

May 13, 2019

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Marc Tessier-Lavigne, President
Persis Drell, Provost
Stanford University

Dear President Tessier-Lavigne and Provost Drell,

The American Comparative Literature Association, along with the other undersigned associations listed below, express their concern with respect to the recent conversations regarding the annual subsidy provided to Stanford University Press by Stanford University. University presses such as Stanford's are essential to scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. The rigorous peer review to which university presses subject manuscripts ensures adherence to the highest academic standards, without sacrificing the lucidity necessary to reach larger audiences.

University presses play a vital role in helping young scholars present their new ideas to the world, breaking new intellectual ground. They are thus ideally positioned to recognize emergent research areas, and to draw intellectual and public attention to new fields of inquiry, creating new audiences for new conversations as they evolve. A strong university press is a vital element of any major research university, and Stanford University Press, with its excellent reputation across a broad range of scholarly fields, enhances the reach and impact of the university which sponsors it.

Since major university presses perform such valuable work curating the most challenging, exciting, and rigorous new ideas, and presenting those ideas to a larger public, they greatly enhance the reputations of the universities that sponsor them. Yet since so much of the great work undertaken by university presses is so innovative, and since markets for such work can be small, university presses nearly always require some form of subsidy to remain economically viable, especially if they do not have an endowment or another reliable source of income, and especially in an era when libraries at many universities have themselves been forced to reduce their acquisitions budgets. The subsidies involved are small in the context of an overall university budget, but the benefits to the university and to the broader scholarly community are very great indeed.

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Support for a university press is an investment in the future of scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, and in enhancing the role of the host university in the important conversations that scholarship will create in the future. We applaud the recent decision to rescind, at least temporarily, the proposed elimination of the subsidy that Stanford University Press receives, and hope that the university draws on the expertise of the scholarly publishing community in creating a long-term financial solution for the Press.

Sincerely,

American Anthropological Association
American Comparative Literature Association
American Historical Association
American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
American Sociological Association
Association for Jewish Studies
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
International Center for Medieval Art
Latin American Studies Association
Middle East Studies Association
Modern Language Association
Phi Beta Kappa Society
Rhetoric Society of America
Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing
Society of Architectural Historians
Society of Biblical Literature

