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PARLOR PRESS LAUNCHES GLASSBEAD BOOKS, INITIATIVE TO PUBLISH LOW-COST AND FREE BOOKS UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS LICENSE

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PARLOR PRESS, an independent scholarly press run by scholars and writers, announces its newest imprint, GLASSBEAD BOOKS (<http://parlorpress.com/glassbead.html>). All books published under the imprint will appear as free, downloadable books in PDF format and as low-cost, high quality print versions. Each will be published under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.5 License, which means the books can be disseminated widely for educational and other non-commercial purposes.

The first Glassbead book, *Looking for a Fight: Is There a Republican War on Science?* was published on September 25, 2006. *Looking for a Fight*: started life as a "book event"—an online, roundtable-style critical symposium on Mooney's work, hosted at [Crooked Timber](http://crookedtimber.org) (crookedtimber.org). Eight contributors offered reviews, discussion and critical commentary. And Mooney responded to his critics. Now the event is a book, available in print for the first time and online for free download at the book's website, <http://parlorpress.com/lookingforafight.html>).

Parlor Press and Glassbead Books

The emergence of Glassbead represents a convergence of just a few of the publishing opportunities enabled by digital technologies. Parlor Press—itsself an independent publisher managed solely by scholars and writers--has the flexibility and track record to help foster new publishing ventures like Glassbead. According to Parlor Press publisher David Blakesley, who is also a professor at Purdue University, "Since we launched in 2002, our goal has been to promote independence and innovation in the publishing world, helping others create their own opportunities for cultivating first-rate scholarly and creative work. Collaborative efforts like the one between Parlor and Glassbead, or between Parlor and the [WAC Clearinghouse](http://wacclearinghouse.org), are new formations in an attention economy. We're looking forward to creating more of these alchemic moments."

Glassbead Books

Editor
John Holbo
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Glassbead books will exemplify what academic book publishing should be in an age of electronic publishing: namely, a generous gift culture. All Glassbead books will be available as quality, affordable paperbacks, but also as free PDF downloads. All will be released under a Creative Commons (non-commercial) license. Academic book publishing has poor



circulation, which is variously diagnosed but generally goes by the name ‘the publishing crisis in the humanities’. We propose that free e plus CC will scour a few clogged arteries and—not only will our patient not die—we predict she will feel a bit better right away. Glassbead will exemplify what academic book publishing should be in another sense: namely, *healthy public intellectual culture*. We will purvey a wide variety of content—ranging from academic specialist works to journalism to critical editions of public domain fiction to new fiction. But we aim to make our mark with works that solve *intellectual* circulation problems—within the ivory tower and without. We will make books that are maximally available, searchable, usable—by the public and by academics. We will make books the general reader (not so mythical as sometimes reported) and the academic reader will *want to make use of*.

Our most distinctive offerings—our first releases—will be “book events.” Born on blogs as massive, multi-reviewer online seminars, the book events are hybrid creatures, unknown in a paper age. We are proud of the critical work they do, the range of participants they have attracted. And, after the fact, they look quite nice on paper. And we hereby demonstrate what an intellectual gift culture can do for the rest of academic publishing. Not all of these books will be narrowly academic, but the case for their intellectual functionality is clearest in the scholarly cases, and perhaps clearest of all in the humanities. Every book published in the humanities should be widely read, discussed, publicly reviewed—should have its own lively comment box, not to put too fine a point on it. Because any scholarly book incapable of rousing a measure of sustained, considerate, knowledgeable, intelligent criticism and downright *bookchat* from a few dozen souls specializing in that area . . . needn’t have been published, after all. Turning the point around: in an age in which technology assures any book worth publishing can be accompanied by such an event, any book that lacks one has been sadly failed by the academic culture in which it was so unfortunate as to be born. We hope to do our part and, even more so, set an excellent example of how to keep ideas circulating.

The book events staged to date have been hosted, primarily, at [Crooked Timber](http://crookedtimber.org) (crookedtimber.org) and [The Valve](http://thevalve.org) (thevalve.org). Our first “book event” Glassbead book is Chris Mooney’s *The Republican War on Science*. Behind it will follow book versions of some subset of the events dedicated to: *Theory’s Empire*; *The Literary Wittgenstein*; *How Novels Think*; *Maps, Graphs and Trees*; *Freakonomics*; *The Wealth of Networks*; *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*; *Iron Council*. And we have more events to come.