

May 8, 2019

President Marc Tessier-Lavigne  
Provost Persis Drell  
Stanford University  
Palo Alto, California

Dear President Tessier-Lavigne and Provost Drell:

The American Historical Association is deeply concerned to learn that Stanford University's financial support for its distinguished press was recently under consideration for immediate major cuts and might still be severely reduced. While we are aware of the challenges facing any university administrator in the face of budget constraints, Stanford University Press has a long history of publishing works that are fundamental to the development of historical knowledge. This vital scholarship should not be sacrificed to contingent exigencies or abandoned to the calculations of profitability.

As academic publishing has evolved over the past century, the world's great universities such as Stanford have embraced the duty to support their presses and thereby to sustain scholarship and scholarly communication through books, journals, and now online publishing. Publishing important scholarship has been a core mission of Stanford University from its founding, and the press published its first book in 1892. In the years since then it has become a leading academic publisher in history and related disciplines, greatly enhancing Stanford's educational and research mission, while contributing to public culture and the creation of new knowledge.

The Press has also consistently published signature books by established and influential scholars in a wide range of historical subfields. Many of these works have profoundly altered what we know about the past, and led to the development of new subdisciplines. Just a few examples from recent decades include Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976), James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest* (1992), and Brodwyn Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights: Citizenship and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (2008). These are field-shaping works published across decades, and more examples could be cited that have built the reputation of the press and the university.

Barbara Weinstein, former President of the AHA, launched her publishing career with a Stanford University Press book, *The Amazon Rubber Boom* (1983). Weinstein has gone on to have a distinguished career as a leading historian of Latin America, publishing several more books and many articles. Stanford University Press has launched the careers of hundreds of historians, publishing their first books, improving their arguments through rigorous peer review, and contributing to the renewal of our discipline from one generation to the next.

Stanford University Press has also led the way in bringing humanities and history publishing into the digital age, in the process obtaining prestigious grants from the Andrew W. Mellon foundation to support this innovative work. These groundbreaking digital publishing projects include several historical works including Nicholas Bauch's *Enchanting the Desert* (which arguably helped the author obtain a tenure track position in his field), and Thomas S. Mullaney's, *The Chinese Deathscape*, with more to be published in the coming years.

Now, more than ever, our discipline and the broader research community of which it is a part needs a strong Stanford University Press. Please ensure that Stanford remains true to the fundamental compact between society and its great universities to add to our store of knowledge in all its forms, including the extensive research and complex argumentation whose medium is scholarly books. Surely, Stanford University has the capacity to ensure that its Press remains strong for historians now and in generations yet to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Grossman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

James Grossman  
Executive Director