Literature Activity IN THE West

A SYMPOSIUM ON ITS FUTURE

July 17-18, 1997

location
San Francisco

presented by
Western States Arts Federation

supported in part by
Walter and Elise Haas Fund

Literature Activity in the West: A Symposium on its Future

Proceedings of the Symposium

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Proceedings of Literature Activity in the West: A Symposium on its Future

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About the Symposium Sponsor: The Western States Arts Federation

The Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) is a regional arts organization that serves the arts-development needs of the arts community and the general public in the 12 Western states. The 25-year-old organization is an active partnership of the state arts agencies of Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Working with these states and in cooperation with private and public-sector funders, WESTAF's primary goals are to strengthen the arts infrastructure in the West and to expand the audience for all forms of the arts.

Throughout its history, WESTAF has adapted and transformed its programs and initiatives to reflect the current needs of the arts field and to respond to major structural changes of that field. The recent dramatic changes in arts funding in both the public and private sectors have prompted WESTAF once again to transform itself to ensure that it is properly positioned to best benefit the arts.

The organization remains committed to programmatic work in the areas of literature, folk arts, visual arts, Native American arts, and performing-arts presenting. Programs in these areas include activities such as the convening of leaders from a discipline; the development of model programs; and the sponsorship of long-term, region-wide programs that fill a gap in the arts infrastructure of the West. WESTAF also has launched an ambitious program in the area of technology and the arts. The presence of the Internet has provided WESTAF with a much-sought-after means of serving artists and arts organizations across the vast reaches of the West. WESTAF also remains committed to the improvement of the capacity and quality of public arts funding in its affiliated states. In the past 30 years, the funding of the arts by Western state arts agencies has made an enormous positive impact on the arts. The sustenance of this effort and the constant improvement of the manner in which it is administered are core commitments of WESTAF.

Symposium Credits

As with any significant undertaking, this symposium is indebted to a wide range of individuals and organizations for its success. Although a listing of those who helped us inevitably will leave someone out, we are compelled to call your attention to those who were generous with their time and advice.

In December of 1996, WESTAF convened a committee to review the literature programs of the organization. Although the principal rationale for the meeting was not to plan the symposium, those present were asked to offer advice regarding the value of WESTAF's sponsorship of such a forum. With lively debate, we received both encouragement and discouragement regarding the meeting—all of which was valuable. Those participating in the literature planning meeting were: Tom Auer, Publisher and Editor, *The Bloomsbury Review;* Len Edgerly, Poet and WESTAF Trustee; Margot Knight, Executive Director, Idaho Commission on the Arts and WESTAF Trustee; Lisa Knudsen, Executive Director, Mountain Plains Booksellers Association; Daniel Salazar, Associate Director, Colorado Council on the Arts; Michael Shay, Literature Program Manager, Wyoming Arts Council; Robert Sheldon, former WESTAF Literature Consultant; Corby Skinner, Executive Director, Writer's Voice; and Kelleen Zubick, Executive Director, Writer's Conferences & Festivals.

Once the decision was made to hold a symposium, a number of leaders in the field were asked to offer advice regarding who should be invited to make presentations at the meeting and what the appropriate topics would be for such a project. Those participating in this phase of the planning were: Tom Auer, Publisher and Editor, *The Bloomsbury Review;* Jill Bernstein, Presenting/Touring/Literature Director, Arizona Commission on the Arts; Kate Boyes, Assistant Editor and Book Review Editor, *Journal of Western American Literature,* and Board of Directors, Western Literature Association; Karen Clark, Executive Director, California Poets & Writers; Len Edgerly, Poet and WESTAF Trustee; Sam Hamill, Copper Canyon Press and Centrum; Chris Higashi, Literary Arts Alliance, Seattle Public Library; Judyth Hill, Literature Consultant, New Mexico Arts; Michael Hunt, Program Administrator for Literature, Missouri Arts Council; Margot Knight, Executive Director, Idaho Commission on the Arts and WESTAF Trustee; Desirée Mays, WESTAF Literature Consultant; Elise Paschen, Poetry Society of America; Charlie Rathbun, King County Arts Commission; Judith Roche, One Reel and Seattle Bumbershoot Literature Director; Michael Shay, Literature Director, Wyoming Arts Council; Robert Sheldon, former WESTAF Literature Consultant; Jim Sitter, Executive Director, Council of Literary Magazines and Presses; Corby Skinner, Executive Director, Writer's Voice of Billings YMCA; Kimberly Taylor, Executive Director, Colorado Center for the Book; Elizabeth Woody, Former Professor of Creative Writing, Institute of American Indian Arts; and Kelleen Zubick, Executive Director, Writers' Conferences & Festivals.

An activity such as this commonly has an enthusiast or two who supply key elements of a vision for such an event. In this case, Peter Hero, the Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Santa Clara County, was especially articulate in identifying ways that the symposium could be of use to the field and particularly to funders. Similarly, Gigi Bradford, previously of the National Endowment for the Arts

and now at the Center for Arts and Culture in Washington, brought with her enthusiasm for the activity as well as a commitment to create an event that would continue a national dialogue about a discipline she has done so much to foster.

The Walter and Elise Haas Fund partially underwrote this symposium and also made program officer Frances Phillips available to the forum. WESTAF appreciates the support of the fund and has benefited from the comments and good counsel of Phillips. Through its support of literary programs and WESTAF, the Haas fund adds its name to a distinguished group of WESTAF literature program sponsors that have included the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the Lannan Foundation, the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The work of WESTAF Trustee and Wyoming poet Len Edgerly is also appreciated. He prepared and delivered a series of creative and appropriate symposium introductions, advised the WESTAF staff on the development of the symposium, and was of great assistance in the planning session surrounding the formal meeting. His dedication to literature and his knowledge of the rapidly changing environment for the arts made him an insightful partner throughout this project.

WESTAF also would like to thank the following for their contributions to the symposium: Ray Tatar, California Arts Council Theater and Literature Administrator, for his warm welcome and opening remarks; the state arts agencies' literature staff for their advice and counsel in planning the symposium, including Jill Bernstein, Arizona; Judyth Hill, New Mexico; Diane Peavey, Idaho; Sharon Rosse, Nevada; Daniel Salazar, Colorado; Michael Shay, Wyoming; and the Director of the Montana Writer's Voice, Corby Skinner.

Finally, WESTAF would not have considered the need for this symposium had it not benefited from the vision of three key people in the West who have sustained WESTAF's commitment to literature. WESTAF thanks Robert Sheldon, who served with distinction as a consultant to the literature field, helped WESTAF expand TumbleWords into a successful program in the region, and led the development of WESTAF's successful Book Awards program. Margot Knight, the Executive Director of the Idaho Arts Commission, also deserves a note of thanks. Her career-long commitment to the inclusion of literature activity in the work of public arts agencies was central to the acceptance of literature as an important area of emphasis at WESTAF. Finally, former Trustee and writer Bill Fox is recognized for his commitment to the concept that a regional arts organization could make a difference for writers and also for his deep commitment to artistic excellence—a commitment that is reflected in his literary contributions to WESTAF and also in the work of those who engage in the programs he helped to create.

Symposium Process

The symposium featured eight presenters and four respondents. The format of the symposium was such that each presenter was allowed approximately 20 minutes to deliver a prepared statement, after which the symposium facilitators directed a discussion that included all participants.

Presenters

Peggy Barber, Associate Executive Director
American Library Association

Lee Ellen Briccetti, Executive Director
Poets House

Margot Knight, Executive Director
Idaho Commission on the Arts

Pennie Ojeda, Acting Director of International Partnerships Program
National Endowment for the Arts

Rick Simonson, Bookseller
Elliott Bay Book Company

Kim R. Stafford, Director
Northwest Writing Institute at Lewis & Clark College

David Streitfeld, Reporter
The Washington Post

Paul Yamazaki, Bookseller
City Lights Books

Respondents

W. Paul Coates, Founder
Black Classic Press

Mary Griggs, General Manager
Emeryville Borders Books and Music

Jonathan Katz, Chief Executive Officer
National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

Frances Phillips, Director, Creative Work Fund
Walter and Elise Haas Fund

Co-Facilitators

Gigi Bradford, Executive Director
Center for Arts and Culture

Peter Hero, Director
Community Foundation of Santa Clara County

Introduction

This symposium was an important action-oriented activity for the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) for a number of reasons. The first is that the symposium served as a clear statement to the literature field that WESTAF remains committed to continuing its work with literature. Recently, after suffering major funding reductions from the National Endowment for the Arts and a hiatus in major private foundation funding of WESTAF literature programs due to foundation-planning activities, the continuation of WESTAF in this important area was not a certainty. This symposium should serve as a clear statement that our organization intends to forge ahead in the literature area and will remain active in the field in a meaningful manner, even with our more limited funding base.

This symposium also signals a redirection of focus for WESTAF. While the organization remains committed to the sponsorship of field-based arts programs, WESTAF increasingly will emphasize its role as a pro-active force for the development of a conducive environment for the arts. One way to improve the arts environment is to utilize a symposium such as this to expand a discipline area's awareness of the critical issues facing it and to identify the options available to address those issues. Through the sponsorship of those discussions, WESTAF hopes to contribute to an emerging consensus about ways to best assist the development of a discipline during this period of extraordinary change.

Finally, this symposium, though focused on the environment for and dynamics of literature in the West, clearly has underscored the fact that national and even international trends in the literature field affect all engaged in work in that field. While there clearly are elements that make the West unique, beyond the content and perhaps dimensions of the style of writing that have emerged from that region and the Western mindset of many readers, there appear to be more similarities than differences in the literature environment across the regions of the country. Indeed, assisting in the strengthening of the connections of the literature community of the West with literature interests in other parts of the country and around the world may be an important role for WESTAF. Such a role may be far more valuable to the development of literature activity in the West than any effort to promote and increase the differentiation of this region from others.

I hope you find these symposium proceedings as useful as we have. Already, they have informed planning at WESTAF that will result in the redesign of existing services and programs and in the development of new ones for the literature field. The dialogue contained in these proceedings is not the last word about the state of the present. We believe, however, that the thoughts shared here will help us better understand the present and that they will serve as useful—and maybe even essential—elements in the fashioning of the future of the literature field in the West.

Anthony J. Radich
Executive Director
WESTAF

Foreword

Leonard S. Edgerly

The Conversation Continues

Think of these proceedings as if you were sitting in a small independent bookstore, say the Blue Heron in Casper, Wyoming. In come a varied and illustrious gaggle of well-dressed people passionate about literature. They start talking.

The bookstore owners gently guide the conversation, but basically they stay out of the way. As you sit at an oak table drinking your peppermint tea, your mind follows along, liking some comments, loving others, and not quite grasping or disagreeing with others. By the end of the day, you're exhausted with Ideas about Literature and Audience Development. You wish you could hear a tape or maybe read a transcript (edited lightly to remove the *ums* and *ahs* and little dead ends).

If you were in Chugwater, Wyoming, or Seattle that day, you might have heard about the lively session from somebody by now, and you might like to see for yourself what all the buzz was about. Well, that's what these proceedings offer—a chance to ponder and wander through a fascinating, high-level conversation about literature.

Like any real conversation, this one could lead people in lots of directions. Someone might be inspired by Peggy Barber of the American Library Association to take her local librarian to lunch and brainstorm ideas about how to bring public readings to town. Another might make a note to see what his community foundation is up to in audience development for literature. Still another might be willing to see chain bookstores as something other than the Antichrist, based on Mary Griggs's thoughtful comments from her perspective as the front-line manager of a Borders bookstore.

I was fortunate enough to attend the WESTAF symposium on literature in San Francisco, far from the Blue Heron but close to issues I care about as a poet who hopes there will be an audience for my work as the bytes, bits, and market trends of the new world come gully-washing over the West.

My personal take: Kim Stafford as keynote speaker began the conversation with a surprising and challenging outlook. He sang and recited writing from unsung writers of the West and posed this version of our task: "how to plant those very local, often very informal, very private, very limited, but unstoppable literary forces at home in their places."

Stafford's challenge relates to the fact that the symposium's participants were all tall dogs in the literature field, like David Streitfeld, who has the dream beat of writing only about literature for *The Washington Post,* and others who publish books, buy books for famous book stores, or give away big amounts of money from foundations. What do these people have to do with the woman Stafford quoted from Twisp, Washington, who wrote a moving ode to a deceased seeing-eye dog named Teak, asking him to "butter God up for our coming, won't you?"

