Temple University Press proposes creating a mobile application based around their book, Forgotten Philadelphia: Lost Architecture of the Quaker City. The book, published in 2007, is a narrative of the choices Philadelphia made in its planning: what kind of city Philadelphia wanted to be, and thus, what buildings had to be removed to achieve this vision. The author, Thomas Keels, describes in great detail these lost buildings and structures. He offers historical context to their building and destruction and what each says about the kind of city Philadelphia was at any given time.

The Press’ goal is to use the rich illustrations and specific locations cited in the book as a guide to the “lost city.” TU Press envisions an immersive app that guides users to destinations written about in the book, and using a combination of an augmented reality environment and the author’s narrative, lets them experience the forgotten city. For example, using the app, a user could walk to Front and Spruce Streets, read about the caves which were the original dwelling spots of William Penn’s first settlers, and then, pointing their phone’s camera toward a directed spot, see images of the caves in the location in which they were first located. Thus, the app will be both an interactive learning source and fun walking guide to the city.

Apps based on books are an important feature of electronic publishing. Rather than simply publishing e-books as one alternate “binding,” apps offer a substantive experience for readers that supplement and enhance the value of print books, and would allow the Press to monetize subsidiary uses for books without licensing out such work to secondary publishers. This would create new revenue streams for their products.

Building the app will be a unique opportunity for the Press to work collaboratively with students in the Fox School of Business, and as many of the photos from the book are part of the Library’s Urban Archives, it will be an opportunity for several important parts of the University to develop, commercialize, and disseminate the work of the University in broadly important ways.