ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS COMMITTEE
FOR
ACADEMIC YEAR 2012–2013

Presented at the
730th Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate
October 10, 2013

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Maria Tymoczko, Chair
Briankle Chang
Carey Clouse
Jennifer Fronc
Olga Gershenson
Jose Angel Hernandez
Janice Irvine
James Kelly
Randall Knoper
Elizabeth Porto
Norman Sims
James Smethurst
Rajini Srikanth (UMass Boston)
Banu Subramaniam
Diana Yoon
Joel Martín (ex officio)
Ernest May (ex officio)
Bruce Wilcox (ex officio)
FY2013 summary

The University of Massachusetts Press continues to publish an excellent list of peer-reviewed books in print form, while also making many of those titles available as e-books. During FY13, the Press published 37 new titles (in hardcover, paperback, and e-book editions), reprinted an additional 87 titles, and released 32 backlist titles in new e-book editions.

The University Press Committee met three times—in October, December, and May—and approved 30 new manuscripts for publication, along with one new series. In addition to reviewing and discussing manuscripts under consideration, the committee heard regular reports from the Press director and acquisitions editors. The director described notable developments at the Press and in the larger world of scholarly publishing, and the editors commented on editorial initiatives undertaken and on academic conferences where they attended sessions, met with authors, and mounted displays of new titles.

The Press has made good use of new technology to produce its books efficiently and to promote them through a variety of channels, including social media. It has sought out new partnerships to assist in the process of distribution. Most notably, it has joined with more than 90 other university presses to form the University Press Content Consortium (UPCC), with the aim of making e-book editions available in reasonably priced collections to academic libraries in the U.S. and abroad.

The Press met its budgetary and financial targets for the year, finished the year with a small operating surplus, and maintained high standards of editorial content and design. The University Press Committee commends the staff for its admirable performance.

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 general advice to faculty and graduate students on a wide range of publishing questions. Since its inception, the Press has sold over 2,000,000 individual volumes. Today it has more than 1,000 titles in print. Eight employees, along with student interns and outside sales representatives, produce and market 30 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 the University of Massachusetts 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), Scholarly Book Services (Canada), 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 the University Press Content Consortium (UPCC), which 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 also has ongoing partnerships with ebrary, EBSCO (formerly netLibrary), and MyiLibrary, all of which supply e-books to libraries.

In partnership with Google, the Press has made more than 800 backlist titles available in e-book editions for purchase by individuals. These e-books are priced at least 20% lower than the paperback editions. Selected titles are also available in e-book editions from Amazon Kindle, Apple iBookstore, Barnes & Noble Nook, Kobo, and other e-book retailers.

FY2013 statistical summary

During FY2013, 37 new books were published—6 in hardback, 2 in paperback, and 29 simultaneously in hardback and paperback editions. In addition, 87 titles were reprinted, in many cases using print-on-demand technology, and 32 backlist titles were released in new e-book editions. All told, more than 40,000 volumes were shipped to customers in the United States and abroad. Net sales for the year amounted to $777,000, and authors earned more than $68,000 in royalties. The Press ended the year with an operating surplus of $13,724 and a revenue trust fund balance of $103,333.

Another way to look at the Press’s finances is to use the comparative data compiled each year by the Association of American University Presses. In the latest statistical survey, the Press is placed in a peer group consisting of 20 presses of similar size. The average figure for “annual sales per employee” in this group is $79,000. The figure for the Press is $104,000. The “inventory ratio” (the value of inventory as a percentage of annual net sales) at the Press is 30% lower than the average for the peer group, which means the Press has not been overprinting and sitting on unsalable books. The level of total “parent institution financial support” for the Press is 28% lower than the average for the group (even without taking into account the 7.2% administrative overhead fee on all Press expenditures, which the Press is required to pay to the University). All of this suggests a lean and efficient operation.