I didn't know the answer to that question, but I kept it with me throughout the day-long symposium that followed Stafford's evening address. I think the connection is audience development. The audience comprises, ultimately, people like Teak's owner, Dee, who asked her friend to write a little something for a memorial service down by the river where Teak had led Dee on daily

walks you could set your watch by.

Teak's sorrowful owner knows the power of words. She didn't need a grant from the NEA or a program designed by WESTAF to value her friend's poem. But without the funds and effort that went into Stafford's being there to lead a workshop in Twisp, where he asked the writer to please, *please* go home and fish that poem out of the trash, we wouldn't have ever heard it, and neither would you.

Thus, I think, the real work is not just about how to get more award-winning literature moving through today's weirdly morphing distribution channels.

The real work is to stay tuned to words, to literature as it keeps poking up from the West in this speeding, greedy age. Tall dogs of the litbiz and seeing eye dogs in Twisp are part of the same challenge: keeping a few channels of attention open for words that are true, that nourish the spirit, that point our way forward.

Lots of good programs and collaborations are indicated. Money is needed. Organizations like WESTAF are necessary as conveners and links for people and ideas. But in the end, what's important will happen in places like the Blue Heron in Casper. People will share writing, high and low. Writers will find readers. The conversation will continue.

Leonard S. Edgerly, a poet who lives in Casper, Wyoming, serves on the WESTAF Board of Trustees and the Wyoming Arts Council.

Kim Stafford

The Literature of Local Allegiance in the West

(With apologies to the authors of several sample texts for errors I may have made in trying to say their work from memory.)

Let me start with an Oregon song:

I've reached the land of rain and mud, where flowers and trees so early bud—
I've reached the land, oh blessed day, for in Oregon it rains always.
Oh, Oregon, wet Oregon, as through thy rain and mud I run,
I look above, behind, around, I watch the rain soak in the ground.
I watch it rain and watch it pour and wish it wouldn't rain anymore.

A sweet perfume is on the breeze. It comes from fir and alder trees,
And all the flowers that bloom and grow, and all the leaves that bud and blow.
Oh, Oregon girls, wet Oregon girls, with flash-ing eyes and soggy curls,
They'll sing and dance both night and day till some webfooter comes their way.
They'll meet you at the kitchen door, saying, "Wipe your feet or come no more."

We have to start with a piece of literature from the West, where Oregon pioneers sang those words to the tune of the old hymn, "Beulah Land." The original hymn went like this:

I've reached the land of corn and wine, and all its beauties now are mine. . . .

But it just wasn't that way when they got to the Oregon winter. They had to take the old song and change it. Who wrote the new version? We don't know. We just know it spoke for a place and a time and a people.

There's a line in a Nez Perce myth, one of their creation myths, about Coyote—who is always messing up in all kinds of ways. But he does one thing right. Coyote destroys the Swallowing Monster, cuts the body up and throws the bones here and there to create the human tribes, the Blackfoot tribe over that way, the Gros Ventre over that way. . . .When he has finished with this task, Fox comes along (every organization should have Fox), and Fox says, "Have you given no thought for the people of this place?" Coyote says, "That's right." He takes water and washes the monster's blood off his hands and shakes his hands over the dust of the Clearwater country, and that makes the "Nimipoo," the real people, what we outsiders call the Nez Perce.

Fox's line is our line for working with literature in the West: "Have you given no thought to the people of this place?"

I remember when I was on a panel (we seem to meet on panels a lot)—I was on a panel in Lewiston, Idaho, and we were talking about literature in the West and about audience development. It seems these are the things we've all been talking about for some time. There was a woman from Grangeville there who said to the group, "Well, maybe the people of Grangeville aren't all that interested in modern American literature because modern American literature isn't so interested in Grangeville." And I thought, yes, that could be it. Who wrote our songs? How can we feature the songs of the people of this place, this place singing to itself as that Oregon folksong did? That's my question.

Well, I want to go back. Since I am the keynote speaker, I have to give some historical perspective here. Let's go back 500 years to the West

country of England, the Northwest Midlands, out in that provincial, backward place where they spoke this strange dialect that the people from the East (London) didn't much respect. Chaucer made jokes about those West country people and their literature, how they had an old-fashioned alliterative tradition in their poetry. I want to take you back to those backward times in that provincial place by giving a piece of a poem by "anonymous." My theme tonight is really the literature of anonymous because anonymous is us. Anonymous is the people we need to support. We need to support literature made by people we will never meet or hear of directly. That is what we really need to do if we are to honor literature in our region.

So here's part of a poem from the West country in the late 14th century. We don't know who wrote it or exactly when it was written, or where—though my favorite scholar thinks it might have been written somewhere in Staffordshire. It's the most metrically complex poem in English, with a total of 1,212 lines, 101 stanzas, with the last word in every stanza picked up and repeated in the first line of the following stanza and the last word of the poem linking back to the first. (I think Len Edgerly here ought to write a poem about the business world in this metrical form.) The poem—it doesn't even have a name in the original manuscript (which no one read for 400 years)—tells of this anonymous person who had a pearl, and it was the most wonderful thing you could ever imagine. And she says or he says,

> I treasured it above all others. But out in the garden, it slipped through my fingers into the grass, and I lost it. In that place I lay down where there was a little mound, and I put my head on the earth and fell asleep, and I had a dream that I was in a superlative landscape. The leaves on the trees were silver and they shimmered, and the ground was pebbled with pearls. I walked there until I came to a stream, and beyond it I saw an infant, a child, and I cried out across the stream, "Are you my pearl, my most precious, that I have mourned by night. . . ?"

And at this point, reading, you realize this is a parent who has lost a child. The pearl that slipped away into the grass was that young one lost. The rest of the poem is a grieving conversation across the water that separates us from our dear departed. In the original dialect, the poem says it this way:

> Perle, plesaunte to prynces paye
> To clanly close in golde so clere,
> Oute of oryente I hardyly saye
> Ne preved I never hir precious pere.
> So rounde, so reken in uch araye,
> So smale, so smothe hir sydes were,
> Wheresoeuer I jugged gemes gaye
> I sette hir singeley in synglere.
> Alas, I leste hir in one herbere—
> Thurgh gras to grounde it from me yotte.
> I dewyne, fordolked of luf-daungere
> For that pryvy perle withouten spotte. . . .

When I say that poem over to myself, when I feel its music and its pathos flow through me, I realize that anonymous did well. And I keep searching for anonymous in my own time and place, which is no single ego, but that life-enhancing, collective ego we call *culture*, that lucky invisible thing we call an *artist community* and a *developed audience*.

In school, when they told me about "The Muse," I thought. . .ah, yeah—that classical cliché. But then I realized the muses are everywhere. I have to say patriotically, everywhere, especially in the West, the muses are the elders, the children, the people in little towns where we live and ramble, the neighborhoods, the stranger on the street who has a story to tell. Right here in San Francisco, my muse today is that tattoo artist over on Columbus. Here's his motto, as I copied it from the window: "Permanent Inspiration." That's one example of my muse. Permanent inspira-

tion is the frequency of local creation. Another example of my muse is my mother, who taught me a song—again a song by anonymous. She was a preacher's daughter and therefore had quite a trove of outrageous texts and here's one of them:

> While the organ pealed—potatoes, lard was rendered—by the choir.
> As the sexton rang—the dishrag, someone set the church on fire.
> "Holy Smokes!" the preacher shouted, as his wig flew in the air.
> Now his head resembles Heaven, for there is—no—parting—there.

Maybe that's the muse of the bad kids in the congregation, right? Kids who are taken up by this urge to tell it their own way. They have a thought for the people of their place.

After publishing 50 books of poetry and prose, my dad's best-known work may be something that became anonymous. William Stafford wrote it, and then it became a piece of academic and sports folklore. It was printed anonymously in *Sports Illustrated* 30 years after he wrote it as a secret text. It purports to be a letter to the college football coach, but it's a kind of bad-boy text, too. It begins something like this:

> Dear Coach Musselman,
> For years you have reminded me of the importance of cooperation between the football squad and the English Department. Often have you reminded me of the need to support your players in their struggles in English composition, lest their failure at study jeopardize their sports scholarships. I would like to ask a favor in return. Paul Spindles, one of our most promising students in English, has a chance for a Rhodes Scholarship, but the application requires that he be a member of the football team's starting line-up. Paul is weak, thin, slight of build; however, he does try hard. . . .

The letter goes on to suggest a deal with Coach Musselman—we'll help your players pass composition if you will let young Spindles lead the football team—and is signed by "Professor Plotinus." Of course, once my father passed this letter to a friend, it was copied often, and it went everywhere. It was printed anonymously, among other places, on the back of the Harvard Crimson half-time entertainment booklet. How did it travel so eagerly for 30 years? Someone was moved to send it on because it spoke for a people. What I am trying to figure out is how literature becomes the possession of the people. If that happens, it will be eagerly funded, written, published, and widely received.

Last week, Diane [Peavey, the Idaho Arts Commission's Literature Coordinator] and I had the good fortune to be in Wallowa County in Oregon, listening to an elder named Horace Axtell, a Nez Perce man, Nimipoo. This was part of the 10th-annual Fishtrap Writers Gathering, and Horace was teaching us some of the Nez Perce language. For a native Oregonian, it was haunting and humbling for me to learn, or try to learn, some of these Nez Perce words. "Have you given no thought to the people of this place?" We were learning words from one of the Nez Perce people, the people who went to the signing of the 1855 treaty where the Northwest was taken away from them. In answer to all the questions that were put to the tribes by the Indian agents, one Nez Perce man in 1855 is said to have responded, "What would the land say?"

Have you given no thought to the people of this place? What would the land say?

As I listened to Horace, I felt I was hearing what the land itself would say because one of the ideas behind the Nez Perce language is that birds say their own names. Think about it. Of course. When the robin sings in the morning, it does not say *Robin*. Listen tomorrow, and you will hear it say its name in Nez Perce, *wispoxpox*.

You can speak back to it, if you like: *wíispôxpôx*. And the killdeer says, *ciyíititit*. And the raven does not call itself by the hoarse call of the raven, but by the lyric song of the raven, saying softly, *qóoxqox*.

So the birds are saying their own names in the Nez Perce language. And another thing about it, the language is in love with itself—so many of the words in Nez Perce are doubled. The blackened embers of a fire are called *cimuúx* ("tsimoo"), and the color black is *cimuúcimux* ("tsimootsimoo") The color white is *xayxáyx* ("hihi") And it goes on and on, these names loving themselves and their world. Our world.

I was listening to Horace, trying to get the pronunciation right. He had us in a circle, and he would have us all go around and say each word again and again. When people try to say a word correctly and they are sitting in a circle, bobbing their heads, Horace says, "You look like a bunch of storks, you're all trying so hard." And what I realized, trying to get it right, is that the act of writing is simply a way of trying to "pronounce" our feelings. When we write a poem or a story or an essay or a memo or the minutes of meeting or a letter of condolence or a birthday card or a love note, we are trying to learn to pronounce our feelings. We're trying to get the pronunciation just right, and when we first try, sometimes it sounds like anger or confusion. We keep trying to pronounce it better, until we get it right so it sings. That is when it names this place as literature.

Literature in the West is each generation of people trying to pronounce their feelings about the place they're from. Let me give a couple examples of Westerners trying this way. First, a cowboy poem. Forgive me, but I get drunk on this kind of thing. This poem, "Rain on theRange," is almost by anonymous—it's by a cowboy named S. Omar Barker. I think it's by Barker, from Nevada some time ago. If I have it wrong, tell me:

When your boots are full of water and
your hat brim's all adrip,
When the rain sets little rivers running down
your horse's hip,
When every step your pony takes, pert near
bogs him down
It's then you get to thinkin' 'bout them boys
that work in town.

They may be sellin' ribbons, they may be
slingin' hash—
It doesn't really matter when the thunder
starts to crash.
They just do their little doin's, be their wages
low or high.
Let it rain till Hell's a pond, they're always
warm and dry.

And their beds are stuffed with feathers, or
at worst with plenty of straw
While your old soggy sogans may go driftin'
down the draw.
They got no rope to fret about that kinks
when it gets wet.
There ain't no puddle formin' in the saddle
where they set.

And there's women folks to cook them up
the chuck they most admire,
While you gnaw cold, hard biscuits 'cause
your cook can't start a fire.

When you're ridin' on a cattle range and hit
a rainy spell,
Your whiskers get plumb mossy, and you
note a mildewed smell

On everything, from leather, to the makin's
in your sack
And you get the chilly quivers from the
water down your back.

