

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS COMMITTEE
FOR
ACADEMIC YEAR 2009–2010**

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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Executive summary

Like other university presses, the UMass Press has been adjusting to a rapidly changing environment for scholarly book publishing. New digital modes of scholarly communication are emerging, academic libraries are buying fewer monographs, and new economic models based on “open access” distribution of electronic editions are being discussed. At the same time, printed books remain a primary vehicle for the dissemination of scholarship in many fields. The UMass Press continues to publish a strong list of peer-reviewed books in print form, while exploring new opportunities created by the digital revolution. The Press has digitized more than 900 of its titles through alliances with Google, Amazon, and other Internet-based companies. In partnership with the W.E.B. Du Bois Library it has placed a small selection of titles in the ScholarWorks digital repository on an open-access basis. It has continued to maintain good relationships with authors, faculty, and scholars in the fields in which it publishes, and UMass Press books continue to receive significant awards and excellent reviews.

Background

Founded in 1963, the Press seeks to support and enhance the University’s stature as a major research institution by publishing outstanding works of scholarship. The staff also provides general advice to faculty and graduate students on a wide range of publishing questions. Since its inception, the Press has sold over 2,000,000 individual volumes. Today it has more than 950 titles in print. Eight employees, along with student interns and outside sales representatives, produce and market 30 to 40 new titles annually. The main offices of the Press are located in the East Experiment Station. There is also a satellite office at UMass Boston, staffed by an editor whose salary is funded by UMass Boston. That office, which was closed for several years, reopened in July 2009.

For administrative, financial, and personnel matters, the Press reports to the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement. Editorially, it reports to the University Press Committee, which includes a faculty representative from UMass Boston.

The Press has developed a number of partnerships to assist with marketing and distribution. Its sales representatives include the Columbia Consortium (for bookstores in the continental United States), Scholarly Book Services (Canada), the Eurospan Group (United Kingdom and Europe), and East-West Export Books (Asia, the Pacific, and Hawaii). Warehousing and order fulfillment functions are handled by Hopkins Fulfillment Services, a subsidiary of Johns Hopkins University Press.

FY10 statistical summary

During FY10, 32 new books were published—14 in hardback, 5 in paperback, and 13 simultaneously in hardback and paperback editions—106 titles were reprinted (in many cases using print-on-demand technology), and 42,763 individual volumes were shipped to customers in the United States and abroad. Net sales for the year amounted to \$884,737, and \$64,986 in royalties were distributed to authors. The Press ended the year with a revenue trust fund balance of \$67,007.

Another way to look at the Press's finances is to use the comparative data compiled each year by the Association of American University Presses. In the latest statistical survey, the Press is placed in a peer group consisting of 19 presses with annual sales of \$1.5 million or less. The average figure for annual sales per employee in this group is \$89,000. The UMass Press figure is \$110,000. The inventory ratio (the value of inventory as a percentage of annual net sales) at the Press is 32% lower than the average for the peer group, which means the Press has not been overprinting and sitting on a lot of unsalable books. The level of total "parent institution financial support" for the UMass Press is 20% lower than the average for the group. All of this suggests an efficient operation.

Press Committee activities during FY10

The University Press Committee, chaired by Professor Maria Tymoczko, met three times—in October, February, and May—to discuss projects under consideration and review the publishing program. Twenty-nine new manuscripts were approved, along with the winners of the Juniper Prizes for Fiction and Poetry (selected by faculty in the English Department's MFA program) and the Grace Paley Prize in Short Fiction (published in cooperation with the Association of Writers and Writers Programs). The committee also approved two new series to be published in association with the Library of American Landscape History: "Designing the American Park" (Ethan Carr, series editor), and "Critical Perspectives in the History of Environmental Design" (Daniel Nadenicek, series editor).

The committee based each of its decisions on the recommendations of the Press director and editors and on the written reports of at least two scholars in the field. In selecting projects to be brought before the committee, the Press editors reviewed hundreds of proposals and manuscripts, evaluating them in terms of quality, audience, financial viability, and appropriateness for the UMass Press list. Series editors, including UMass Amherst professors Christian Appy, Marla Miller, and Arthur Kinney, assisted in this process. In recent years, the Press has focused primarily on books in the field of American studies, broadly construed—books that explore the history, politics, culture, and environment of the United States—as well as works with a transnational perspective.

At each meeting, director Bruce Wilcox reported on significant developments at the Press. Editors Clark Dougan and Brian Halley described conferences attended and editorial initiatives undertaken. During FY10, the Press had its own booth at the annual meetings of the American Studies Association (October), National Council on Public History (March), and Organization of American Historians (April) and displayed books at many other conferences via cooperative exhibit services. The Press also mounted exhibits at the New England Booksellers Association convention (September) and the AWP Bookfair (February) and was represented in cooperative displays at the London Book Fair (April), Book Expo America (May), and the Frankfurt Book Fair (October).

The committee noted the success of the Press staff in securing grant support on a title-by-title basis. These grants came from a range of sources, including foundations, cooperating organizations, and other universities and colleges.

Digital publishing

As scholarship continues to shift to the digital environment, the Press has taken steps to ensure that its books are accessible via online search engines and online booksellers. It has also signed up to participate in the Google eBooks program, which will make more than 800 UMass Press titles available for sale to individuals in reasonably priced ebook editions. In addition, the Press has joined with sixty other university presses to form a consortium that will offer bundled collections of ebooks to libraries on either a subscription basis or a perpetual-access basis. The aim is to make the books available as widely as possible, while still providing an adequate revenue stream to the publisher.

In FY10, the Press staff continued to monitor and participate in discussions concerning the evolution of the system of scholarly communication. Wilcox served on a national task force organized by the Association of American University Presses to investigate new economic models for scholarly publishing. The task force report was scheduled to be released early in 2011.

Notable awards and honors

* Blake Gumprecht's *The American College Town* won the J. B. Jackson Prize of the Association of American Geographers (AAG). The prize, which carries a \$1,000 award for the author, was established in 1991 "to encourage and reward American geographers who write books about the United States which convey the insights of professional geography in language that is interesting and attractive to a lay audience."

* Ethan Carr's *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* was selected as winner of the Elisabeth Blair MacDougall Book Award of the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH). The award was established by the SAH Board in 2005 to recognize annually "the most distinguished work of scholarship in the history of landscape architecture or garden design."

* Robin Karson's *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era* received the John Brinkerhoff Jackson Book Prize of the Foundation for Landscape Studies. The award is presented annually to a distinguished book or books published in the English language within the past three years on a subject pertaining to landscape studies.

* David Vann's *Legend of a Suicide* was named one of the "100 Notable Books of the Year" by the *New York Times Book Review* and appeared on many other "best books of the year" lists. The book attracted international attention and is being translated into twelve languages—French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Greek, German, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Russian, and Chinese. It was also selected by Lorrie Moore for The New Yorker Book Club and is being made into a film by Chris Meloni, best known for his role in the television series "Law and Order: Special Victims Unit."

* Over the course of the year, books from the Press were favorably reviewed in the *Boston Globe*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *London Telegraph*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and many other newspapers, as well as a host of scholarly journals. All of this attention helped to support the research mission of the University and enhance its reputation.