

Cambridge University Press and Censorship

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21 August 2017 (last updated 6 September 2026)

Cite as: Martin Paul Eve, "Cambridge University Press and Censorship", *eve.gd: Martin Paul Eve*, August 21, 2017,
<https://doi.org/10.59348/hm2mv-dmq59>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59348/hm2mv-dmq59>

Available at: <https://eve.gd/2017/08/21/cambridge-university-press-and-censorship/>

The [recent self-censorship](#) by Cambridge University Press in China is billed, by some, as an assault on academic freedom. It is certainly a worrying trend.

There are, though, a couple of responses that I wanted to note about this:

1. [Following David Price](#), I note that making material open access with an open license allows for the free, open, online dissemination of scholarly work. Depositing copies of this final version of record in institutional and subject repositories – in effect creating a distributed network of copies – would make such censorship far harder.
2. If CUP was funded *by* Cambridge University, instead of being a cash cow *for* Cambridge University (or even just being forced to keep itself afloat), this problem would be easier to counter. At an annual revenue of [£269.1 million and an £8.2m surplus](#), however, CUP is actually a big business (though smaller than OUP). The reason that it has to bow to pressure from China is because it has to bow to *market* pressure. If CUP did not have economic concerns about its distribution practices, it would not have to become complicit in censoring its own work in China. In short: while CUP has to sell to China, it will do what it can to preserve that revenue stream. Certainly, it could take a principled stand. However, that is easier to do when one doesn't rely on money from the people demanding certain behaviours.

Update: [CUP has reposted the articles](#).

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