You couldn't pull your boots off if you
hitched 'em to a mule
So you think about them ribbon clerks and
call yourself a fool

For ever punchin' cattle with a horse between your knees
Instead of clerkin' ribbons and a takin' of your ease.
But, when you bow your neck to quit without a doubt,
The rain beats you to it, and the sun comes bustin' out.

Your wet clothes go to steamin' and most everywhere you pass
You notice how that stretch of rain has livened up the grass.
That's how it is for cowboys when a rainy spell has hit:
They just hang on till it's over, then there ain't no need to quit.

Now I ask myself, why have a whole lot of people I know taken possession of that piece of literature? Why do they memorize it and say it to each other when they have a chance? If I answer for myself, it's because the simple wisdom at the end and the pure delight all the way through make something I want to have in my life. The cowboys, when they hear a poem from each other that they like, may say, "I want that." This does not mean, "Can I have a Xerox of that?" or "Where was that published?" It means, "I want that—memorized—in my body."

This is one of the things that happens around here, when the people of this place try to pronounce their feelings. You hear a story and then you put it into your story bag and then you take it out and it goes back to the regional literary kin of the people you heard it from. What we call *audience development* shrinks down to that one exactly-right person who needs a particular poem at a particular time.

I was up in Nez Perce country at Lapwai, Idaho, and I went to see this great old lady named Louise. She won't look at you because, in her culture, if you look someone in the eye, you're trying to figure out if they are lying, so you don't do that very often. You just are there, looking off to the side, visiting silently. I had learned something about this earlier, visiting an Eskimo family in Alaska. There, I was trying to do what my mama taught me and make conversation, keep things going, and finally the father said to me, "Why are you talking so much?" Well, I said, I was just trying to get acquainted. "You can get acquainted," he said, "without talking." And we sat silently for a stretch of time, and I found he was right. So with Louise, I was still. We sat there awhile. She wouldn't look at me, but if I got uncomfortable and started to leave, she would start talking because she didn't want me to leave. After a time she got out some things she had made, and I bought from her this beaded baseball cap—nice red cap with red and white beading all across the brim. I thought, now this is a piece of Western American literature. This is a text. And I gave it to my daughter when I got home.

A couple years later, I went to see Louise again. I didn't think she would remember me. After we had sat for a time, she began to tell me a story. At the end of it she said, "That's when I made that hat you bought for your daughter." She knew that a gift like that needed a story to go with it because literature functions to deepen our lives in particular ways. A beautiful object has a story of its kinship with time, place, and event. By the time I got home, I had this way of remembering what Louise had told me:

I went upriver to visit Louise, stopped at the market to give her a call.
She's always home working on her beads—you know Louise.
I knocked on her door, she shuffled me in—

had all her beadwork
spread out on a board.
I bought some things, and asked how she was. She looked away.

I stood by the window to say my good-bye.
The sun was low,
and the day was cold.

But then Louise started to speak, and I listened to Louise.
She said, "We went down to Phoenix to visit the Pope, that summer
when he was there.
I was wearing my red dress that day, with the white shells on.

"My friends, they all said they saw me on TV. They said, 'Louise,
did you touch the man?'

Well, I reached out my hand, but then I was afraid. I pulled away.
The man beside me shook the Pope's hand, then the crowd moved him along.
We got in our truck, and started for home—driving toward Idaho.

"As we drove along, I was working on my beads. My fingers shook,
and I dropped a few.

My little grandson, he laughed and he said, "Why do those old things?"

I took his arm and looked in his eye. I didn't like what I felt then.
I said some things that I'd say again. I love that boy.

"I said, 'It is hard when you sew one bead at a time. My hands are shaking,
my eyes have grown dim,

But are you too lazy, or are you too rich, to sew one bead at a time?'
Well, Louise was finished, and I said good-bye, drove over the bridge
at Spaulding for home,
On up the canyon, past Kendrick for Troy, as the dark came on.

I went up the switch backs, came out in the wheat, left the car, stood by the pines,
Looked at the stars, and thought about Louise:
"It is hard when you sew one bead at a time. My hands are shaking,
my eyes have grown dim,

But are you too lazy, or are you too rich, to sew one bead at a time?"

That little boy in the story is coming to my college this fall. He speaks Nez Perce. Is my college ready for him? Because his grandma did something to him, gave him an amazing gift of wisdom that my college must be ready to nurture and receive. Earlier in life, he went off to boarding school in the East. Horace Axtell, my teacher, went to see him there, and the young boy's professor said to Horace, "This boy is thinking of leaving school. Can you talk to him?" Horace said, "Yeah, I'll talk to him." In private, the boy said, "Grandfather, I'm so homesick. I need to spend more time with my grandmother. That's the kind of person I want to be." So Horace said, "It sounds like you have decided." So the boy went home.

But now he is coming to my college. When I learned this, I said to Horace, "How can I help him at my college—a very good but sometime insensitive place?" Horace said, "Tell him that I am thinking of him. Tell him that every day in my thoughts I see him. Tell him I have been noticing him. When an elder notices a young person, they become stronger."

Again, the land is trying to tell its story to those or through those who can translate some of those sounds, some of those feelings.

I was walking across my campus one day on my way to the faculty convocation. There were two guys bent to their work below ground in a ditch. It was a cold day, and they were at work on a steam pipe. As I walked by, one of them said to the other,

> As the world around us grows colder,
> sincerity and honesty
> must be the fire to keep us warm.

I wrote that down in my little book, and when I got to the convocation, I read the ditch-digger's remark to my friends. Do you know what they said to me? "You didn't hear that. You made it up. . .or maybe those were some of our English majors who couldn't get *real* jobs."

I heard in the skepticism of my educated friends this sorrow: literature is not a native possession of our kind. The wisdom of story does not reside among us all. We have to fund literature to make people read it.

This is the prejudice about people at large and about literature's pale virtues that we must move beyond. I want to be the eavesdropper on my culture and start this other cycle going: literature traveling from a place through a voice and to us all.

I know I am preaching to the converted. Please forgive me.

Here's a text that may put this clearly. I was in the little town of Twisp, Washington—a town with a sense of humor: the liquor store is called *Isabel's House of Spirits*. We were meeting for a writing workshop in a cafe that had recently become an art gallery, and I started off by asking, "What have you all been writing?" My friends there answered that they had been writing in their journals, in letters, in stories for the grandkids. And finally, one woman said, "I wrote a poem a couple days ago, but after it served its purpose, I threw it away."

"What was its purpose?"

"Oh, well," she said, "there's a woman in town, Dee, and she had this great seeing-eye dog, Teak, and you could just about set your watch to see Dee and Teak go down along the river for their morning walk. Well, this went on for years, but Teak finally died, and Dee called me up and said, 'Diana, would you help me go down along the river to scatter Teak's ashes?' So I wrote a poem for Dee and then I read it down there by the river and then I threw it away."

"Have you taken out the trash?" someone said.

"No, it's probably still in the recycling box."

"Could you bring it to our workshop tomorrow?"

The next morning, she found the poem, ironed it flat, and brought it to class. I made a copy for myself and urged her to keep the original. This is a person and a place and a time trying to get right the pronunciation of a feeling about life in Twisp:

> Teak
> Now, you lucky dog, you get to romp
> eternally
> naked of your fallible body, among the
> celestial periwinkles.
> Butter God up for our own coming, won't
> you?
> Tell Her how we faithfully filled your dish
> and stroked your velvet ears.
> How we gave you gravy at Thanksgiving
> and hors d'oeuvres at parties
> thrown—while not exactly in your honor—
> at least for your entertainment.
>
> As these ashes we spread along
> your favorite banks absorb morning's
> dew and adhere to the soil we
> poor mortals continue to tremble along
> on our own circuitous trails to our own
> inevitable ends,

know we'll extol you by remembering
your elegance, your tolerance, your liquid
understanding eyes, Dee's eyes.

I hesitate to believe, tho' perhaps I'm right,
we're better bi-peds from having made your acquaintance. Oh true gentleman of the finer species.
If anyone can do it, you can.
Butter God up, we're on our way.

We all cheered to hear this poem. And that moment of celebration reminded me that any skill I have as a teacher results from years of going to class unprepared. When you go unprepared, you have to appeal to the writers in the class: What have you been reading? What have you been writing? What has been happening here in Twisp? As a teacher, I need to interview the class, the place, the time. And the result is when I give a reading from my own book, *Having Everything Right*, I notice my place markers for favorite passages all have local people's names: the stories told me by Grace, Martin, Wilma, Belle—the elders. These are the stories that were given to me, and I try to give them back. That's how literature works in this place.

Here we are in San Francisco, the place of the fabled "San Francisco Renaissance" of literature in the 1950s. Let me give one of the legends from that time. There was a man named Glen Coffield, born in Missouri early in the century. When he received his teaching degree in the 1930s, the depth of the Great Depression, he said to the school board, "Send me to the poorest place." He wanted to go there because he wanted honest stories. He taught, he listened, he completed his education among rural people.

Then in 1942, he got his draft notice, effective immediately. Six months later, he showed up in the camp his notice had specified, but he was so late they wanted to throw him in the slammer for non-compliance. His reply was that he had begun walking the day he got his notice, and it took six months to do the thousand miles. That was his version of complying with authority but on his own terms. After a series of conversations and formalities, Glen ended up with conscientious objector status, stationed at Camp Angel on the Oregon coast. Many of the COs were artists, writers, free thinkers of a particular cast, and the head of the Selective Service realized he could move them around, get them together in useful ways (a kind of follow-up to the WPA projects of the 1930s, and perhaps a forerunner to the NEA). That saavy director, General Hershey, sent a lot of the artistic CO types to Camp Angel, and it became a beehive of creativity. There they were, planting trees and fighting forest fires by day, and reading, writing, acting, painting, and discussing the essential new world order in the evenings. Glen wore his hair long but he worked hard—he held the record for the most trees planted in a day—and he also wrote like crazy and experimented with little publications of various kinds. When the war ended, he and his friends were saturated with original thought and creative momentum. Many headed south for San Francisco, to contribute in a spirited way to the beat generation that began, in many ways, with their influence. Up in Oregon, Glen tried to figure out how to support himself, and one thought was to edit a magazine and try to generate enough subscriptions to get by. What he realized, however, was that there were three libraries in the country that subscribed to every magazine published. If he edited enough magazines, he reasoned, and sold the three subscriptions to each one, he could make a living wage. So that's what he did. For a while, I've heard he had some 25 magazines going. Much of the copy he wrote himself—poems, stories, articles on world economy, bread recipes, local agricultural practice, folk songs. His effort was the university of the world, all radiating out to inspire the multitude from his cabin on the slopes of Mt. Hood, east of Portland. If you wanted to meet this genius, how did you find the place? "Well," Glen would say, "past Rhododendron,

there's a big stump on the right, and after that there's a road that turns off into the forest. Follow that road until it forks, and take the worst fork. Go up that way until the road forks again, and take the worst fork. . . ." When you got to the house, you found a river going through the living room, trees growing through the roof. Nothing straight, everything integrated, a typewriter on a plank. No real furniture but lots of ideas and rich conversation. He was clearly ahead of his time.

These were the stories I was raised on, since my father was a CO in the war years, too. I went to Glen's wooden palace as a kid. It all made sense. When Glen died, that era became a kind of family myth, the golden age of home-made literature in the forest of our world.

Just two days ago, I heard this story: after Glen left the woods, it seems, the daughter of a logger found his house. At the age of six, she and her girlfriend had this secret mansion in the forest. They told no one, sneaking up there to play. And one day, they lifted a board in the living room floor, and there were all these notebooks tucked away safe. They had found Glen's journals from World War II: peace, justice, respect, the human principles of reconciliation. They were just learning to read, and over the years they two helped each other work through the jornals one by one.

One night at the dinner table in her family's house, the conversation took a strange turn. It became clear to her parents that the girl was filled with strange ideas. "Where are you getting all that?" her father said. She held her ground. She wouldn't say. But finally, she buckled, and from under her bed came these notebooks. That night, in the yard, they all burned. But she maintains today that Glen's writings changed her life. They changed her children's lives, she says. They will change *their* children's lives, she is certain.

I'm glad you will all be together for a day now because you can figure out how to do this thing I'm trying to name: how to plant these very local, often informal, private, limited, but unstoppable literary forces at home in their places.