Press Committee activities during FY2013

The University Press Committee met three times to discuss projects under consideration and review the publishing program. Following a rigorous process of peer review, 30 new manuscripts were approved, along with the winners of the Juniper Prizes for Fiction and Poetry (selected by faculty in the English Department’s MFA program from 657 entries) and the Grace Paley Prize in Short Fiction (published in cooperation with the Association of Writers and Writing Programs). The committee also approved a new series: the “Amherst Series in Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought,” edited by Amherst College professors Austin Sarat, Lawrence Douglas, and Martha Merrill Umphrey.

Prior to each meeting, committee members reviewed 200 to 300 pages of supporting materials, which described and evaluated 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 series editors and 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.

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 contributions of series editors, and currently has thirteen active series, ranging from “American Popular Music” to “Public History in Historical Perspective” to “Science/Technology/Culture.”

At each committee meeting, director Bruce Wilcox reported on significant developments at the Press and in the broader world of publishing, including the following:

(1) The Press sold more than $80,000 worth of e-books through the University Press Content Consortium (UPCC) during calendar year 2012 to customers in 17 countries. Participating institutions ranged from large academic research libraries to community colleges and high schools. The UPCC consortium now includes more than 90 presses and 21,000 e-books.

(2) The Press signed a new agreement with Portico, a service of the not-for-profit organization ITHAKA, for the long-term archiving and preservation of digital content. Portico maintains one of the largest digital archives in the world and was established to preserve e-journals, e-books, and other electronic scholarly content.

(3) The Press signed a new agreement with AcademicPub (also known as SharedBook), which enables faculty members to assemble disaggregated content from multiple publishers at a reasonable cost and then distribute a “course pack” to students digitally or in printed form via print-on-demand.

(4) The Press signed a new agreement with INscribe to convert digital PDF files to ePub format and distribute the resulting e-books via a range of e-retailers, including Amazon, Apple iBookstore, Barnes & Noble, and Kobo.

(5) The Press experienced ongoing difficulties in dealing with Amazon.com, due to an extremely high rate of returns and the requirement that all communications be channeled through Amazon’s online portal called “Vendor Central.” Some other presses experienced similar difficulties.

(6) Many author events were held during the course of the year, including book launches, readings, media appearances, and symposia. Among the more notable gatherings were an elegant reception at the Boston Athenaeum to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Library of American Landscape History; a one-day symposium at Amherst College to mark the 20th anniversary of publication of Barry O’Connell’s On Our Own Ground: The Collected Works of William Apess; and a lecture at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism by Christopher Daly on his book Covering America: A Narrative History of A Nation’s Journalism that was videotaped and broadcast nationally by C-SPAN Book TV.
Editor Brian Halley chaired the national program committee for the annual meeting of the Association of American University Presses in Boston in June 2013. Wilcox noted that Halley was responsible for recruiting dozens of speakers on a wide range of topics related to scholarly publishing and that the meeting attracted nearly 800 attendees.

At each committee meeting, editors Clark Dougan and Brian Halley reported on conferences attended and editorial initiatives undertaken. During FY2013, they staffed Press exhibits at numerous academic conferences, where they met with current and prospective authors and displayed an array of recent titles. Among these conferences were the annual meetings of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, Urban History Association, American Studies Association, American Historical Association, Modern Language Association, Association of Writers and Writing Programs, American Society for Environmental History, Organization of American Historians, and National Council on Public History. The Press also mounted displays at the New England Independent Booksellers Association convention and was represented in cooperative displays at the London Book Fair, Book Expo America, and the Frankfurt Book Fair.

The committee also noted the success of the Press staff in securing grant support on a title-by-title basis. These grants came from a range of sources, including foundations, cooperating organizations, individuals, and other universities and colleges.

**Strategic planning**

In response to the campus-wide strategic planning initiative coordinated by the Office of the Provost, Press director Wilcox prepared a preliminary five-year plan for the Press, which was submitted to Vice Chancellor Malone for his review on March 15 and to the University Press Committee on May 18. Wilcox invited committee members to submit comments and suggestions, which would be incorporated into a subsequent draft.

