



## Profile

# Anthony Cond

**Anthony Cond is Managing Director of Liverpool University Press, the UK's third oldest university press. With the current resurgence of interest and activities around university presses, *Insights* managed to catch up with Anthony to find out exactly what it takes to run a successful university press.**

Liverpool University Press (LUP) has a distinguished history of publishing exceptional research since its founding in 1899 and specializes in modern languages, history, literary studies and visual culture. It has expanded significantly in recent years and is now seen as a global ambassador for the University of Liverpool. When asked about his role as Managing Director of LUP, Anthony began by saying that he is responsible for 'leading an outstanding team that publishes around 75 humanities and social sciences books and 500 journal articles each year. The role includes P&L responsibility, strategic direction, acquisitions and business development, innovation, staff management, and all the usual stuff that comes with heading a business.' In addition to this, he said that he also 'commissions the Press's lists in the Modern Languages, and flies the flag externally'.

Anthony has a good pedigree in academic publishing, with a wide and varied range of experience. 'I started off as a marketer at Blackwell Publishing in Oxford, working full time while also a full-time postgrad. I'm still not sure how I managed it. I then moved on to Polity Press where, aside from the privilege of working on books by Derrida, Bourdieu, Habermas and their ilk, I had the good fortune that one of Polity's founders is the publishing-focused Cambridge sociologist John B Thompson. In particular, my tenure coincided with his fieldwork for *Books in the Digital Age: The Transformation of Academic and Higher Education Publishing in Britain and the United States* so each meeting in Cambridge had the feel of a tutorial, with the result that I was particularly well grounded in the context of scholarly publishing.'

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201 From here, Anthony headed northwards. 'I left Polity for love and moved north, initially working in university corporate communications before happening to see an advert for a Commissioning Editor at Liverpool University Press, which had recently been restructured under guidance from David Attwooll (who remains the Press's Chair today). I got the job; 18 months after that I was Editorial Director; 18 months after that I was Managing Director. That was eight years ago.' Since then, there really has been no looking back for Anthony!

He went on to say, 'In 2015, the Press was awarded both The IPG Frankfurt Book Fair Academic and Professional Publisher of the Year (following on from the likes of SAGE and Bloomsbury) and The Bookseller Independent Academic, Educational and Professional Publisher of the Year.' This clutch of awards seems fair reward for the work that has gone into developing the Press over recent years.

But, success may often be accompanied by failure. When asked whether he had made any mistakes, Anthony replied, 'Plenty of embarrassing moments, but I'm not sharing them.' And maybe that is the right attitude – not wasting too much time dwelling on life's less positive experiences!

What is clear, though, is that Anthony has plenty of other distractions in his life which might prevent him dwelling too long on the negatives anyway. 'I have three children under eleven, I am a primary school governor, I am a director of ALPSP (the leading trade body for scholarly publishing) and I write about university presses in the hours that I'm not in one ...', so it came as no surprise when he added, 'I don't have a huge amount of time to actually relax, but family life is the single most important thing to me.'

The success of LUP comes at a time when, after years of gentle decline, university presses seem to be undergoing a mini renaissance. Your Editor was keen to know what Anthony believes to be the key drivers for this resurgence. 'What is interesting about the establishment of a host of new UPs in the UK is the range of rationales articulated, including the potential of open access (OA), dissatisfaction with existing publishing options (either by format or publishing company), the potential to increase impact, enhancement of staff and student recruitment and of international profile, diversification of library roles, and so on. There is passion and energy in the new UPs and I'm excited to see how they will develop', though he did go on to say that '... although, all of the universities concerned will need to be mindful that they have made a long-term commitment. I'd add that while OUP and CUP obviously attract the headlines given their scale, there is a vibrant middle-sized tier of presses in the UK – Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Policy Press (Bristol), Wales – with excellent and committed staff, whose publishing programmes have become even more important as consolidation of the academic publishing industry continues.'