When I was at the Fishtrap Writers Gathering last week, I was heading up the trail into the mountains early one morning, and when I came around a corner, there was a panorama of silent forest, and one single tree that was trembling. It was the quaking aspen, shivering green in the sunlight. The stem of the aspen leaf is designed to do that, so the firs, the cedars, and the pines all were still, but that one little tree was responding to the lightest breeze. I looked at that young tree dancing before me, and I thought, that's the writer, the listener, the one who reads every local event. You know how in the writing workshop people say, "As a kid, I suffered because everyone said, 'You're too sensitive.'" But then I realized when I began to write, I'm *supposed* to be sensitive. We are supposed to tremble. Wind travels through a place like a story, and a generation knows it through the writer's quiet pronunciation.

I'll end with a piece my daddy wrote. It's private, and it's for you. He gave himself this assignment: you remember what you said, at some crossroads in your life, but then you write what you *should* have said. You remember what you did, but you write what you *should* have done. This is the great thing: you can revise your life. Through literature, we have options. We live again and again and again. I miss my father—William Stafford—and I treasure the true claim he made, a kind of truth available in every family, every relationship, every town. We're going to help this happen, we who gather for this work.

Here are the two letters: first, what he might have written home and then what he should have writ-

ten home. He's imagining it's about 1936. He has left home in Hutchinson and gone away to college:

Dear Home,

We study by the lamp you sent, and Mrs. Wilson sends cookies upstairs sometimes. Norman and my other roommate Frank are good company, and our bull sessions—as the guys here call them—are fun.

I made a B in the last psychology test. Did you ever hear of Freud and Jung? They know what we are really like, I guess. I'll try to learn and explain when we meet at Christmas.

Thanks for your letters.

—Bill

Dear Home,

I hate it. Every night in the stale-cabbage smell upstairs we gather to make fun of Charley. He is so pale and dumb—he believes anything. Frank the medic has him terrified of diseases; Norman delights in telling him shocking stories about scoutmasters and ministers, the heroes Charley used to have. These years will mark Charley for life.

It's so cold in our room that the inkwell froze. Noise from the frat house goes on all night. The psychology teacher snickers about people like you, and I sit there holding my smile still so he won't know I'm hurt.

I want to quit and be yours again.

—Bill

I want to belong like that—to a truth, to a place, and to my people in the West.

Paul Yamazaki

The Economic Structure of the Sale and Distribution of Literary Materials

My intention today is to describe the system in which the book industry now operates—literature's place within that system. I also want to identify the potential opportunities and challenges our field faces in the present and in the future. Hopefully, over the course of the day, we will be able to develop a consensus regarding the topography of the challenges facing the field and identify ways we can meet those challenges. The operative word today for all of us, both in the commercial side and non-profit sides of the business, is that we operate in a very challenging environment.

At the present time, several major trends are dramatically reshaping the book business. Much of this has already been written about by people such as David Streitfeld, and much has also been reported in the business press over the last two years. For a number of reasons, a lot of the mainstream and other media are beginning to focus on the challenges of the book industry. I think that people are starting to become aware of the fact that, if we lose our literacy and if we lose our literature, the national culture will be greatly impoverished.

For booksellers and for people in publishing, one of the things that has changed dramatically over the past 30 years is the reduction in the number of concerns that actually publish books. Presently, Manhattan has been reduced to what we could call a handful; they are giants, but it is a still only a handful. Right now, there are only two independent publishers left—Mifflin and Norton. Others that we call *trade commercial houses* are now subsidiaries of large media conglomerates. What this means is that there are many pure editorial choices, and I will expand on this later.

To give you a sense of the scale that we're talking about, in 1986, over $20 billion in books were sold. Of that number, about $5.5 billion were trade books. About 82% of those trade book sales came from eight conglomerates. To give you a sense of scale, the largest distributor of independent presses—and most of them aren't literary—is out here in the West, Publishers Group West. They did about $100 million worth of business in 1996, which represents 1.8% of total trade sales. The largest distributor of literary books, which is Consortium, had about $12 million in book sales in 1995, which represents about two-tenths of a percent of total book sales. Some people engaged in economic analysis would say that this number is so insignificant that it doesn't even register.

Over the past 30 years, all of us in this room have witnessed dramatic changes in the national culture. We are now looking at an amazing variety of good writing and publishing taking place. The disjunction is that we haven't been able to effectively reach all of our audiences. I don't think we are reaching our core audiences now, and I don't think we are positioned to expand into potential new audiences. At the same time we look at this problem in publishing, we are also starting to look at the same things occurring in wholesaling. Ingram dominates the wholesaling market. A great number of regional wholesalers are no longer in business.

The same type of consolidation is occurring in retail bookselling, where trade books are being sold less in bookstores. The growth market now is in price clubs and areas other than bookstores. The independents who have been the traditional supporters of independent publishers in literature have slipped to control only about a 19%

share of the market—and this number is still falling. So we have all these crisis points in terms of the delivery mechanisms. The thing that doesn't get discussed is that we also have to talk about the crisis in the public schools and public libraries. I think that if we are not able to talk about this in the same breath we talk about the changing book sales and distributions systems, we are going to miss the huge potential for reaching future audiences. Effective schools and libraries are essential components of a healthy literary field. I am happy that Ojeda and Briccetti are here today, as they are currently working on programs in these areas.

Another weakness in the book industry is that we don't have many numbers. We are largely a statistically bereft industry. A lot of what we do we do in the dark without communicating with each other. Establishing effective communication in our field is essential. Just over the course of visiting informally with all of you yesterday, I've picked up an amazing amount of new and useful information. There are these communications disjunctures where we don't know what others are doing, and I think that we must work on this problem in order to make headway in this challenging environment.

Over the last 30 years, literature in this country has changed dramatically. It has changed in terms of who writes it, who produces it, and who reads it. I believe that we still have an amazingly upside potential for attracting new readers, and that's why I think libraries and schools are so important. As a bookseller for close to 30 years, I have been a beneficiary of all the efforts of the people in this room. Without the efforts of funders and literary organizations, writers will never walk into our doors in the form of books, and that's one thing we really need to focus on—how the literary culture continues to be funded. The National Endowment for the Arts and CLMP [Council of Literary Magazines and Presses] were central to the effort to bring a wider range of literary voices into our culture. Without their work, many of the publishers that we now consider key—such as Copper Canyon, Graywolf, and Arte Publico—simply wouldn't be well represented.

Here again, we go back to systems. The individual work has always been done. What has been lacking are effective mechanisms to get those books into the hands of readers. At each step of the writing process, except for the writer-editor phase, there are problems. Distribution remains ineffective, and wholesaling is almost non-existent. Wholesalers who are devoted exclusively to literature and literary presses are down to one in the entire country. I find it shocking to have this disparity between an incredible volume of literary production and a narrow channel into the bookstores and libraries. This situation puts us all in a very precarious situation. If SPD's [Small Press Distribution] were to shut its door, for example, 300 publishers would disappear off the shelves of City Lights in the course of a 12-to-15-month period because that is the only access that I have to those publishers. Even though this number is small, they represent the emerging voices. For example, Hanging Loose published a young Native American writer out of the Northwest, Sherman Alexie, in 1992, and within three years of that, Alexie was receiving national review attention. His books are now published by Grove Atlantic and in paperback by Warner. There are many other voices, like that of Harryette Mullen, which are now carried by such publishers. Without these presses, we do not hear these voices. The challenge becomes, how do we do this?

Some programs have been launched with interesting results. I want to talk briefly about things that I, as a bookseller and board person, have been involved with that will highlight some of the trends I have been talking about. Consortium, and the presses related to Consortium, have been very generous in sharing information with me, and I would like to use them as a model of how literary presses operate within the commercial sector. Many of these presses have been operating for a long time, most notably Milk-

weed and Graywolf, and have a long and distinguished history for almost as long as the Endowment has been funding literature. I think we can point directly to the rise of these presses and their prominence today because of NEA funding. When we look at recent developments, however, the most notable thing that has occurred in terms of funding for these presses was that CLMP, along with the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, launched a literary marketing initiative that was funded with $5 million over the course of five years. This was the first time that funders gave literary presses significant money not for production or authors' fees but to reach directly out to their audiences.

Some of the work accomplished through this initiative was extremely creative. What some of the presses did was move out of the normal chain of author appearances at book stores, combined with the distribution of publicity pieces to news media, and move into sending materials to librarians, teachers, and social workers and, in the case of Curbstone, actually putting their authors in different types of venues—i.e., youth facilities, junior colleges, junior high schools, high schools, and public libraries. The response to this was extraordinary. For a small, left-wing literary publisher like Curbstone to sell 25,000 copies in hard cover and then go on to have a very nice sub-write sale to Simon & Schuster was an extraordinary thing, something that we rarely see in literary publishing. What was so notable about that particular event was not the numbers but rather the new audiences they reached. To me, this signals the possibility that there may be a sea of potential readers out there.

One of the things that we haven't been able to effectively communicate to younger people is that a lot of the concerns of younger people and interests of younger people are addressed in a lot of literary fiction and literary writing today. Hopefully, what the presses involved in the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest program have learned is how to approach and attract this audience and connect it with literature that is meaningful to it.

Literary presses face a huge marketing and management challenge. They have to think of ways to sell more books because their operating costs have gone up; what to do about the fact that their traditional allies, the independent bookstores, have been losing market share; and how to intelligently sell to the chains. From the numbers I outlined earlier, literary publishers are a very small piece of the pie, and they thus don't have access to the marketing and publicity resources that the large publishers have at their disposal. Independent bookstores that sell the books of literary 501(c)(3)s represent about 21% of their total sales. The national chains represented about 13% of such sales. Wholesalers of various sorts, of which a large portion is represented by Ingram, total 51%; college text adoption and college bookstores are 15% of the total; and libraries account for less than 1%. Although these numbers cause me great concern, they also indicate where potential growth might occur in the future.

The other function that has changed a lot in the commercial end of bookselling is that returns have risen dramatically. In 1996, they averaged out at 35%, which is a 15% general increase over the historic average that we experienced in the 1970s and 1980s. Retail independent bookstore returns were 23%. The year 1996 was a record one for book sales and also a record year for returns. The result was that the net increases turned out not to be a record at all. Independents bought 21% of all literary press books and returned 23%. The chains bought 13% and returned 31%. Thus, even though a great number of books are getting into the chains—and they represent a very significant portion of independent presses sales—the high return rate is disproportionate to what is being sold. This means that the cost of an independent doing business with the chains is much higher than it is for an independent bookstore because returns often come back in much bigger numbers and even in

bigger waves. Independent literary presses are much less able to absorb a higher level of returns, and the increased volume can wreak havoc on their cash flow. In some cases, wholesalers and some of the chains pay their outstanding bills with returns. For the literary publisher, that means they cannot get behind in paying their printing bills. This dynamic can throw off the press's whole schedule for production and then can cause problems for bookstores because the publisher may have announced a book for a June publication date but, because of cash flow and management problems caused by returns, those books don't come out until November. This throws off the scheduling of everything we at a bookstore plan to do to promote and sell the book.

The challenge for the literary publishers in this current scenario is that as they sell more books, the cost of doing business goes higher because of the built-in inefficiencies. Those inefficiencies are largely related to sales of books to large corporate retail entities. Returns seem to be coming back at a rate much higher than what they are buying. This means that books aren't sitting on the shelves long enough; I think that's another problem that both the chains and the independents have been facing with a computerized inventory. Many booksellers—and I include independents in this—have been over-determined by the use of their computer systems. They are looking at rate of sale rather than value of book and have focused on what we in the book business call a *turn rate*, which is simply a ratio of sales to purchase on an annualized basis. I consider that one of the most over-valued and over-determined ways to manage your inventory.

To use City Lights as an example, we have a low turn rate. A turn rate of three or better is considered good; ours is slightly over two. What makes us very different—and what people should look at in terms of the economic picture of a bookstore—is that you look at production per square foot in dollars, and ours is over $1,000 per square foot, which is well over what is considered excellent. The reason for this is that City Lights has a very informed staff that is able to, in a certain sense, hand select every book that is on the shelves. This provides a density of quality reading, and, even though a lot of those books will sit on the shelves for years, they sit there because we, as a staff, feel that they are good books and that there is a reader out there for each of them even though the press or author has no public profile.

