

University Press Committee
Minutes of Meeting of February 15, 2008
Convened at 1:30 p.m. in Room 911-15, Campus Center

Attending the meeting were chair McFarland, members Cox, Fong, Gershenson, Goodenough, Jones, Paradiso, Sims, Tymoczko, and Wise, director Wilcox, senior editor Dougan, and managing editor Betsch. Copies of sixteen recently published titles were on display. The minutes of the meeting of October 19, 2007, were approved with the notation that a \$6,000 grant had been received to support publication of Blake Gumprecht's *The American College Town*.

Commenting on financial matters, Wilcox reported that at the end of January, net sales for the first seven months of FY08 amounted to \$766,000, which was 24% above the same period in FY07 and 3% above budget. He mentioned that the committee's annual report had been presented to the Faculty Senate the previous day, and that both committee chair McFarland and Faculty Senate secretary Ernest May had commended the Press for its record of accomplishment.

It was noted that chair McFarland had sent a letter to Vice Provost Paul Kostecki in late January, urging him to consider funding the position of an additional editor at the Press, to make up for the loss of Paul Wright, who had served as the Press's Boston-based editor for 18 years. No response had yet been received.

Wilcox reported on the impending retirement of Richard Lozier, who had served as the Press's business manager for 36 years. A search for his successor was underway, and more than 30 applications had been received. Six candidates were invited for interviews, with the expectation that an offer would be made by early March. Lozier had agreed to continue to work on a part-time basis during the transition period.

Two recent awards were cited:

Ethan Carr's *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* won the 2008 John Brinkerhoff Jackson Prize of the Foundation for Landscape Studies. This award "honors a distinguished book in the English language that was published between 2004 and 2007 . . . a book that has made a significant contribution to the study and understanding of garden history and landscape studies."

Having already been selected for the AAUP Book Show as one of the best-designed university press books of the year, E. John B. Allen's *The Culture and Sport of Skiing: From Antiquity to World War I* was named winner of the 2008 Ullr Award from the International Skiing History Association. The award was to be presented in Aspen in March at the ISHA Awards Banquet. The mission of the Association is "to preserve and advance the knowledge of ski history and to increase public awareness of the sport's heritage." It also publishes *Skiing Heritage Magazine*.

Wilcox reported that Robin Karson's *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era* had generated a lot of attention, with elegant publication parties in New York and Amherst, a full-page ad in the holiday issue of the *New York Review of Books* (financed by a donor), and a feature article on the author in the December issue of *Landscape Architecture*.

In November the Press completed the distribution of complimentary copies of *The Future of Work in Massachusetts* to all public high schools and public libraries in Massachusetts and to all state legislators. In each case, the book included a cover letter from Chancellor Cole.

Dougan described the recent meeting of the American Historical Association, where the Press had a booth. He also commented on plans for upcoming meetings of the Organization of American Historians and the National Council on Public History. Wilcox talked about the AWP Bookfair, which this year drew 7,500 people and included a session of readings by recent winners of the Juniper Prizes for Poetry and Fiction.

Turning to the manuscripts on the agenda, the committee considered nine projects, in alphabetical order by author. All were approved, some with specific stipulations.

First up was Glen Scott Allen's *Master Mechanics and Wicked Wizards: Images of the American Scientist from Colonial Times to the Present*, which uses the tools of cultural studies to examine the changing perception and portrayal of scientists in American culture. Some members of the committee found this approach convincing, while others urged the author to address the concerns of Reader B, a historian of science. One member suggested that the author consult a book by Richard Rhodes. The project was approved with the understanding that the author would be asked to give careful thought to Reader B's criticisms.

The committee then turned to David Hunt's *Into the Maelstrom: Vietnam's Southern Revolution*, a study of the "peasant revolution" in southern Vietnam. Dougan noted that the present draft had been carved out of a much longer manuscript. The committee was impressed by the extremely positive readers' reports. Some concern was expressed about whether the Rand documents that provided much of the evidence were "automatically discredited," but Dougan reassured the committee that Hunt had carefully contextualized those interviews.

Moving to Jeremy Kuzmarov's *The Myth of the Addicted Army: Vietnam and the Modern War on Drugs*, the committee expressed enthusiasm for the project, noting that one reviewer predicted it would "contend for best-book awards in history, sociology, and many fields of policy studies." Much of the discussion revolved around the use of the term *Myth* in the title and the importance of clarifying its implications.

In considering *Reading Emily Dickinson's Correspondence: Critical Essays*, edited by Cynthia Jane MacKenzie and Jane Donahue Eberwein, a member of the committee asked about the market for a book of this kind and was told that critical works on Dickinson continue to sell well, particularly reference works. Another member said she was impressed with the review process for this project—both the quality of the reports and the volume editors' thoughtful response.

Commenting on Peter Robinson's *The Dance of the Comedians: The People, the President, and the Performance of Political Standup Comedy in America*, one member noted that any book dealing with humor and politics should itself be entertaining. Dougan reported that indeed this manuscript had a "lively, fluid style." The committee also discussed the historical scope of the project, the dance metaphor in the title, and the treatment of ethnic humor.

The committee approved Linda F. Selzer's *Charles Johnson in Context* with relatively little discussion. One member suggested that since the author had written such an effective letter of response, she should work that material into her preface and thereby "frontload" her argument.

Jonathan Silverman's *Nice Choices: Johnny Cash and American Culture* was described as "neither a conventional biography nor an exercise in traditional music criticism," but rather "a study of the construction of an identity." In view of the detailed and constructive readers' reports, and the author's eagerness to revise, the committee approved the project with the understanding that at least one of the two reviewers would scrutinize the revised draft. The author was also urged to make the chapter titles more consistent.

Next up was Ann Morrison Spinney's *Passamaquoddy Wampum Ceremony Songs: Aesthetics and Survival*, an ethnomusicological study of the songs and dances involved in the ceremonies of the Wabanaki Confederacy. There was some discussion of whether a CD-ROM might be included with the book, although a website seemed a better solution. One member pointed out that the American Philosophical Society has published many similar volumes and might be willing to provide a grant to assist this one.

The last item on the agenda was a volume to be published in association with the Kahn Liberal Arts Institute at Smith College—*Trans-Buddhism: American Perspectives on the Transmission, Translation, and Transformation of Buddhism in the Global Arena*, edited by Abraham Zablocki, Nalini Bhushan, and Jay Garfield. Although one of the three outside reviewers was highly critical of this project, the other two were generally positive. The committee decided to approve publication with the stipulation that the volume editors must continue to revise the manuscript to give it greater coherence and with the understanding that a subsidy of \$8,000 would be provided by Smith College.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:38 p.m. No date was set for the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Wilcox
Secretary

cc: Faculty Senate office