

ANNUAL REPORT
of the
UNIVERSITY PRESS COMMITTEE
for
ACADEMIC YEAR 2005–2006

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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Gerald McFarland, Chair
Niyi Afolabi
Arlene Avakian
Robert Cox
Herman Fong
Judith Goodenough
Stephen Harris
Bernie Jones
Shaun O'Connell (UMass Boston)
Sharon Paradiso
Emily Silverman
Maria Tymoczko
Helen Wise (ex officio)
Janet Rifkin (ex officio)
Ernest May (ex officio)
Bruce Wilcox (ex officio)

Executive summary

The University of Massachusetts Press continues to publish a strong list of scholarly books, many of them related to the field of American studies. Following substantial budget cuts in 2003, the Press emerged a leaner, more efficient organization with a more sharply focused editorial program. It has developed effective partnerships with Columbia University Press for sales representation and Johns Hopkins University Press for warehousing and distribution. It has embraced new technology, digitizing more than 800 titles through alliances with Google, Amazon, netLibrary, and other Internet-based companies. It has become increasingly successful in raising grant support on a title-by-title basis. Its books continue to receive significant awards and excellent reviews. The committee is pleased with the progress and accomplishments of the Press during FY06.

Background

Founded in 1963, the University of Massachusetts Press serves as the book-publishing arm of the University. Its mission is to support and enhance the University's stature as a major research institution by publishing outstanding works of scholarship. The Press 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 1,000,000 individual volumes. Today it has more than 900 titles in print. Seven employees, along with student assistants and outside sales representatives, produce and market 25 to 35 new books annually. The offices of the Press are located in the East Experiment Station. For administrative, financial, and personnel matters, the Press reports to the Vice Provost for Research. Editorially, the Press reports to the University Press Committee, which currently includes a representative from UMass Boston.

FY06 statistical summary

During FY06, 37 new books were published (12 in hardback, 10 in paperback, and 15 simultaneously in hardback and paperback editions), 57 titles were reprinted (in many cases using print-on-demand technology), and 52,340 individual volumes were shipped to customers in the United States and abroad. Net sales for the year amounted to \$933,859. The Press ended the year with a revenue trust fund balance of \$125,366, reflecting an operating surplus of \$15,161 over the course of the year.

Press Committee activities during FY06

The University Press Committee, chaired by Professor Gerald McFarland of the History Department, met three times—in October, February, and May—to discuss projects under consideration and review the publishing program. Thirty-two new manuscripts were approved, along with the winners of the Juniper Prizes for Fiction and Poetry. The committee based each decision on the recommendations of the Press director and editors and on 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 UMass Press list. As always, the editors were looking for disciplinary rigor, interdisciplinary synthesis, incisive analysis, clear writing, and wide accessibility.

At each meeting, director Bruce Wilcox reported on significant developments at the Press. Editors Clark Dougan and Paul Wright described conferences attended and editorial initiatives undertaken. During FY06, they traveled to key academic meetings to display recent titles and talk with prospective authors. The Press had its own booth at the annual meetings of the American Studies Association (October), American Historical Association (January), and Organization of American Historians (April), and displayed books at many other conferences via cooperative exhibit services. The Press also mounted exhibits at the New England Booksellers Association convention (October) and the AWP Bookfair (March) and was represented in cooperative displays at the London Book Fair (April), Book Expo America (May), and the Frankfurt Book Fair (October).

In addition to evaluating projects proposed for publication, the committee gave particular attention to the issue of the future of the Press's Boston office, in view of the fact that Paul Wright would be retiring in December 2006. Since the 1970s, UMass Boston has had a voting faculty representative on the committee, and in 1988 the Amherst and Boston campuses signed an agreement establishing an office of the Press at UMass Boston, with an editor whose salary and expenses would be covered by UMass Boston. Wright was appointed as editor. This arrangement developed into a very productive relationship between the two campuses. As a consequence, all books published by the Press came to bear the dual imprint, "University of Massachusetts Press / Amherst and Boston." Recognizing the great value to the Press of having an editor based at UMass Boston, and acknowledging the important contributions that Wright had made over the previous seventeen years, the committee passed a resolution to be delivered to UMass Boston Chancellor Michael Collins, urging him to provide full funding for an editor's position, beginning in January 2007, and to proceed with a search for Wright's successor. Unfortunately, Chancellor Collins declined to do so, and the Boston office was closed in December 2006. Henceforth, books published by the Press will no longer include "and Boston" on the title page.