Another example of this is that with SPD, the majority of presses we get at City Lights come only from SPD—that's my only way of obtaining those books. In the 1996 SPD sales, there was a 98% sell-through rate, which is extraordinary. Those books come in at 1's and 2's and are spindled out there, mixed in with the other 40,000 books, competing with the Randoms and the Simons, and to see that 98% demonstrates that if you have the well-selected books on the shelves, the readers are out there and are combing through the shelves and finding what is of particular interest to them. As Stafford mentioned last night, you must start with the particular—the localized—and know that you are able to expand audiences because of the knowledge you hold of your particular terrain. Whether it is a literary publisher, your community, or the job rate, you form a series of intersections and synergies that can actually grow. Your staff and customers help bring all those things together, and I think that part of our challenge is to come to understand how we make that process systemically repeatable and broaden those areas that are repeatable, economically feasible, and flexible enough to be able to respond to local conditions.

We have an opportunity today to examine these issues and pick them apart and attempt to reassemble the different pieces. Through this effort, I hope we can establish the basis of a model that we can use to expand our audiences.

Discussion

Bradford: Thank you, Paul. You have put a number of issues on the table. You have talked about the need to build effective models for audience development and also the need to understand the power of local interest in the development of audiences. You have identified the challenges faced by literary publishers in the rapidly changing bookselling environment. You have identified the role of public and private funders in the development of a more diverse literary message. You have noted that the weak infrastructure underlying the literary field presents it with several challenges that the field itself must help address. All of these issues and themes are going to be recurring throughout this discussion. Thank you very much for bringing them to the fore.

Griggs: I believe that it is vitally important that we have more opportunities to get books into the hands of readers. At many libraries, like the San Francisco Public Library, it is amazing how few books you can actually get your hands on. That's certainly where we need to put a lot more attention. We need to make certain libraries are stocked with books and, at the same time, we need to level the field in the competition involved in getting books out from publishers to independents and chains. Certainly, the returns issue is a major issue. I have talked to people at a number of independent stores who definitely say that they pay their bills with returns. This is particularly the case when cash is limited to pay bills, and sales have not been made. Some of these stores simply return books and then buy them back the next month. This is not a situation anyone wants to get into; it hurts the bookstore as well as the presses, and, certainly, chains don't help when they make mass buying of books that are certainly not going to sell. I would have to say that Borders' returns have actually been falling for the last three years. We had fewer returns as a percent of sales in 1996 than we did in 1995 and 1994. I hope that other chains do the same.

Hero: I was struck by Yamazaki's point of view that to be a bookstore, you need to have a lot of books in your store, including a lot of books that don't all sell in great volume. It's sort of like, can you call yourself a grocery store if you only sell milk and bread because that's what you sell the most of? The answer is "no." You need a lot of other things, even though you don't sell very many. To what extent does that filter into the thinking at Borders about having books that maybe don't turn over very much? How do you balance the issues that Yamazaki was talking about?

Griggs: When Yamazaki was talking about three being considered excellent, at Borders, a turn of two is considered excellent. That's one of the main reasons that the company has expanded to sell music and video in most of the stores. By doing so, you can then balance the turnover rates out because you're going to have high sellers in books or in music, and those actually fund us to be able to maintain more obscure titles. It certainly is a consideration. There are books that you expect to turn on a regular basis—sections where you expect to see movement. Nevertheless, one of our major considerations is that we maintain the commitment to balance that out with best sellers and top billboard titles.

Hero: Are your margins on music higher?

Griggs: On some music items, the margins are higher.

Coates: Regarding Yamazaki's presentation, certainly one of the core points that he worked with was the whole issue of the selling of books to the retail outlets and the patterns of shifting and the changes that are going on, especially as these relate to returns. There's been so much written on it and so much discussion about it in

the last few years. One of the things that I find interesting—and that I don't hear much about—is the issue of the publisher's responsibility in the whole cycle of returns. I think it is a pertinent point, particularly when you talk about non-profit presses and small presses as well. It certainly is a relevant point for the major large presses. Anytime they send out a book, like President Clinton's book, and get half of the books back in returns, the publishers have to be held accountable to some extent. The publisher has to be the one who says, "Well, I'll supply the books, or I won't supply the books." Black Classic Press is a case in point. We are a small press, and even in my comments and criticism, I am not criticizing from a point that we have solved this problem. We need to have a determination of how many books you are going to publish. Often, you know within this number that you're going to get a lot of those books back. It seems to me that it would be prudent for small publishers to look at those numbers and realistically try to understand that the numbers are just numbers, and they don't necessarily mean that you're going to sell the books.

One must engage in a process of trying to figure out what number of books you really should have out there or even if the book should make it in this particular marketplace. In addition, publishers must consider whether or not a book should be in the chains or only in the independents. Publishers must also consider whether books need to be placed in special markets to ensure sales. After all, selling the book is the point. Selling the book and getting the book into readers' hands as opposed to getting the book onto the bookstore's shelves is what we want to do. Getting a book on the shelves is not synonymous with selling the book; it simply means that yes, you have a shot at selling the book there. All of this is part of an antiquated model—a model that is going to come under more scrutiny and examination. We have been using this model for the last 200 years and yet, we are in a cycle in which information can be printed very fast, which means that you're going to have a larger number of returns than those cited by Yamazaki for 1996. Publishers have to look at this issue, and we have to look to ourselves as opposed to pointing the finger at our booksellers.

Simonson: In Yamazaki's number regarding wholesalers, would you say that wholesalers' returns were low in relation to their purchases?

Yamazaki: Yes.

Simonson: That's actually part of the problem for the publishers. When books are returned from the stores, publishers have sold those books at a wholesale discount to the wholesaler and then returned and credited at the retail level. So publishers, large and small, have been caught in this web.

Barber: You mean the bookstore buys the book from the wholesaler and returns it to the publisher?

Simonson: Say a bookstore bought 10 books from the publisher at the beginning of the year and then sold 10 books every month and, at the end of the year, had 7 books left. Granted, those books physically came from the warehouse. Those 7 books go back to the publisher because a wholesaler sets up a penalty for returns that is high enough so that booksellers don't want to do that. That's how this process works.

Katz: Yamazaki alluded to the usefulness of bookstores working with libraries and school systems. I think that throughout the day, it will be useful for us to keep our ears open for the large coalition that's going to be necessary to make a difference here. It's probably not only going to be libraries and schools but the rest of the non-profit bookselling industry, including literary centers and other like institutions—i.e., the profit-making book industry that has a stake in increasing readership—and media as well—television and computer folks who have an interest and stake in literature and reading. I think

we will hear ways during the day that we can start conceiving the coalition that's necessary to bring these elements together.

Hero: That's a very good point. Let's not lose sight of this as we go through the day, and toward the end of the day, identify these strands that could be woven together and make something out of all this.

Peggy Barber

Libraries and Literary Programming

I represent the American Library Association, and I am here to sing the praises of collaboration. While I will focus on literary and cultural programs involving libraries, no program I describe would have been possible without the collaboration of funders, authors, publishers, and community organizations. They represent some lessons we have learned that apply far beyond libraries. Those lessons are: a) There is a ready audience for literary programs and collaborative efforts to help to find and build those audiences; b) Effective programs have to be locally supported; c) Effective programs must focus on quality and be strategically developed; and d) Programs are best when they bring together diverse segments of the community. I was pleased to have been invited to join in this symposium because the invitation is a living example of your interest in collaboration. Collaboration isn't easy, so please bear with me if I tell you more than you want to know about libraries.

At a meeting in Chicago a couple of years ago, when Jane Alexander hosted an NEA summit on the arts in America, a literary group huddled in advance of the general sessions. I was invited to the huddle, where there was a lot of talk about the lack of funding for literature, literature's lack of visibility, the fact that the literature program was one of the smallest programs at the NEA. You've heard this conversation, and much of it is true. I was struck by the comments of one person, who said, "Our problem is we don't have a place. The artists have museums, musicians have symphony halls, but writers don't have a place." "Don't have a place?" I thought. What is wrong here? How out of touch have writers and librarians become? Librarians can take full credit for the distance between writers and libraries. We talk too much to each other, and we get bogged down in bureaucracies. But we can also be great collaborators, and we're doing our best to reconnect. We have much to offer, including immortality. Books are out of print so quickly these days. Without libraries, how much writing would survive? But we also have a more active role—supporting the work of writers and building audiences for literature.

Libraries are many things to their communities. They offer the practical information people need to improve their quality of life and increase individual options in a complex society. They offer literacy programs and information about health, education, business, childcare, computers, the environment, looking for a job, and much more. Libraries also give their communities something less tangible—yet just as essential to a satisfying and productive life—nourishment for the spirit. Programs in the humanities and the arts that encourage people to think and talk about ethics and values, history, art, literature, and other cultures are integral to the library's mission. The American Library Association wants libraries to be more than passive warehouses of information; rather, they should be the university of the people. Today, I have a mission. I am determined to convince you of the potential offered by libraries, describe the collaborative programs we know best, and make a pitch for more partnerships.

Why libraries? Ask yourself: who has more outlets than McDonald's, card-carrying members than Visa, kids enrolled in its summer program than Little League, brand-building opportunities than the NBA, visitors each week than all museums and zoos combined, grassroots reach than America's theme parks, goodwill than even public TV? America's libraries. There are 15,904 public libraries (including the

branches), and public libraries circulate more than 1.6 billion items per year. Americans make some 810,768,000 visits to libraries each year, an average of 4 visits per capita. More than 6 out of 10 adults (66%) use a public library at least once a year. Slightly more women (69%) use libraries than men (64%). In spite of this, public libraries receive less than 1/10th of 1 percent of all tax dollars—an average of $19.16 per capita.

Public libraries have traditionally provided programs as well as books, videos, and information in all formats. The most recent addition is public access to the Internet. But most active library programming has been for children. That is now changing, and the American Library Association's Public Programs unit is helping to make the change.

The American Library Association's Public Programs office promotes and supports all types of libraries—public, academic, and school—in their roles as cultural centers. We provide programming models and materials, financial and other resources, training and technical assistance, and networking opportunities. Our role is to link libraries and communities and culture.

The primary funder of our Public Programs projects is the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund also provides major funding. Other funders include Time Warner and the National Endowment for the Arts. The current major project of the Public Programs office is a program to build audiences for literature. The Writers Live at the Library program, which is funded by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the NEA, brings diverse writers and readers together in small- and mid-sized communities. We started the project in 1993 with grants to 19 libraries in Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. In addition to grants in the range of $8,000 to $10,000, we provide materials, training, a roster of writers, and technical assistance—including assistance with bookings. We make it very easy for librarians in small communities—where writers are never on book tours—to participate in the program. Libraries participating in the program must have a community partner (collaboration) and agree to plan and sponsor a year-long series of literary events. In Flint, Michigan, the library's partner is the United Auto Workers Union. In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the partner is the public radio station; and in Peoria, Illinois, the partner is the local arts council.

The first series of programs in 19 libraries attracted more than 20,000 people to hundreds of literary events. Eighteen of the 19 original program participants have continued to sponsor literary events without grant funding. This program has been expanded to more Midwestern states and continues to grow.

Librarians have discovered that—with their partners—they can build big audiences. For example, in Watseka, Illinois, population 5,424, the library attracted 200 people—undaunted by a storm and power outage the night of the program—for an appearance by Gwendolyn Brooks. Each library's series features big stars and up-and-coming writers from their own communities in public readings and book sales/signings, special school visits, writers' workshops, book discussions before and after the authors' appearances, and other literary events. Writers Live at the Library is ready for national prime time. I hope someone here will want to bring it to the West.

Our Association hosts an annual meeting and trade show each year. There were more than 23,000 of us in San Francisco just two weeks ago. The exhibits are massive, featuring more than 1,200 booths and, for the past few years, we've sponsored a special Writers Live section, where we host the Poets House "Complete Poetry Showcase" and provide a stage for poetry readings throughout the days of the show. This has all been possible because of a collaboration with Poets House that was initially supported by Lila Wallace funding. The readings have

been incredibly popular and well attended. Here's how the recent readings were reported by Patricia Holt in the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

> It's a treat to come across that corner of the ALA that's designated for poetry readings. While individual booksellers to an ABA convention do attend this kind of program, they also acknowledge that poetry brings in a small percentage of sales in the bookstore business, so they soon depart for something potentially more lucrative. But librarians are in the business of posterity. The value of their collections is measured not by dollars but by the timelessness of the ages. So while booksellers might drop by a poetry reading as it begins, librarians have filled the chairs an hour before the first poet, Robert Hass, is set to appear. The fact that the ALA is in San Francisco means that the likes of Carolyn Kizer, Gary Soto, Jane Hirshfield, Thom Gunn, Diane Di Prima, and others are also accessible.