Wilcox also announced that an external review team composed of three well-respected publishers from other university presses would be coming to Amherst in early October to scrutinize the Press operation and offer advice. He noted that members of the Press Committee would have an opportunity to meet with the visitors.

**Awards and prizes in FY2013**

Books from the Press were favorably reviewed in a wide range of newspapers and scholarly journals. These reviews attest to the high quality of the publishing program and help to enhance the reputation of the University as a leader in research and scholarship. In addition, the following awards and prizes were received during the course of FY2013.

(1) Barbara Hochman’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the Reading Revolution received the 2012 DeLong Book History Book Prize from the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP). The award honors “the best book on any aspect of the creation, dissemination, or uses of script or print.” The author was presented with a $1,000 prize at SHARP’s annual conference in Dublin in July 2012.
(2) Peter Benes’s *Meetinghouses of Early New England* won the 2012 Kniffen Award of the Pioneer America Society for the best book in the field of North American material culture. The author accepted the award at a banquet in Philadelphia in September 2012. The book was also named to the *Choice* magazine list of “Outstanding Academic Titles.” The *Choice* reviewer described it as “a handsome and magisterial volume . . . an indispensable guide to the relationship between religion and material culture in early America.”

(3) In November 2012 Lawrence Goodheart was presented with the Homer D. Babbidge, Jr. Award from the Association for the Study of Connecticut History for his book, *The Solemn Sentence of Death: Capital Punishment in Connecticut*. Peter Hinks, chair of the awards committee, praised the book as “an example of the finest scholarship on American legal and social history.”

(4) Christopher Daly’s *Covering America: A Narrative History of a Nation’s Journalism* received the 2012 Prose Award of the Association of American Publishers for the best book in the category of “Media and Cultural Studies.” The Prose Awards annually recognize “the very best in professional and scholarly publishing by bringing attention to distinguished books, journals, and electronic content in over 40 categories.” Winners were announced at a luncheon in Washington, D.C., in February 2013.

(5) At the meeting of the National Council on Public History (NCPH) in Ottawa in April 2013, Denise Meringolo was presented with the 2013 NCPH Book Award for her book, *Museums, Monuments, and National Parks: Toward a New Genealogy of Public History*, along with a prize of $1,000. The award is given annually to “the best work published about or growing out of public history.” Another UMass Press book, Michael Scott Van Wagenen’s *Remembering the Forgotten War: The Enduring Legacies of the U.S.–Mexican War*, received Honorable Mention for the award. In addition, series editor Marla Miller and author Cathy Stanton each received an award for “Excellence in Consulting.”

(6) In June 2013 at the annual meeting of the American Library Association, Christine Pawley’s *Reading Places: Literacy, Democracy, and the Public Library in Cold War America* received the 2013 Eliza Atkins Gleason Book Award of the Library History Roundtable. This award is presented every third year to recognize “the best book written in English in the field of library history.” *Reading Places* previously won the E. Jennifer Monaghan Book Award of the International Reading Association, which was presented at the Association’s annual conference in San Antonio in April 2013.

(7) The Juniper Prizes for Poetry and Fiction, sponsored by the UMass Press, were awarded in April 2013 to Dana Roeser of West Lafayette, Indiana, and Rod Val Moore of Los Angeles, California. Their manuscripts were selected from among 657 entries submitted for the two prizes. The contest judges were faculty members in the UMass Amherst MFA program—James Tate, Dara Wier, and James Haug for poetry, and Noy Holland for fiction. They were assisted by graduate student screeners. This is the 38th year of the poetry prize and the 9th year of the fiction prize.

(8) The $5,500 Grace Paley Award in Short Fiction, sponsored by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, went to Corinna Vallianatos for her collection *My Escapee*. The judge was Jhumpa Lahiri. Reviewing the book in the *Boston Globe*, Matthew Guerrieri wrote, “Clear, vivid, and affecting, Vallianatos’s debut is rich with precisely rendered moments of painful recognition, resignation, or passionate defiance.” In the *New York Times Book Review*, Natalie Serber described the book as “a taut and delicate collection . . . full of swift insights about expectation and disappointment.”