The committee commended the Press staff for its success in securing grant support on a title-by-title basis. According to OGCA records, in FY06 the Press received 23 grants from a wide range of sources, including foundations, cooperating organizations, and other universities. The committee also endorsed various partnerships and co-publishing arrangements. During FY06 the Press published titles in association with the Library of Congress, the American Antiquarian Society, the Thoreau Society, the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, and the Library of American Landscape History. While applauding these initiatives, the committee encouraged the Press to extend its general fund-raising efforts by inviting contributions from individuals.

Digital publishing

As scholarship continues to shift to the digital environment, the Press has taken steps to ensure that its books are accessible via online search engines and online booksellers. It has also gradually increased the number of titles that are offered for sale in e-book form, working with outside vendors such as netLibrary/OCLC, Questia, and Ebrary. The goal is to make the books available as widely as possible, while still providing an adequate revenue stream. At the Faculty Senate meeting of February 6, 2006, Wilcox joined Jay Schafer and Robert Rothstein on a panel discussing "Research and Publication in the Digital Age"; their comments were subsequently posted at the Library's website. The Press is cooperating with the Library in the creation of ScholarWorks@UMassAmherst and has offered fifteen books by UMass Amherst faculty for inclusion in this digital repository. Wilcox also spoke about recent changes in the environment of scholarly publishing at the Five College Publishing Day and at the Five College Women's Studies Research Center.

Notable awards and honors in FY06

* Glendyne Wergland's *One Shaker Life: Isaac Newton Youngs, 1793–1865* was named winner of the 2006 Award for Outstanding Publication from the Communal Studies Association. The citation recognized the book as “an outstanding contribution both to Shaker studies and to the broader field of communal studies.” Reviewing *One Shaker Life*, noted authority Stephen J. Paterwic described it as “one of the finest pieces of scholarship ever done on the Shakers. . . . I cannot state enough how important books like this are if we are ever to gain a correct and complete view of the Shakers as they have evolved.”

* Bernard Bell's *The Contemporary African American Novel: Its Folk Roots and Modern Literary Branches* won the 2006 Distinguished Scholarship Award of the College Language Association. The book had already received an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation and had been named a *Choice* Outstanding Academic Book.

* For her book, *Huerfano: A Memoir of Life in the Counterculture*, Roberta Price received the 2006 Zia Award from the New Mexico Press Women, an affiliate of the National Federation of Press Women. The Zia Award celebrates an outstanding New Mexico woman author of fiction, nonfiction, or children's literature. *Huerfano* was selected as the best work of nonfiction published in 2003, 2004, or 2005. It was previously named one of *ForeWord* magazine's top ten university press books of the year.

* Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish: Stories out of Entebbe* won the Commonwealth Foundation's 2006 Best First Book Award in the Africa region. The award, which includes a cash prize of £1,000, was made by an international judging panel meeting in Kampala, Uganda. Baingana is a Ugandan writer who lives in the United States. *Tropical Fish* previously won the Grace Paley Award in Short Fiction from the Association of Writers and Writing Programs. Baingana also won the Washington Independent Writers Fiction Prize and was a two-time finalist for the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2004 and 2005.

* *Altering American Consciousness: The History of Alcohol and Drug Use in the United States, 1800–2000*, edited by Sarah W. Tracy and Caroline Jean Acker, was reviewed not only in all the usual historical journals, but also in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The latter noted: “There are no shrill polemics here and no pretentious proposals for tougher laws or less stringent policies. What the reader will find are interesting snapshots of an erratic historical trajectory that shows how the social context matters more than biochemistry. . . . Each essay is enjoyable as well as informative, clear, well organized, and self-contained.”

* Six books from the Press were named to the list of “Outstanding Titles for 2006” by the Public Library Association and the American Association of School Librarians. Two others were selected by the American Library Association to be included in an exhibit of 27 titles deemed “The Best of the Best from the University Presses: Books You Should Know About.” The selected titles were the subject of a two-hour program at the American Library Association conference in New Orleans.

* Over the course of the year, books from the Press were favorably reviewed in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times*, and other newspapers around the country, as well as a host of scholarly journals. All of this attention helped to extend the reach and enhance the reputation of UMass Amherst.