We want to grow this portion of our exhibit and attract more literary press exhibitors. It's a great way to reach the library market.

Storylines America is a radio/library partnership that explores regional literature. NEH funding supported *Big Sky Radio*, a series of library-sponsored call-in radio programs in Montana. The National Endowment for the Humanities and the ALA are collaborating to bring the *Big Sky Radio* concept to the Southwest and Northwest. The project will include 13 programs that will air at a National Public Radio (NPR) station in each region. Other area radio stations will also air the programs via satellite uplinks. Listeners will have an opportunity to interact with scholars and on-air hosts through an 800 number. Each one-to-two-hour program will feature one book, and all programs will take place at a regularly scheduled time each week. Libraries will distribute books and discussion guides to participants and will have tapes of completed broadcasts. The programs will air from October to December this year. We think there should be a national book discussion show on NPR that is built on a foundation of grassroots collaboration. We've had some initial discussions about this with NPR, the Library of Congress, the Center for the Book, and the NEH. We welcome more collaborators.

Poets in Person is a 14-part audiocassette series produced by the Modern Poetry Association with funding from NEH and the Pew Charitable Trust. The series introduces and explores the great diversity of styles, subjects, and ideas about writing that have characterized contemporary poetry since the middle of the 20th century. It was first broadcast on NPR in 1991. Since then, ALA, NEH, and *Poetry* have used the series to develop scholarly reading, listening, and discussion programs in more than 100 libraries across the nation. *Poets in Person* has attracted some of the largest and most diverse groups of people ever to attend humanities programs in libraries. Persons from age 16 to 60 are reading and discussing the works of A. R. Anmons, Rita Dove, Allen Ginsberg, W. S. Merwin, Sharon Olds, and many others. They become library users, and poetry circulation increases.

Oprah's Book Club: The ALA is distributing 10,000 copies of each Oprah Book Club selection to our high school and public library members. Copies are donated by the publishers at Oprah's request. Who could have anticipated this phenomenal promotion of literary fiction? The fan mail from librarians and readers is a joy to read.

Booklist, the ALA's journal, reviews more than 7,000 titles each year. The journal has a new partnership with NovelList, CARL corporation's electronic reader's advisory service. *Booklist* reviews will now be included in a service that allows people to obtain reading recommendations online. In addition to reviews, *Booklist* is increasing its reader advisory role with more features such as the recent "Mystery Showcase" issue and an upcoming article titled, "After

Oprah," recommending additional titles for each of Oprah's Book Club selections.

There are also some excellent programs that connect literacy and literature in libraries. Writers to Readers is a program of the Santa Clara County Library and San Jose State University's Center for Literary Arts. Funded by the California State Library and the Santa Clara Community Foundation, it brings authors—such as Grace Paley and Mary Gordon Olson—to university programs that are open to the public. There they also meet with students and spend a morning with adult literacy students at the public library. The authors and new adult readers are equally enthusiastic about these meetings. To quote author Lee Smith about a similar project:

> I think that more writers should work in literacy programs and help participants start expressing themselves through writing. So many writers tend to be solitary and don't know how to plug into the community. I'm sure that in every community, there are writers who, like me, would gain so much from working with these students. And the students, who are potential readers, would see that writing is done by people they know—and by them, too. Then they would understand that an article is not created up on a cloud somewhere or by people outside their lives. I would hope they would come to realize that culture is not something that's always brought in from the outside.

What do all these programs have in common? They have all generated local support. They focus on quality and all have been carefully planned. In addition, they bring together diverse community groups. I hope the scope, ambition, and energy of these projects help make the case for collaboration. Working together and reaching out, we can build the audience for literature.

Our motto and call to action is a Chinese proverb, "A peasant must stand for a long time on a hillside with his mouth open before a roast duck flies in." We're not waiting; our organization is eager to work with you and to learn from you.

Discussion

Hero: As we lengthen the string that connects many of the collaborative literature activities in this country, I want to encourage collaboration with community foundations. There are 300 such foundations in this country, and many of them are very involved in the arts. These foundations are the fastest growing segment of the philanthropic sector in the U.S. The arts have been a priority for our community foundation because we believe that they offer a means of bridging diverse cultures. If you are not familiar with the community foundation in your area, I want to encourage you to get to know it. I was struck by the enormous range of activities that libraries are undertaking and also by the way they are reaching out and dealing with literacy. In areas where there is a great deal of heterogeneity within the population, people are interested not only in learning how to read, but they also want to know how they can use libraries to learn about and network opportunities and services in their communities. Libraries play a central role in these activities.

Knight: In working with librarians, my sense is that they feel overwhelmed with all of the Internet information that they must master in addition to their traditional tasks. How do you suggest we work with librarians to develop better networks with them and to persuade them that turning their attention toward literature and public programming in literature is something that they should pay some attention to even while they are pressed for time?

Barber: That's a very good question. One thing we have found is that the programs we develop need to be designed as turnkey programs. For example, in the Writers Live program, every-

thing is done. We make available pre-printed materials and even have printed T-shirts available. There are pre-printed postcards that they can use to announce local programs, and training is available.

We have found that when we issue a request for proposals for applications for one of our national programs, the respondents tend to self-select. Last night, someone asked me how you find the librarians who are interested in literature. Well, you look for them, and you make it easy for them to be stars. They get to be a big success. The one library that didn't continue after the first round of the Writer's Live program was one where the director changed, and there wasn't a commitment from the top—and that commitment must be there. But that situation is an opportunity for someone on the staff—who happens to really like literature—to assume a program that becomes theirs. Others see it and are impressed when the library receives a lot of publicity and visibility. They feel they could implement the program in their library, also. It is important to come up with a way to let people who want to put time into this program to come forward. If you start with one, others follow, and the program spreads. We have so many things facing us—from how to integrate all the new technology within existing budgets to how to increase those budgets—it's not easy.

Yamazaki: In programs such as Writers Live, do you incorporate a program that builds collections or assists librarians with acquisitions?

Barber: When we put out a request for proposals, we tell potential applicants what the scope of the grants will be. They write a proposal and attend a training program where they refine that proposal. We suggest categories of expenditure for the funds they may receive. These categories include such things as collection development, stipends to writers making presentations, and publicity activities. Collection development is encouraged as a part of each of these.

Bradford: I see something that Yamazaki brought up, reiterated by Barber's comments: infrastructure. These programs are fabulous. Consider all the people that they are reaching and all the libraries there are to work with. Barber made an interesting point of saying localized programming—you find what works and then you franchise it. We don't do that effectively in the general 501(c)(3) literary organization network. This is where partnerships and collaborations—either at a library, YMCA, regional arts organization, or a national service organization level—need to be looked at.

Katz: There are certain kinds of infrastructure that make this happen. One is similar in type to a national clearinghouse, where, when a good (or bad) thing happens anyplace, anyone who is a member of the clearinghouse support system receives information about it. The other kind of infrastructure that is needed is the local center of leadership. Information about literature developments has to go someplace and be distributed in some way. This information needs to go someplace in a local community where there is a center of concern for literature. In some cases, that center of concern is an enlightened bookstore owner, and, in some cases, it will be the active librarian or the great teacher or the great literacy program. Identifying where that is in a given community is a real challenge.

Bradford: This is particularly true for literature because it has so many different potential footprints in each community, which is why communication—which we are theoretically good at —but actually bad at—is so important.

Hero: I think of the anthology that Peter Sears [former literature coordinator at the Oregon Arts Commission] did. It was distributed through the state library system, and the state library actually ended up paying for a lot of it. The work also went out through the schools. I would like to note that the connection of literature with literacy is very important. I believe there is a wide

funding base of individual donors in my county—even corporate donors—who might not support pure literature programs but may underwrite literature programs that are focused on literacy. Studies show that the single most pertinent statistic related to whether someone completely falls off the track and life dead-ends and someone who succeeds is whether they can read by the time they are in third grade. If you can work on literacy and tie it in with libraries and the newspaper, then suddenly those programs turn into true literature programs and bring in others. You can build on that base of literacy because it is such a readily understood issue.

Katz: The notion that literature is useful in the development of literacy, which most people might think is obvious, is not necessarily obvious to and accepted by teachers of literacy or English. The acceptance of standards in K-12 teaching of English, such as those advocated by the International Reading Association or the National Council of the Teachers of English, would be the number-one thing that could change in the U.S. that would result in more people valuing literature and incorporating literature into their lives.

Coates: I am a member of the National Association of Black Book Publishers, which is a small organization founded in 1993. Early on, we realized the importance of making a commitment to literacy, particularly in the black community. Such a commitment makes sense from a business perspective. We do not put enough time into developing the resources of our community, which means readers. We understand that we have a tremendous resource in our community, and that resource is people who are not currently reading or who are reading below the level at which they should be reading. The efforts in our case of working with different literacy programs have been very productive, and it seems to be a very good activity that I would think most small publishers would want to join in.

Phillips: Over the last 18 months, an interesting point of discussion in San Francisco has been how angry everyone is about the new main library. For those of you who haven't seen it, the controversy is that we moved the library collections to a larger building, where there was supposed to be a lot more space for books. There were arguments about how much shelf space there really was in the building. The response from the head librarian, who is now gone, was that this library is not about books or objects—it's about information. A library is a place where people should have access to information. A conversation has also been convened by the state arts council, and the theme of the conversation is that this is a very exciting time for artists because, in California, there is a lot of new work available as content providers to new media. There are, in fact, some high-paying jobs for composers and designers who wish to work in technology fields. However, my concern about this is that as libraries are seen as centers of information, what happens to the literature in them? Do writers become seen as "content providers" rather than artists?

Barber: The San Francisco Public Library situation is a kind of a train wreck, and I could spend hours talking about it. It is a good example of the media run-amok. Being here for the conference, I got lectured about that library from cab drivers who had never been near it. A lot of this debate is like Nicholson Baker's romance about the card catalog—it's just amazing. I don't think libraries are going to survive unless we are both. That's why I say we have to be the source of information. Information is boring, but people have got to be able to get it when they need it, but that's not about culture and it's not about the quality of life. I think the response to Poets House's Poetry Showcase and the readings they presented is one example of librarians racing over to stand around and listen to a poetry reading when they could be going to look at the latest software. They have to do both; it's not one or the other. The fact that it has been so charac-

terized that way in San Francisco is a tragedy. There is a tremendous renaissance in library buildings across the country. There are new, beautiful buildings in San Antonio, Denver, Phoenix, Chicago, and all of them, including the library in San Francisco, have tremendously increased in use as soon as they opened. It is complicated, and we have to get past "the libraries are going out of business" statements because we are not. Brooke Astor recently announced a $5 million gift to the New York Public Library for the Book Fund for Literature. Bill and Melinda Gates just came up with $400 million for the Gates Library Foundation. It's a struggle, but it's not all technology and it's not all about information, and many librarians will agree with that.

Hero: There is an interesting book titled *Silicon Snake Oil* by Clifford Stoll, a physicist at Berkeley. The work is very provocative and entertaining. Stoll makes many interesting observations about technology and its impact on literature, specifically on libraries. You may disagree with him, but I think he compares himself to the person who saw all the super highways first being built in 1952. At that time, he thought the highways were great and that they enhanced freedom of movement. Later, however, that same person becomes concerned about the extent of the concrete and the pollution. Stoll is not opposed to technology, but, in the book, he raises some very interesting issues.

Knight: What do you think is driving the construction of new "edifice" libraries in large cities?

Barber: What I think is driving the creation of the new, big library buildings is the realization that a library is politically an institution that serves everyone. This is especially true in cities like Chicago. If an alderman there wants to score points with voters, he'd stand on a shovel in a neighborhood and introduce a new library branch. Politicians have realized that libraries serve everyone and that people like and trust them. It's also about urban redevelopment. But it is also about an institution that has an importance as a place and not just a cyberspace. It is one of the few public spaces where everyone is welcome, no questions asked. I think it is a reinvestment in the institution.

Knight: It sounds to me as though the San Francisco situation suggests that the missions of libraries are diverging. At one point, perhaps the missions of libraries across the country were the same.

Barber: I am not sure that the missions of libraries have ever been the same. One of the things about public libraries is that over 90% of their funding is derived from local tax support. That funding source ensures that each library will be somewhat different. The American Library Association once had standards for public libraries that were quantitative. For example, for so many people, you should have X number of chairs, tables, and books. Those standards were done away with long ago because they didn't mean a thing to the local city council.

