

ANNUAL REPORT
of the
UNIVERSITY PRESS COMMITTEE
For
ACADEMIC YEAR 2003-2004

Presented at the
637th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
February 10, 2005

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Gerald McFarland, Chair
Arlene Avakian
John Brigham
Deborah Carlin
Eugene Golowich
Judith Goodenough
Stephen Harris
Shaun O'Connell (UMass Boston)
Josephine Ryan
Emily Silverman
Peter Stern
Maria Tymoczko
Ernest May (ex officio)
Janet Rifkin (ex officio)
Helen Wise (ex officio)
Bruce Wilcox (ex officio)

Executive summary

The University of Massachusetts Press continues to publish an excellent list of scholarly books. Despite a substantial reduction in its subsidy, the Press finished FY2004 on budget and with no deficit. It expects to do the same in FY2005, despite a further drop in its subsidy. In the long term, we do not believe it is realistic to expect the Press to operate on a break-even basis with no financial support from its parent institution. No other university press of its size is able to do so. The committee urges the UMass Amherst administration to restore at least a portion of the Press's former subsidy. We make this recommendation in the belief that an investment in the Press is a cost-effective way to support the research mission and enhance the reputation of UMass Amherst in national and international academic circles.

Background

Founded in 1963, the University of Massachusetts Press serves as the book-publishing arm of the University. Its mission is to support and enhance the University's stature as a major research institution by publishing outstanding works of scholarship. Since its inception, the Press has sold over 950,000 individual volumes. Today it has more than 900 titles in print. Eight employees, along with student assistants and outside sales representatives, produce and market some thirty to forty new books annually.

For administrative, financial, and personnel matters, the Press reports to the Vice Provost for Research at UMass Amherst. The Boston office, established in 1988 and staffed by editor Paul Wright, comes under the Dean of Graduate Studies at UMass Boston. Editorially, the Press reports to the University Press Committee, which includes a representative from the Boston campus.

The Press generates approximately \$1 million in sales revenues annually and raises additional grant funding on a title-by-title basis. For many years it relied on a University subsidy to cover the remaining portion of its expenses—roughly 20% of its overall budget. In May 2003, because of severe financial pressures on the University, the Press was told that it could no longer count on this ongoing support. Instead, it was promised three years of "bridge funding" with the expectation that the publishing program would move toward self-sufficiency. The Press director and senior staff took immediate steps to reduce operating expenses and reconfigure the operation. Five of thirteen staff members were laid off by October 2003. Warehousing, order processing, and shipping functions were shifted to Johns Hopkins University Press, and more than 100,000 books were transferred to the Hopkins warehouse in Pennsylvania. Responsibilities for marketing and promotion were reassigned among the remaining employees. To provide additional staff support, an internship program was established for graduate students from the English Department's MFA program. Prices of backlist publications were substantially increased. Print runs of new publications were reduced, and outside subsidies were vigorously pursued. The Press also sought to form publishing partnerships with various organizations to help reduce costs and increase revenues.

FY2004 statistics

Despite the disruption caused by these changes, FY2004 was a very productive year. In all, 36 new books were published (17 in hardback, 12 in paperback, and 7 simultaneously in hardback and paperback editions), 5 were distributed for the Massachusetts Audubon Society, 55 titles were reprinted (in many cases using print-on-demand technology), and 61,077 individual volumes were sold to customers in the United States and abroad. Net sales for the year amounted to \$984,491, a decrease of 1% from the previous year. Several books won important awards (see "Notable awards and honors" section below) and a host of published reviews testify to the high quality of the new titles.

Press Committee activities during FY2004

The University Press Committee, chaired by Professor Gerald McFarland of the History Department, met three times—in October, January, and June—to discuss projects under consideration and review the publishing program. Twenty-one new manuscripts were approved, along with one series—*The Spirit of Thoreau*, to be published in cooperation with the Thoreau Society. The committee based each decision 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 University of Massachusetts Press list.

At each meeting, director Bruce Wilcox reported on significant developments at the Press. Editors Clark Dougan and Paul Wright described conferences attended and editorial initiatives undertaken. During FY2004, they traveled to a number of academic meetings to display recent titles and talk with prospective authors. The Press had its own booth at the annual meetings of the American Studies Association (October), American Historical Association (January), and Organization of American Historians (April). It also mounted exhibits at the New England Booksellers Association convention (October) and the AWP Book Fair (March) and was represented in cooperative displays at Book Expo America (May) and the Frankfurt Book Fair (October).

The committee paid particular attention to the financial challenges facing the Press. Members discussed various fund-raising strategies and passed a resolution in favor of the idea of forming an alliance with the four colleges in Five Colleges, Inc.—making the Press, in effect, a UMass/Five College Press. A copy of that resolution is appended to this report. Subsequent discussions with the Five Colleges board of directors have been inconclusive, and no formal proposal has yet been submitted.

