ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

UNIVERSITY PRESS COMMITTEE

FOR

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-2017

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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Summary
Fiscal Year 2017 was a challenging year for the Press. Like all university presses, the University of Massachusetts Press faced an uncertain sales climate, and in order to ready itself to weather future challenges, the Press carried out a reorganization of staff. The process included the elimination of positions, the creation of a new department, and significant projected savings. The changes to workflow were designed to maintain the Press’s standards of quality and realize the benefits of new technologies. The year also brought positive developments to the Press. The editorial staff sought and received the Press Committee’s approval for a number of new endeavors, including the first new monograph series approved since 2010. Additionally, the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement allocated a significant increase in subvention support. By the end of Fiscal Year 2017, the Press reached a stable and sustainable position.

Activities of the Press Committee
Throughout the course of the year, the Press Committee met four times to consider and approve projects and review the publishing program. In all, the staff presented 39 projects, including the winners of the Juniper Prizes for Fiction and Poetry (published in partnership with the University of Massachusetts Amherst MFA for Poets and Writers) and the Grace Paley Prize in Short Fiction (published in cooperation with the Association of Writers and Writing Programs). All projects presented to the committee were approved.

The Press’s acquisitions team presented three new initiatives for the Press Committee’s consideration. In October, they presented a new imprint, Bright Leaf: Books that Illuminate. Bright Leaf books are intended for general readers, and the titles will cover a range of regional topics deriving from the Press’s scholarly strengths and accentuating the community engagement aspect of the Press’s mission. Aimed as they are at a popular audience, Bright Leaf books emphasize accessibility and readability. In their presentation to the Press Committee, the Editors noted that the Press has a long tradition of publishing books for general readers. The creation of the imprint will afford the opportunity to market these titles to bookstores and review venues that may otherwise shy away from university press titles. Bright Leaf titles will focus on the history of the region, its culture and foodways, its natural history, and its many attractions. The Press Committee deliberated about the best protocol for the review of these volumes and agreed with the Editors that outside readers should be selected for their understanding of both the topic at hand and the needs of a popular audience. Bright Leaf was unanimously endorsed by the Press Committee, and its first titles were scheduled to be published in the fall of 2017.

The Press Committee also approved two new scholarly series. Through its scholarly series, the Press maintains a national (and international) reputation for publishing top quality scholarship in specific subfields. In January of 2017, the Committee endorsed the creation of a new series, Childhoods: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Childhood and Youth, edited by Rachel Conrad, Professor of Childhood Studies, Hampshire College; Alice Hearst, Professor of Government, Smith College; Laura L. Lovett, Associate Professor of History, University of Massachusetts Amherst; and Karen Sánchez-Eppler, L. Stanton Williams 1941 Professor of American Studies and English, Amherst College. Nine readers reviewed the series proposal and attested to the Editors’ strong reputations and the field’s vigorous growth. The proposal was unanimously approved and was the first new series to be approved since 2010.

At the May 2017 meeting, the Committee approved a second new series, African American Intellectual History. The series grows out of a new scholarly association, the African American
Intellectual History Society, whose mission is to foster dialogue about researching, writing, and teaching black thought and culture. The series is open to scholars in all disciplines, including but not limited to African American history, literature, philosophy, art, music, dance, and film. Reviewed by eight faculty members, this series received high praise and was unanimously approved. The Series Editor, Christopher Cameron, is Associate Professor of History, University of North Carolina at Charlotte and is a founder and current president of the African American Intellectual History Society.

At each meeting, Director Dougherty shared the latest news from the Press and circulated a report on marketing activities, and Editors recounted their conference travel and campus activities. Throughout the year, Dougherty and Editors Becker and Halley traveled to academic meetings central to the Press’s editorial program. Among them, they attended the annual conferences of the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the American Studies Association, the Modern Language Association, the American Society for Environmental History, and the National Council on Public History.

Before each meeting, Committee members reviewed 200 to 300 pages of supporting materials, which described and assessed the manuscripts under consideration and documented the process of peer review. The Committee then discussed each project thoroughly, evaluating the scholarly merit of the proposed publications. In making its decisions, the Committee took into consideration the recommendations of the Acquisitions Editors, the Series Editors, and the written reports of at least two scholars in the field. Committee members frequently offered comments to be conveyed to the authors.

In determining projects to be brought before the Committee, the Editors evaluated each project in terms of quality, audience, financial viability, and suitability for University of Massachusetts Press’s publishing program. Consistently, the Editors pursued engaging and innovative projects, and they reviewed just over 400 unsolicited proposals and manuscripts. In recent years, the Press has focused primarily on books in the field of American Studies broadly defined—books that explore the history, politics, culture, and environment of the United States—as well as works with a transnational perspective. It has benefited greatly from the continuing contributions of series editors, and currently has 15 active series, including Public History in Historical Perspective and the Environmental History of the Northeast.