Instead, what the Public Library Association has developed is a marketing plan. The public library standards now suggest rules, services, and strategies for how a local library develops that plan with a community. Libraries are different. Their missions are based on an interaction with the community and their governing boards. Maybe they are getting more different. This is a good question.

Katz: Historically, the great growth of libraries had to do with the public's willingness to fund them as a social integration mechanism. For the 50 years following the Civil War, people were moving from rural to urban areas, and later there was a tremendous wave of immigrants. There was a great public investment in libraries to serve the needs of these population flows, and the public understood the function of libraries in that way. Recently, there have been real challenges to the public's historic willingness to

support libraries. The future of local libraries is marketing to the community. Persons interested in literature need to involve themselves in the marketing of libraries.

Streitfeld: What I see in my community is that the suburban libraries, which are relatively well off to begin with, have more programs of the type we are talking about today. The libraries in inner-city Washington are struggling just to stay open and many times are not open and can't afford to buy books. I think there are a number of communities like that, and these are presumably the places where there is the greatest illiteracy. All of these programs are useful everywhere; however, where they are most needed, certainly in Washington, no one has time for them. Is there any way around this problem?

Barber: The same issue applies to the funding of the public schools, which are also supported by property taxes. This is an equity issue. The programs I have described, like Writers Live, were developed for rural, not suburban communities, and this is just one project focused on areas where one is least likely to find resident professional writers or authors on tour. Many urban libraries are not as bad off as the libraries in Washington, D.C., and many of them have regular literary programs. Onondaga County Library in Syracuse, New York, for example, has teamed up with a bank, and they have a fee-based program that constantly brings in huge audiences for big-name writers. The Los Angeles Public Library also sponsors many literary programs. I think Washington's situation is unique, but that library has some very strong literacy programs and humanities programs. It is more difficult in major cities to get publicity for these programs.

Rick Simonson

Commercial Sector Development of Audiences for Literature

Before delving into the question or statement as it is posed, I would like to say a bit more about the relationship between the for- and not-for-profit sectors. We are now approximately a decade along since the first small literary presses of the current generation started becoming non-profit presses and organizations. No single story of the transition from founder-directed, technically for-profit status to not-for-profit status is exactly alike—be the press Graywolf, Story Line, Women in Transition, Bamboo Ridge, Arte Publico, Calyx, or whichever. Some of these presses were aided and abetted in vital ways by pioneering programs funded by national foundations. This funding assistance has now come to a general conclusion, at least in direct form. Most all of these presses have also had important sustenance and assistance—as, indeed, have individual writers and presenting organizations—from the National Endowment for the Arts, an observation that is timely as developments related to the agency currently unfold in Washington, D.C. Germane to this particular discussion is that this decade has already seen a considerable meld and mix of these sectors—the for-profit and not-for-profit. The ways they have already been entwined include:

First, the relationships between booksellers and publishers: Within certain perimeters, most bookstores and wholesalers order, carry, sell, promote, or return books from and to whomever they will, be they for- or not-for-profit. Basic sales and distribution services for many of these presses come by way of for-profit companies.

Second, the situations in which an author's writing is published by both kinds of publishers: Examples are Lois-Ann Yamanaka with poetry from Bamboo Ridge and fiction by Farrar, Straus Giroux; William Kittredge with work from Graywolf, Mercury House, Vintage, and Penguin. The visibility and promotion given the larger commercial houses for these authors has enhanced the sale of their books by the not-for-profit presses.

Third, the direct relationships among the publishers: Reprint rights can go either way. And there are instances such as that in which Bantam Books purchases rights to a Calyx novel for a price that helped rescue Calyx from a financially dire, difficult year.

Fourth, the ways that individuals who work on the for-profit side have become formally involved with the work of the not-for-profits: Most of the not-for-profit presses and literary organizations I know of have such people on their boards of directors. I know my experience and background as a bookseller and as one engaged with publishers of all sizes is brought to bear in my serving on Copper Canyon's board. This information seems of use to other board members, who may have less book business background, and also to members of the press' staff. I would add that I also bring back from my Copper Canyon work information that is of use to the work of Elliot Bay Books.

All this said, in looking more directly at how an audience for writing has been developed, it should be noted that efforts on this front come from both publishers and booksellers—from all angles and directions. They happen—when they do happen—by means of a constantly interactive, mostly informal, reciprocating ready-to-read process.

It should also be noted that the rise of perceptible audience development for literary works

has also taken place, perhaps not coincidentally, within the same past decade. Before the mid-1980s, there were relatively few author tours for literary works, and literary authors had little presence at American Booksellers Association conventions. There were few visible signs of book reading-discussion groups and certainly no publishers producing reader guides to serve them.

A decade ago, there was a certain ascendance—a diligent but unself-conscious momentum within and around many independent bookstores. New stores opened, and existing stores expanded as readers seemed willing to take on literary and other books that they were getting the opportunity to be exposed to. A certain decolonized, decentralized cultural sensibility was at work in the larger public. These bookstores carried and stocked books from small presses and regional presses, as well as from the larger publishers. No one gave them much overt assistance in this, save for some publishers that have always been smart about making sure that individuals on bookstore staffs had access to reading copies of their books, the better to help hand sell those books. For many independent bookstores in those days, the primary competition was generally non-reading activities. Most nationally operated bookstores were small, bestseller driven and located in malls or within in-city retail complexes. To be sure, various currents from that quarter came rolling through, such as Crown Books' visibility in aggressive price discounting. Because their selection was quite limited, their pricing strategies posed no real peril to most independent booksellers. At least no such threat was perceived. If anything, the noise and competition some stores faced made many independents look harder at what they were doing right—and seek to do more of it. This included continuing to focus on increasing breadth and depth in book titles. It also included noticing that people were really drawn to spending time in their bookstores.

Variations on themes, based on individual stores' likes and inclinations, came along. In lieu of highlighting *New York Times* bestsellers—discounted or not—a store might put up a "staff recommended or customer recommended" display, with handwritten notes. Another might open an on-premises cafe. Still another, with the increased space of a store expansion, would decide to start hosting literary readings. There were, in most instances, no grand plans or strategies afoot. People responded, came, attended, and bought enough books—in the case of the readings—for stores to adjust their staffing to accommodate staging them on a regular basis. Few called it a promotion or marketing activity. It was just done.

It was not, I would say, any great glowing or golden time. The work was hard. Stresses were being added. Bookstore staffing was evolving, and personnel issues emerged that management never dreamed of when these stores were first opened. Adaptation was made to living and working with computers. It did feel, though, that the matter of putting literary work from whatever source in people's hands was something we were able to do without our having to engage in a survival mode or fending off a sense that the world we were trying to work within was shrinking on us.

One of the things that happened in that time was that publishers of literary work saw more opportunity for growth and audience development by beginning to tour such authors first regionally; then nationally; and, finally, in the case of writers from abroad, internationally. They responded to an audience and bookstore-generated climate that was supportive of such endeavors. When I say *audience generated*, I mean it. More times than I could count, I was stunned at a turn out for a writer largely unknown, the ways I would be approached elsewhere in town and asked about some writer's work since it was I who was getting the publicity that was associ-

ated with these people—I was the one who would stand at the start of the readings and make the introductory remarks. The business has its part, too. People who took our fairly informed word about how good a certain book or author was were more likely to take us up on our next suggestion. These suggestions, in turn, kindled word-of-mouth generated business.

Media played almost no part in this—at least not in Seattle, a factor that confounded New York and Los Angeles-based publicity people. How do people find out? How do they know? As time went along, little circuits evolved. A Port Townsend poet might make a loop of bookstore readings in Bellingham, Spokane, Olympia, and Portland, as well as Seattle. Sometimes, a kindred college circuit would be worked in or a national tour might include stores in Seattle; Portland; Berkeley; Denver; Chicago; St. Paul; Boston; Washington, D.C.; and New York. Some circuits for one author, others for another. And there were other forms of collaboration—most of those were worked out locally. There were also all kinds of community alliances—literary, library, social, educational, cultural, political, even other bookstores. These were and are still being made on this level, part and parcel of most independent stores' lives today.

That this all seemed to work, to proceed in a modestly successful way for most parties concerned most of the time and without any great pronouncements, was, of course, a vacuum waiting to be filled. On the bookselling side, the chain stores, feeling the pressure from their similarly scaled discount competitors, took note of many of the elements that comprised these seemingly successful independents. The sheer size and number of books on display was one factor. Other touches—the in-store cafe, the big stairwell, the chairs and tables that invited leisurely browsing—these were more or less copied from the independent store. Various capitalizing strategies were attempted and undertaken, such as selling to private investors or a large, parent retail chain and then going public.

For their side of things today, I can say little based on direct knowledge—and I will leave room in response time for Mary Griggs to elaborate. My sense of their part in finding and sustaining audiences for literary work does include a number of ways. Simply having so many stores with a sizable selection is one, as all stores of a certain size have the potential and likelihood of selling certain books and selling a certain number of them simply because they're there where someone can find them. Second, many—if not most—of these stores have author readings or book-discussion programs, both those that are locally devised and those that are placed by regional or national chain-store offices for nationally touring authors. Third, the chain stores generally have tried to foster attention for small-press titles or mid-list titles by larger houses. These are usually by means of special co-op programs for placement or promotion, paid for by the publishers—which means they aren't of the most altruistic nature. They do, in any case, have some effect. Certainly, some are in communities not previously well served in range or selection of books. And fourth includes other means of audience development such as sponsorship of National Public Radio programs, participation in National Poetry Month, and so on.

I would suggest, in closing this line of commentary, that there are advantages and drawbacks to these stores being operated as centrally as they are. Publishers and other interested parties, on the one hand, can obtain some sort of read on how books are doing based on the market share these stores now comprise. Getting books into the stores is quicker and neater for publishers than the store-by-store, sales-rep-around-the-territory nature of independent stores' new book orders. At the same time, such large-scale enterprises do require a culture of organizational maintenance that can be quite consuming. People move around—get transferred and promoted within the company. Various pressures are brought to bear with rivalries, bits of turf, questions about some stores being favored or

better than others, competing and cannibalizing forces at work within. Again, I can't say much about this from experience but from observation of similar types of operations. The drawback in this maintenance is that there tends to be more attachment and involvement with the store's culture than the long-term culture of the community and audience that store is serving. This is a generalization, I know; not all stores are like this.

As the playing field on the bookselling side changed, so have there been changes and shifts within commercial publishing. Some of the corporate acquisitions, mergers, and demises have been occurring for decades. Personally run companies are bought by conglomerates and holding companies. Publicly owned companies sell off or go private. The people who work in publishing will, as they do, move around, too. Various antes get upped. Agents let publishers bid up advances for literary authors with resultant pressures for these books to be produced and promoted. The author reading tour became *de rigueur*, a regularity for some authors, who, in retrospect, were sent out too frequently or for books that were being published in this way because, in true, large-house fashion, it was the thing that was done for these books. An entire symposium could probably be staged on the life and times, the possibilities and pitfalls, of these reading series and the publisher-sponsored tours that help fuel them. This isn't the time or place for that. What we do see today, from the publishers' end in particular, in certain quarters, is a re-assessment of the place of these literary tours and, indeed, the even larger issue of the place of literary mid-list publishing. Where this is so, the thought seems to be that the audience for this work is shrinking or, in any case, isn't worth the trouble or money to cultivate.

The very first thing to say about the publishers' part in building an audience— an audience that will take on a certain amount of faith someone's word that certain books are good and have value—is that a publisher's first responsibility is to publish books of good and true quality that are as well written and as well edited as any book can be. I am speaking much of the entities and categories of publishers and booksellers, for-profit and not-for-profit. While all of us are subject to certain forces at work as parts of these organizations, there are individual people at work within them.

There are several areas now where a great sense of stress or a sense of siege is at work. One is certainly continued National Endowment for the Arts funding and the concurrent climate that encourages state and local arts funding. Another is at work within organizations—probably more acutely in large ones—as corporate practices and trends are applied to a line of business where the qualifiable, possibly quirky, and out-of-the blue unique have traditionally played a part in a company's success. These newer, very measured means—downsizing, cutbacks, off-the-list title additions to help meet budgets, remaindering in place—often have little to do with long-term viability and possibility. Everything is short termed. The turnover and flux affect everyone—others within the publishing house, authors, the books themselves, and their potential for reading audiences. When I talk with a New York publicist, it may be more about these swirling winds than about any book or author. When these forces are in place as they are, they have to be addressed, just as independent bookstores have had to address challenges both of chain-store competition in their communities and unfair publisher practices. My cautionary advice regarding this is that when this necessary scratch-and-claw-to-survive talk is going on, we aren't actually doing the book-by-book talk that can and will build real audiences. We may survive and even win battles—but not some larger wars.

