication: Beyond the Firm - [http://ar.educausa.edu/articles/2015/1/the-commons-of-scholarly-communication-beyond-the-firm](http://ar.educausa.edu/articles/2015/1/the-commons-of-scholarly-communication-beyond-the-firm)
- Geffert, Bryn. “A Future for Publishing and Scholarly Communication?” Presentation to Annapolis Group, June 2012. (PDF shared with Oberlin Directors, June 2012)