

University Press Committee
Minutes of Meeting of October 28, 2005
Convened at 1:30 p.m. in Room 904-08, Campus Center

Attending the meeting were chair McFarland, members Afolabi, Cox, Goodenough, Jones, Paradiso, Silverman, and Wise, director Wilcox, and editors Dougan and Wright. Copies of twenty-two recently published titles were on display. McFarland was reelected as chair of the committee and Wilcox was reelected as secretary. The minutes of the meeting of June 7, 2005, were approved with some discussion of subventions that had been secured for specific titles.

Wilcox reported on a busy and productive summer at the Press, with more than twenty titles published since the last meeting of the committee. At the end of June, Web and Promotion Manager Alice Maldonado resigned so that she could return to Puerto Rico to care for her parents. Staff members pitched in to perform her duties until a replacement could be found. In early September, Carla Potts was hired to fill the position.

In July, Provost Seymour approved the continued funding in FY06 of two staff positions at the Press, with the remaining salaries and expenses to be covered by sales revenues and grants. While expressing gratitude for this commitment, Wilcox said that to achieve financial stability the Press would need to request that three positions be funded in FY07. He pointed out that at one time eleven positions had been funded by UMass Amherst and as recently as FY03 six positions were funded. The Press was also expected to pay an administrative overhead fee, which in FY05 amounted to \$76,288.

At UMass Boston, Wright had set up a meeting with Chancellor Michael Collins to discuss the future of the Boston office of the Press. The meeting was postponed from September to November and would be attended by several faculty members.

Wilcox noted that the Press was continuing to pursue a strategy of publishing books in association with other organizations and institutions, such as the Massachusetts Historical Society, American Antiquarian Society, Library of American Landscape History, and Thoreau Society. Press editors were also vigorously seeking subsidies on a title-by-title basis. Wilcox circulated copies of an article from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* by John Thompson on "How to Keep Academic Publishing Afloat," as well as Thompson's excellent book entitled *Books in the Digital Age*. He also circulated materials relating to the controversy over the Google Library Program.

Following a flurry of awards in the spring, Wilcox noted two more recent awards. Bernard Bell's *The Contemporary African American Novel* won a 2005 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. Brad Martin's *The Theater Is in the Street* was awarded the 2005 Lois P. Rudnick Book Prize of the New England American Studies Association.

It was noted that two projects had been approved since the last meeting of the committee, following established procedures. First, the Press agreed to issue a paperback edition of Daniel Cohen's *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace: New England Crime Literature and the Origins of American Popular Culture, 1674-1860*, a book originally published in hardback by Oxford University Press to excellent reviews. The Press also plans to release a volume entitled *Sticks and Stones: Living with Uncertain Wars*, which was developed by the editors of the *New England Journal of Public Policy* at UMass Boston, drawing essays from two special issues of the journal on the legacy of war in our time. The book is to be published in association with the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies at UMass Boston.

Commenting on recent meetings attended, Dougan described a conference held at the University of Virginia's Miller Center to celebrate publication of the *The Great Society and the High Tide of Liberalism*, edited by Sidney Milkis and Jerome Mileur. He also spoke about the upcoming meeting of the American Studies Association in Washington, D.C., where the Press would have a prime booth location, a session would be dedicated to the work of Press author Daniel Horowitz, and editors Dougan and Wright would be actively recruiting manuscripts.

Committee members asked about additional ways to publicize the successes of the Press locally, mentioning the UMass Amherst website, the "In the Loop" e-newsletter, the Chancellor's office, and the growing emphasis on "benchmarking."

Turning to the manuscripts on the agenda, the committee considered ten projects, presented in alphabetical order by author.

Scott Hancock's *The Law Will Make You Smart: Black Identity and the Law in Massachusetts, 1641-1861* elicited a lengthy discussion. All agreed the manuscript needed revision. The main question was whether the author, with careful editorial guidance, could produce a book that would make a significant contribution to the field. In the end the project was approved with the understanding that it would undergo substantial revision and then be reevaluated by at least one of the original reviewers.

Geoffrey Jacques's *A Change in the Weather: Modernist Imagination, African American Imaginary* was approved with relatively little comment. Some wondered if the metaphorical title might be too obscure for a literary monograph in an era in which scholars use search engines to locate relevant titles.

The committee expressed enthusiasm for Robin Karson's *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era*, which is to be published in association with the Library of American Landscape History. Members asked about the format and marketing of the volume, which comes with a subvention of \$20,000 and should attract a broad readership.

Marian MacCurdy's *The Mind's Eye: Image and Memory in Writing about Trauma* was approved as a valuable addition to the Press's growing list on the pedagogy of personal writing. Questions were raised about the process of securing permission from the students whose writings are cited and about the market for the book.

In considering Roberto Marquez's *Puerto Rican Poetry: A Selection from Aboriginal to Contemporary Times*, the committee discussed the tradeoff between a single-volume English-language edition and a multi-volume bilingual edition. The project was approved with the understanding that if enough money could be raised, the bilingual approach would be preferable, but that even the English-language edition as envisioned by Marquez would make a significant contribution.

The committee noted the long history of Amelia Miller and A. R. Riggs's *Romance, Remedies, and Revolution: The Journal of Elihu Ashley of Deerfield, Massachusetts, 1773-1775*, a project initiated in 1958. Given the preference of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association for a complete edition with extensive notes and commentary, and given the availability of a \$16,000 subsidy for this purpose, the committee agreed with the strategy of publishing the complete edition and then possibly following at a later date with an abbreviated paperback edition designed for classroom use. The project was approved on that basis.

Although the Press does not ordinarily publish festschriften or volumes in honor of particular individuals, the committee was persuaded to approve Steven Mintz and John Stauffer's *The Problem of Evil: Slavery, Freedom, and the Ambiguities of American Reform* (a collection from a conference celebrating the work of David Brion Davis) on the grounds that it includes excellent essays by prominent scholars in the field. But because several essays do not measure up to the caliber of the rest, the committee accepted the manuscript with the understanding that the Press editors would make a strong case for dropping the weaker essays. The project comes with a subsidy of \$10,000.

The committee was interested to hear the story behind Lawrence Rockwood's *Walking away from Nuremberg: Just War and the Doctrine of Command Responsibility*—based on the author's experience of having been court-martialed in 1994 after protesting human rights abuses in Haiti, where he was serving as a counterintelligence officer. Noting that Rockwood was prepared to revise the manuscript in light of the readers' reports, the committee approved publication.

Dr. Chaim Rosenberg's *Goods for Sale: Products and Advertising in the Massachusetts Industrial Age* was accepted with the condition that a subsidy of at least \$15,000 must be provided to cover all production costs. The committee noted that the chief attraction of the book would be the color illustrations—Victorian-era trade cards—which would appeal to a regional audience and to members of such organizations as the Ephemera Society of America.

The last item on the agenda was a new edition of Polly Adler's memoir of her life as a brothel owner, *A House Is Not a Home* (1953), with a new introduction by Rachel Rubin exploring the significance of the book as a narrative of a Jewish immigrant woman's experiences in New York in the 1920s and 1930s. In view of the strongly favorable readers' reports and the encouraging prospects for classroom adoptions, the project was approved without hesitation.

One member commented that this was one the most interesting collections of proposals she had encountered in her service on the University Press Committee. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m. No date was set for the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Bruce Wilcox
Secretary

cc: Faculty Senate office