

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS COMMITTEE
ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-2018**

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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Summary

Fiscal Year 2018 was a very good year for University of Massachusetts Press. Financially, the Press performed well, modestly exceeding its revenue forecast and maintaining strict control of expenses, which came in more than 20% below forecast. Other highlights of the year included the Press Committee's approval of three new scholarly series and a robust set of new projects. The Committee was also delighted to see the vigorous and frequent media coverage of UMass Press titles, featured in scholarly, trade, and library outlets.

Activities of the Press Committee

Throughout the course of the year, the Press Committee met three times to consider and approve projects and review the publishing program. In all, the staff presented thirty-six 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). All projects brought to the committee were approved unanimously.

The Press's acquisitions team presented three new scholarly series for the Press Committee's consideration. Through its scholarly series, the Press maintains a national (and international) reputation for publishing top quality scholarship in specific subfields. These new series bring the total of the Press's active series to fourteen, aligning more closely than before to the numbers of series maintained by comparable and aspirational presses.

In October 2017, the Committee endorsed the creation of a new series titled *Veterans*, edited by Brian Matthew Jordan, Assistant Professor of History at Sam Houston State University, and J. Ross Dancy, Assistant Professor in the John B. Hattendorf Center for Maritime Historical Research at the U.S. Naval War College. Nine readers reviewed the series proposal and attested to the editors' strong reputations and to the relatively new field's importance for both historical and interdisciplinary study. In his memo to the committee, Executive Editor Matt Becker stated that "Veterans Studies is in the early formation phase of an academic discipline, which includes a new journal and a few nascent programs. With this series, the University of Massachusetts Press will, hopefully, be key to the development of this discipline." The proposal was unanimously approved, and the first title launched in May 2018.

At the December 2017 meeting, Senior Editor Brian Halley presented the Committee with a proposal for a new series, *Textual Cultures and Platforms*, edited by Kate Eichhorn, Associate Professor of Culture and Media, The New School for Social Research. In his preface to the proposal, Halley explained that this series would allow the Press "to expand our work on 'the book' (in the broadest sense) into media studies." Ten readers assessed the proposal, offering praise for the venture and for the editor. Among them, one reviewer wrote, "This series is very much needed in the field of book history—and, more to the point, it is needed in the spaces between book history and adjacent disciplines such as media studies, platform studies, and other, newer disciplines." The series was unanimously approved.

At the third and final meeting for the year, held in May, Becker presented a proposal for a new series, edited by Sigrid Schmalzer, Professor of History, University of Massachusetts Amherst. This book series, *Activist Science and Technology Studies*, will publish accessible, engaging books by scholars from a wide range of disciplines internationally who seek to mobilize Science and Technology Studies (STS) in support of movements for justice and sustainability around the world. Nine readers warmly endorsed the venture, and it was approved unanimously.

The Press also formed a partnership for distribution with Tagus Press, the publishing arm of the Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Tagus's scholarship is well regarded within the world of Lusophone Studies, and in addition to scholarly works, they produce a number of literary translations. The Press will market and distribute up to ten titles per year and will also facilitate discoverability for the Center's journal, *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*.

At each meeting, Director Dougherty shared the latest news from the Press and circulated a report on marketing activities, and Editors reported on their conference travel and campus activities. Throughout the year, Becker, Dougherty, 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. Members of the staff also attended the annual meeting of the Association of University Presses, held in San Francisco in June 2018.

Before each Press Committee meeting, 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 and the Series Editors, the written reports of at least two scholars in the field, and the author's reply to those reports. 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 the Press's publishing program. Consistently, Press Editors pursued engaging and innovative projects, and they reviewed just over 470 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 an interdisciplinary perspective. The new series add definition and currency to the editorial program, and the staff also updated the website and author-facing materials to reflect their evolving interests and up-to-date scholarship.

Press Finances

Year-end results for Fiscal Year 2018 were modestly better than forecast. Twice a year, at the first meeting of the fall term and at the first meeting after the formal budget has been submitted to the University, the Director now provides the Committee with an update of forecasted cash revenue, estimated expenses, and results. For Fiscal Year 2018 the Press published thirty-nine new titles and distributed one project. The Press's adjusted net income from the sale of books and other sources was \$671,562 against a projection of \$667,810. Of that total, books sales were \$613,118 and other sources brought in \$58,444. E-book revenue rose from 15% of net revenue in Fiscal Year 2017 to a new high of 20% of net revenue for Fiscal Year 2018. Due to print-on-demand capabilities and prudent management of resources, the Press staff further reduced book production costs. All non-payroll expenses totaled \$443,550, over 20% less than was forecast. Nationally, the climate for selling books remains difficult, but the Press is managing to keep quality standards high and production costs under control.

Publicity, Awards and Honors

The year brought widespread news coverage, largely positive, and a number of prestigious and popular awards to the Press. Highlights of the coverage include:

The Press's new regional trade imprint, Bright Leaf: Books that Illuminate, received a warm welcome in the media. *Publishers Weekly*, *Choice*, and the *Boston Globe's* New England Literary News column all ran pieces on the launch of the imprint. Bright Leaf's first title, *Bricklayer Bill*, by Patrick L. Kennedy and Lawrence W. Kennedy, enjoyed an excellent run in the national press. The *New York Times* excerpted a selection of the book in the run-up to the 2017 New York City Marathon. So too, the *Boston Globe* profiled the book in advance of the 2018 Boston Marathon, and the authors were interviewed on National Public Radio's nationally syndicated program, "Only A Game."

The year's Juniper Prize winners for Fiction were noteworthy and received broad coverage. In particular, Malinda McCollum's collection of short stories *The Surprising Place* garnered a number of prestigious reviews, among them a full review in the *Sunday New York Times Book Review*. It was called "edgy, energetic, and often funny."

Robert and Mary Bagg's biography, *Let Us Watch Richard Wilbur*, attracted a great deal of attention. The title was selected by the *Times Literary Supplement* as one of its books of the year. It was also reviewed widely, including positive assessments in the *Boston Globe* and *Amherst Magazine*. The book was also included in the many homages written on the poet's passing, including a piece in the *New York Times*.

Press titles also won scholarly awards, among them:

- Thomas J. Hrach's *The Riot Report and the News: How the Kerner Commission Changed Media Coverage of Black America* won the 2017 American Journalism Historians Association Book of the Year Award.
- For his book, *Redefining Science: Scientists, the National Security State, and Nuclear Weapons in Cold War America*, Paul Rubinson garnered the 2018 Distinguished Faculty Research Award from Bridgewater State University, and the volume was shortlisted for the Philip J. Pauly Prize from the History of Science Society.
- *The World of Credit in Colonial Massachusetts*, edited by James E. Wadsworth, received the 2018 Chet Kevitt Award from the Weymouth Historical Commission.

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 forty to fifty new titles annually. The main offices of the Press are located 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 maintains multiple partnerships for the distribution of library e-books; current partners include JSTOR, EBSCO, and Project MUSE, administered by Johns Hopkins University Press. The Press's e-books are available to individuals through Amazon and Apple's iBookstore.