**Press Finances**

Due to increased expenses and an uncertain sales climate, the Press forecasted a severe deficit for Fiscal Year 2017. The revised budget for the Fiscal Year suggested that without changes, the shortfall could run as high as $250,000. Director Dougherty, working closely with Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, Mike Malone, and his staff, made the difficult decision to reorganize the Press’s long-standing structure and workflow. In a move that is increasingly common at university presses, two departments merged into a single office, the Editorial, Design and Production Department, now responsible for all matters related to editing manuscripts, designing books, covers, and marketing materials, and the production of print and digital books. Two staff positions were eliminated, with forecasted savings of over $100,000 per year. Dougherty operated within University rules, union contracts, and state laws in the process, and the Professional Staff Union/Massachusetts Teachers Association represented the Press’s
staff members who faced the elimination of their positions. The Press Committee was informed of the changes on March 24, 2017, and met with Dougherty in a number of executive sessions to understand the full situation, its causes, and the resulting reorganization. As a result of the executive sessions, the Press Committee and Dougherty agreed upon new fiscal reports to be delivered to the Press Committee twice each year. At the first meeting of the Fall Semester, the Director will present the Committee with a report of year-end results relative to expectations for the prior fiscal year, and at the first meeting of the Spring Semester, the Director will share an overview of the revenue and budgetary projections submitted to the University. The Press Committee maintains primary responsibility for all matters editorial, and the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement retains full responsibility for fiscal and personnel matters.

Year-end results for Fiscal Year 2017 were modestly better than forecast. The Press published 42 new titles and distributed two projects. Returns, which were high in the prior year, particularly in the last quarter, stabilized at 17%. The Press’s adjusted net income from the sale of books and other sources was $685,802 against a projection of $620,000. Of that, books sales were $627,031 and other sources brought in $58,771. E-book revenue rose from 12% of net revenue in Fiscal Year 2016 to a new high of 15% of net revenue for Fiscal Year 2017. After a review of data from the Association of University Presses, the Vice Chancellor’s office increased the Press’s annual subvention by 29.8% and allocated $100,000 in one-time support monies. Press staff undertook the sale of remainders, and those netted an unanticipated $35,000 in book revenue; the acquisitions staff raised $29,000 in book subventions. The Press staff reduced expense as prudently as possible and through the use of short run digital printing and the implementation of print-on-demand programs, saved $64,000. While the national sales atmosphere remains difficult to predict, University of Massachusetts Press established a good foundation for sustainability.

Awards and Honors
The year brought a number of prestigious and popular awards to the Press.

- Peter Benes’s *For a Short Time Only: Itinerants and the Resurgence of Popular Culture in Early America* won the prestigious George Freedley Memorial Book Award from the Theatre Library Association and was selected as an Outstanding Academic Title by *Choice*. New England Public Radio’s host Carrie Healy also interviewed Benes about the project.
• Joan Frank’s Juniper Prize winner, *All the News I Need: A Novel*, received national recognition with praise coming from *People* magazine, *PBS NewsHour*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

**New Staff Members**
The Press welcomed three new staff members. After working in publicity at Yale University Press, Courtney Andree joined us to serve as our new Marketing Manager. She earned a PhD in Literary Studies at Washington University in St. Louis and a bachelor’s degree, with honors, from Dartmouth College. In addition to her university press experience, Andree also worked at Countryman Press, a division of W. W. Norton. Rachael DeShano joined the staff as Production Editor. She earned a master’s degree at Boston College and a graduate certificate at the University of Kentucky. Before she came to University of Massachusetts Press, she worked at Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. And Dina Noto, whose formal training is in digital animation, joined us as a Digital Production Assistant.

**Background**
Founded in 1963, the University of Massachusetts Press seeks to enhance the University’s stature as a top-tier research institution by publishing outstanding works of peer-reviewed scholarship. The staff also provides advice to faculty and graduate students on a wide range of publishing questions. Since its inception, the Press has sold over two million individual volumes. Today, it has more than 1,100 titles in print. Eight employees, along with student interns and outside sales representatives, produce and market up to 40 new titles annually. The main offices of the Press are located in the East Experiment Station on the Amherst campus. There is also a satellite office at the University of Massachusetts Boston, staffed by an editor whose salary is funded by that campus.

For administrative, financial, and personnel matters, the Press reports to the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. 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), the Eurospan Group (United Kingdom and Europe), and East-West Export Books (Asia, the Pacific, and Hawaii). Warehousing and order fulfillment functions are handled on a contract basis by Hopkins Fulfillment Services, a subsidiary of Johns Hopkins University Press.

In an effort to make its books more widely available through libraries, the Press joined in the formation of the University Press Content Consortium (UPCC), which now provides participating institutions with unrestricted access to more than 21,000 titles from more than 90 academic publishers via Project MUSE (http://muse.jhu.edu), administered by Johns Hopkins University Press. The Press maintains numerous partnerships to place digital versions of its titles in university libraries. The Press’s e-books are available to individuals through Amazon, Apple’s iBookstore, and other e-book retailers.