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LUP recently hosted the 'University Press Redux' conference, so Anthony was asked what he had hoped would be the main outcomes from the event. He responded enthusiastically, 'The conference, which took place in March and for which LUP partnered with the Academic Book of the Future project, was an opportunity for the great range of UPs to come together for the first time in the UK to understand where we are, what we do and where we go next. Questions as important for Cambridge University Press, founded in 1534, as they are for the White Rose University Press launched in 2016.' He added, 'The conference included sessions with authors, funders, students, librarians, intermediaries, US presses, presses from continental Europe, presses large, small, OA and commercial. Despite the diversity across 150 delegates from close to 40 UPs, there was no doubting a shared commitment. It was a fascinating and inspiring couple of days.'

Integral to LUP is its close relationship with the University Library. When asked what benefits Anthony feels that this relationship brings to both parties, he replied unequivocally. 'The LUP/Library partnership is one of equals, pooling a range of expertise for the common

good rather than pitting one against the other. Both partners are vastly experienced in the curation of scholarly materials. The Press/Library Board at Liverpool meets regularly and outcomes of the partnership include Modern Languages Open, and our successful joint e-textbooks bid to Jisc. We're lucky to have Andrew Barker (Head of Academic Liaison & Heritage Collections) as a key contact in the Library. He and I have solved many a scholarly publishing conundrum over a veggie burger and Beatles trivia.'

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When in doubt, Anthony and colleague Andrew Barker consult those other Liverpool icons, The Beatles, for inspiration

This talk of 'scholarly publishing conundrums' prompted your Editor to ask Anthony what frustrates him most about the current publishing environment. 'There is an obvious disjuncture between supply and demand in scholarly publishing: authors need to publish for career purposes, and that has resulted in massive over-publication for "the market". Only finite funds are available to purchase the fruits of scholarly research, and those are spent predominantly on scientific, technological, engineering and medical (STEM) journals. That puts pressure on humanities and social sciences (HSS) subjects and that puts pressure on the monograph. I grow weary of the endless 'death of the monograph' articles and blog posts but it seems to me that as well as keeping the bar high so that university presses remain a home for essential scholarship, presses also have a duty to experiment with model and form whilst preserving what is valued by our authors and readers. All other things being equal, university presses by virtue of their location are uniquely placed to publish what the Academy wants in the way the Academy wants it.'

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It is hard to talk about publishing nowadays without mentioning OA, so your Editor asked the inevitable question about how OA is impacting the world of the university press. Anthony referred me to some of his early comments, but added, '... it's become a driver for the new university presses. For the established presses it simply has to be part of the offer where possible, the very principle of OA chimes with the reason university presses exist, but obviously there are costs in open access and most UPs are strongest in HSS which cannot match STEM for funding. For that reason OA will be additive not substitutive – something UPs can and will offer – but for presses to be sustainable in the long run, not the only thing on offer. LUP was the first publisher to sign up to Knowledge Unlatched, *Modern Languages Open* was the first broad HSS OA 'megajournal' from a UK UP, and one of our OA e-textbooks will be used on the largest taught modules in the University – replacing a £56 textbook from a commercial publisher for 1,000 international students in the Management School. At the same time, however, LUP is entirely self-funding and expected to make

a surplus each year so I have to ensure our books are of the highest quality and continue to sell in a range of formats and that our journals remain essential subscriptions for institutions. Running an established university press is like running several businesses at once.'

So, in rounding off the interview, a bit of future gazing seemed appropriate. When asked to identify any significant publishing opportunities on the horizon, Anthony replied, 'With student satisfaction a core part of many university strategies and student expectation frequently being that, having paid tuition fees, resources should be freely available, it seems to me that bespoke OA (or at least free to the institution's students) e-textbooks are in some ways an easy win for universities. Customized content for a course, freely available and enhanced beyond print. It's being done but not enough of it is being done by university presses and the institutions themselves.'

With this, your Editor thanked Anthony for a fascinating insight into the work of the university press and for taking time to talk to *Insights*.

#### Abbreviations and Acronyms

A list of the abbreviations and acronyms used in this and other *Insights* articles can be accessed here – click on the URL below and then select the 'Abbreviations and Acronyms' link at the top of the page it directs you to: <http://www.uksg.org/publications#aa>

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