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25 April 2019

Dear President Tessier-Lavigne and Provost Drell,

We, the undersigned, write to express our concern about the announced plan to eliminate the modest base subsidy to the Stanford University Press. We believe this will cripple the press with likely fatal results. In particular, we would like to express our strong belief that any decision about drastic restructuring at the Press should be made only after full consultation and well-prepared discussion in the academic senate, with a chance for all members of the university community to be heard. Moreover, we urge that any decision be based on a careful examination of the Press's operations by an external committee of experts with experience in academic publishing who can offer an assessment of the Stanford University Press and suggestions for improvement.

University presses serve a vital need, disseminating scholarly work and communicating the results of academic research. They exist expressly in order to publish works that are not necessarily commercial. Accordingly, they operate by design at a loss, which is made up by a combination of endowment income (both Harvard and Princeton have endowments of over \$100 million), journal income, fundraising and subsidies from their universities. The small annual subsidy the Press receives pays dividends in the form of wide-ranging lists that showcase a variety of academic disciplines and, because of the Press's reputation for excellence and thoughtfulness, regularly compete for authors with much larger and better-funded presses. Eliminating the base subsidy will not only undermine an important venue for scholarship but will also send an extremely unfortunate signal about Stanford's commitment to scholarship in the arts, humanities and social sciences—all fields of inquiry vital to a world class university, as indeed is a strong university press.

As historians, we would also like to point out that the present moment, with the world of learning, knowledge and scholarship under daily political assault, is an especially inopportune time to flag in our support for the dissemination of knowledge and the results of academic research.

We hope you will reconsider any decision to eliminate the subsidy to Stanford University Press and urge you to, at the very least, present any such decision to the academic senate for discussion to ensure you have a complete picture of the value of the Press.

Sincerely,  
Matt Sommer, Chair, History Department  
Jessica Riskin, Vice Chair  
Professor Keith Baker  
Professor Jennifer Burns  
Professor Gordon Chang  
Professor David Como  
Professor James P. Daughton  
Professor Rowan Dorin  
Professor Paula Findlen  
Professor Zephyr Frank  
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Professor Fiona Griffiths  
Professor Gabrielle Hecht  
Professor Allyson Hobbs  
Professor Katherine Jolluck  
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Professor Thomas Mullaney  
Professor Norman Naimark  
Professor Robert Proctor  
Professor Richard Roberts  
Professor Aron Rodrigue  
Professor Priya Satia  
Professor Londa Schiebinger  
Professor Matthew Sommer  
Professor Peter Stansky  
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