Electronic editions, search engines, and online marketing

Because faculty and students increasingly rely on the Internet as a research tool, and because many book-buyers now shop from home, the Press has made a concerted effort to ensure that its books are available through online search engines and online booksellers. Working in partnership with netLibrary/OCLC, it has made over 450 titles available for purchase by libraries in digital form, as “e-books.” It has also entered into an agreement with Google to have 750 titles included in the new “Google Print” program. These titles are being digitized at Google’s expense and will be included in Google search results, with links to online bookstores. At amazon.com, the Press has enhanced its coverage by enrolling in the “Search Inside the Book” program, which allows customers to browse through books electronically. In addition, the Press has expanded its direct-to-customer marketing efforts through the use of electronic news releases and flyers, with links to its website (www.umass.edu/umpress) and secure online ordering. At the same time, a network of sales representatives (the Columbia Consortium) continues to call on traditional bookstores across the country at least twice a year.

New offices

After being housed for three decades in a modest residence on East Pleasant Street, the Press moved in July 2004 to the newly renovated East Experiment Station, near the center of campus. The new offices are well suited to the needs of the editorial, design, and marketing staff and are more accessible to local faculty.

Prospects for the future

In the short term, the Press has weathered the worst of the budget cuts while maintaining the quality and integrity of the publishing program. In the longer term, it seems clear that the Press must find additional sources of funding beyond sales revenues if it is to preserve its financial equilibrium. The committee hopes that the UMass Amherst administration can assist the Press staff in this process and that the Press will be included in the Campaign for Amherst which is now in its preliminary phase.

Notable awards and honors in FY2004

* Joel Dinerstein's *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture between the World Wars* received the 2004 Eugene M. Kayden Press Book Award for the best book in the humanities published by an American university press. Administered by the Office of the Chancellor at the University of Colorado at Boulder, the award is given annually and includes a \$4,000 prize for the winning author. Each American university press may submit one entry for the competition. *Swinging the Machine* also received a 2004 Award for Excellence in Historical Sound Research from the Association for Recorded Sound Collections. Reviewing the book in *American Quarterly*, Elspeth Brown wrote, "In one elegantly written, well-researched, and delicately argued project, Dinerstein has produced a magnificent interdisciplinary cultural history that is a must-read for both graduate students and advanced undergraduates in a variety of related fields, including U.S. cultural history, American history and culture, history of technology, and the history of both popular music and dance."

* Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney's *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* was named winner of the New England Historical Association Book Award for 2004. The award is given annually to an outstanding book on any historical topic written by a New England author or authors. This was the second year in a row that a book from the University of Massachusetts Press has won this award. The previous year the award went to James M. O'Toole's *Passing for White: Race, Religion, and the Healy Family, 1820-1920*. The authors of *Captors and Captives* were also honored by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) with an Award of Merit presented at a banquet in St. Louis underwritten by the History Channel. *Captors and Captives* was a History Book Club selection and has been widely reviewed. In a lengthy piece in *Reviews in American History*, Brett Rushforth concluded, "In sum, Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney have written an exceptionally well-researched, engaging, and cogent book. *Captors and Captives* is sure to become the standard account of the 1704 raid, likely to withstand the scrutiny of antiquarians and professional historians alike. The authors' meticulous research has uncovered new insights about a story that has been told and retold for three centuries. They have also expertly situated Deerfield with the historiographies of New England, New France, and Native America, suggesting new directions for each of these vibrant and complex subfields."

* Four titles were selected by *Choice* for its list of "Outstanding Academic Titles." The list for 2004 includes 644 books selected from among 7,539 titles reviewed. The winning titles represent less than 10% of the titles reviewed, and less than 3% of the 23,000 titles submitted to *Choice* for review. The four books selected were Daniel Horowitz's *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979*, Benjamin Bowser and Louis Kushnick's *Against the Odds: Scholars Who Challenged Racism in the Twentieth Century*; Ron Cohen's *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival and American Society, 1940-1970*; and Tom Cottle's *A Sense of Self: The Work of Affirmation*.

Attachment A

Resolution passed by the University Press Committee, October 31, 2003

Recognizing the financial challenges facing the University of Massachusetts Press, we endorse the idea of forming an alliance with the other members of the Five College consortium—Amherst College, Smith College, Mount Holyoke College, and Hampshire College. We would welcome the addition of representatives from these institutions on the University Press Committee, which oversees the editorial program of the Press. We would also be happy to see a statement included in each book to the effect that books published by the University of Massachusetts Press are produced with the support and cooperation of the members of Five Colleges, Inc. In return, we hope that the four colleges will be able to contribute financially to the support of the Press on an ongoing basis. We leave it to the Press director and others to negotiate the specific terms of any such agreement.

We believe that the University of Massachusetts Press is an essential resource for the Five College community. At a critical juncture in its history, the Press needs to reach out and find additional sources of support. We urge the four colleges to join us in ensuring the survival of this distinguished scholarly publishing program.