At the beginning of this, I stressed a number of ways in which the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors are linked. What I didn't say then is that the proposition to which I am responding here is a somewhat misassuming one. This is no one-

way street. For starters, there already are ways in which the for-profit sector is learning lessons from the not-for-profits. The current surge, wave, or whatever term you would use for an increased awareness of poetry and poetry-book sales is owed to several players. Most of the leadership for it has come from not-for-profit organizations and publishers.

This is but one instance. The not-for-profits have qualities going for them that the for-profit sector desperately needs. These include a certain constancy in people, philosophy, and purpose. Most not-for-profits are still founder oriented, and there's generally less turnover in key positions where others are involved. Most live with lower overhead and a sense of scale and modesty that carries with it a more restrained perception of their importance in the scheme of things relative to the roles of the author, agent, bookseller, library, and, not least, the real reader. The commercial publishers and the bookstore chains—when they're given to such pronouncements—tend to overstate their place.

The lessons the not-for-profits can learn from the commercial sector, at least on the publishing side, are mostly cautionary ones. There is an admitted temptation to muse on what would happen should venture capital and then a public stock offering be involved so that we could instead be talking about the billionaire glut among the literary press establishment. But most not-for-profit publishers *have* been doing business in the current climate. They know what that is—the adapting that has worked and hasn't worked; where they have been burned and, hopefully, have learned; gaining the knowledge that what works one time may not another and may work in one place and not another. Part of being adaptable in this way is living with perplexities and contradictions. If they feel clueless, they should know that in New York, there's even greater cluelessness. Now, more than ever, it shows. It may seem hard to see this that way because the not-for-profit organizations are themselves relatively young compared to their commercial counterparts. We have a scenario where the still-young organization has the seasoned and experienced publishing person who has been in place for years set against the revolving-door tendency of New York publishers to have inexperienced and unseasoned individuals in larger organizations that, in name at least, have had a longer duration. As beleaguered as those in the not-for-profit sector may feel—from low orders and high returns, from being understaffed and underfunded—they hold as many of the keys for the long-term survival of literature and for cultivating audiences as their counterparts do, especially in the present day.

Discussion

Griggs: Getting the authors to come out to stores that are not in D.C., Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, or San Francisco is a very hard job for a lot of us who are in the bookselling industry because we are contacting the authors directly and because the major publishers have no interest in a store that's not on the major thoroughfares.

For example, we had to work very hard to get Jewel Gomez and Jess Mowry to come to the Emeryville [California] store, and they both live in Oakland. It was great for them to come to Emeryville, and I think we should work with small publishers and other groups to encourage them to support author travel out to all sorts of areas—whether libraries or bookstores, in every area, in every community—because that helps to get books into the hands of the public.

Phillips: I know a lot more about literary centers and their events—because that's where I have worked—than I do about bookstores and their events, but when you chose the time period of a decade ago, was there any sort of watershed event at that point in time or did that observation have to do with your personal experience?

Simonson: During that period, we had a remodeling job that left a space open to start doing this. It was sort of an accidental/incidental thing. There were a few other stores doing it, but they were not very connected. We were feeling our way along and responding to people who said, "Oh, let's try it." It was very much in that vein. It was also a time when Graywolf moved from Port Townsend, so in the beginning, which was 12 or 13 years ago, it was that period of coalescing, about concern regarding distribution for small presses, as well as the decision not to move to not-for-profit status.

Phillips: From the point of view of the Poetry Center at San Francisco State University and Intersection for the Arts, which have two very long-running reading series, there was a real heyday from the mid 1970s to the early 1980s, followed by a real decline for about eight years, and currently there is a kind of resurgence. I think a part of it was that there was a generation of writers growing up who were relatively young in the early 1970s (there were a lot of the then-younger writers like Cherríe Moraga, writers of color—a lot of now-Aunt Lute-published authors—and also a lot of people doing experimental work). They went to every event that the members of their movement had, and then, a decade later, they started to have children and mortgages, and they went out less often. There is currently another generation of young authors. I think it's a case of "the next-alternative-movement-has-come-along," and each of those movements has fueled the nurturing activity of people going to see one another's work, but again, I don't know if that is limited to San Francisco or national.

Yamazaki: In terms of poetry in this country, when you look at New York trade houses, with the exceptions of W.W. Norton; Farrar, Straus, & Giroux; and Harry Ford at Knopf, there is no poetry in mainstream publishing period. Without independent literary presses, there is no poetry publishing in this country, with those three exceptions.

Simonson: I've never read or seen anything about all the "prose" books now being written by poets for the New York houses. These actually help sell their poetry.

Streitfeld: The benefits of author tours are obvious. The writers that I interview, however, complain a bit about the downside. One complaint, especially heard from British writers, is that they are on tour for a year or so and find they have to travel to Australia, Ireland, and the U.S. Is there ever a point at which the performing of literature is going to threaten to take the place of the reading of literature? For most poets today, if they are not out on the circuit, their material does not, as far as I can tell, seem to sell very well or even necessarily get reviewed because reviews are tied into appearances by poets.

Simonson: In regard to traveling writers, there are times when some writers do not want to tour —and the touring function can be replaced. I also think there was a time when some authors were over-toured or otherwise overdone. Their going out does help sell their work and, in turn, the books get read. There is a sense of people walking around with certain definitions and expectations in their minds, and sometimes authors have been surprised to discover that there are people in an audience who have actually read their work.

Streitfeld: Are you ever confronted with a choice of two different writers, one a "so-so" writer who is a very good performer of his work and the other an excellent writer who stutters or who can't read that well?

Simonson: I am aware of who is good [at reading] and who isn't, but it is never much of an issue.

Streitfeld: Is there a bias on the part of bookstores?

Simonson: No. Many times, we don't know

what writers will do until they get there. Some do and some don't like taking questions, and some just like to read—it varies. If an audience member expresses disappointment with a reading, I try to remind him or her that the important thing is the book, not the performance of the author.

Hero: Donald Hall made the observation one day during a National Council for the Arts meeting that the book is becoming a kind of souvenir program you take home from a reading, it has become a commemoration of the event. And—the book is even better when it is signed!

Bradford: There are no for-profit ballet companies and no for-profit fine art museums. You addressed the difference between two different kinds of for-profit venues for literary presentation. I think this is something to keep in mind as we think about the challenges for this field. We are very complex. We are affected by so many different factors, many of which were described this morning. We always need to keep the complexity of this field in mind as we look at how we are going to move it into the future.

Simonson: We have talked about not-for profit and for-profit enterprises in the field. When I talk about Amazon.com, I almost always call it a *not-for-profit* because it is losing millions of dollars, and yet, it continues to secure new funds with which to operate. There are other large corporations that can do that for a while; yet, if a not-for-profit literary organization lost funds at the rate Amazon.com is losing them, it would not be in business for long.

Robert Sheldon, Literature Consultant: The comment I would like to make has to do with the concept of author touring and authors themselves and how they manage their lives. Some of the comments that Simonson made left out the fact that there are often agents or publishers, colleagues, and friends who tend to put pressure on writers to do various things. Often, writing is not one of the things a writer is encouraged to do by these people. In all my work with WESTAF over the years, the questions I hear from writers most often is: "How do I manage my life? What should I do?" One can go to a writing program and learn how to refine one's craft, yet the writer does not generally receive marketing assistance or even have access to a how-to manual for book tours. What I have tried to stress at workshops is that writers need to learn how to manage their lives in ways that balance what they need as an artist and as a professional in terms of what money they need to make with the development of their craft and the development of an audience for their work. I think that writers themselves need to be brought into this discussion so that we may ascertain how we affect their lives in all the things we are doing.

Katz: That's a very important point. I think that preparation for writers in higher education is really lacking in that regard. I think it is quite possible to graduate from many writing programs and really not understand the publishing industry and how it works or how a writer can fit into not-for-profit programs or literary centers.

Hero: From my observations as a former president of a college of art and design, the situation is no different in any other art form. In fact, there is typically a reaction by the faculty against any sort of preparation [professional development] that is serious or thoughtful in nature. The instructors seem to have the fear that introducing the commercial—providing information about making a living—is going to influence what you're doing while you are in college. In fact, these mentors are all themselves teachers and are generally making it as artists.

Katz: In other fields, like the visual arts, an artist is expected to get out into the market. The visual artist pays half of the selling price of a work to a gallery to cover the cost of marketing

Kelleen Zubick, Writers' Conferences & Festivals: Robert Sheldon mentioned that writers

can learn their craft in writing programs, and I would like to add that there is a whole network of conferences that afford the sort of on-going learning opportunities in just those areas for writers. For example, at a recent conference, there was a workshop on how to read your work and a variety of panels with agents and editors regarding professional development. Assistance does exist out there; the trouble, again, is communication information about these opportunities.

Karen Clark, Poets & Writers, Inc.: In light of this being a conference where we are looking at literature in the West, I find that a lot of the comments that have been made are being made from a national viewpoint. Are there any issues that are particular to the West—problems or successes that might help us as we work with WESTAF to identify ways to support literature in the West?

Yamazaki: What I am seeing that is very specific to the West is that we are having this huge demographic and cultural shift out here that really hasn't been documented well or recognized by anybody on the East coast. If we are talking about New York publishers, they don't have a clue about what's really happening out here in terms of how dramatically things are changing. For those of us in the coastal states, our West doesn't stop at the shore; rather, we continue to look out across the Pacific and to the South because so many people are coming from those places. In my opinion, our culture is changing to our greater benefit, and we are already starting to see the work of a number of emerging artists from those areas. One of the things that is most exciting is a program that the Creative Work Fund through the Walter and Elise Haas Fund supports with Spencer Nakasako down in the Tenderloin. There, he works with young people from Laos, Cambodia, and of Southeast Asian descent who are into film, video, and theater. He has already produced one film with these young people—a film that won the best feature-length documentary award at the San Francisco Film Festival and has toured to Berlin and Toronto. He is currently working on another film and has a third project in development. This is being done at a grassroots level. There are a lot of very specific things that are happening out here, which, once again, are very localized. One of the things I'd add to what Kim Stafford mentioned last night is that we need to know how to communicate this information and how to nurture the local aspects of this art. I believe that the field also needs to become aware of the larger dimensions of activity. Jonathan Katz mentioned the need for a national clearinghouse and, I think, such a system would be a very valuable thing.

Hero: I think publishers and people in the East generally don't see this enormous change that is going on out here—a change that will probably happen in a lot of other places, too. I know in my own county, there are some 53 different languages or dialects spoken in the school system. Imagine facing a third-grade class with that challenge in front of you. Is there anything you are doing specifically at City Lights or that you see happening at the book-retail level in response to these changing demographics?

Yamazaki: It's marketing and a sense of being aware of who the writers and publishers are. Once you know that, you need to treat them in the same way you treat other authors, provided the work is appropriate—the same way you would treat one of Harry Ford's authors. If you think a young writer who is coming up from Kaya Press is good, you bring in 10, 15, or 20 copies of the book, give them a faceout, and its that placement in the store that gives equal value.

Simonson: We have sought out and have had non-English-speaking authors. This brings up the matter of reading in the original language simultaneously or with translated passages. When I tell people this, they can't believe that people sit through those readings. Granted, at one, there were a lot of native speakers who knew the language, but there were also people

present who did not know the language but could appreciate the reading. Most U.S. writers who go abroad—and this is a fairly active contingent—do not speak German, French, or Japanese.

Griggs: Definitely listen to your customer base. At my store, we started out with a number of things in approaches to expanding our book groups. When we started an African-American Literature series, we had several customers ask us about Asian-American literature. Listen to your customers when they tell you what they want to hear next.

Barber: Over the past several years, the State Library of California has invested huge amounts of federal funds in literacy programs. The California literacy programs are way out in front of the entire country in terms of library literacy programs. Some projects, like the one I described in Santa Clara, are really connecting the literary and literacy with English as a second language. Activity in this area is ripe now in California in a way that it isn't anywhere else in the country. There are over 200 libraries that have active literacy programs in this state.

Bradford: I feel that one of the things that the Arts Endowment has been able to do successfully is to fund independent presses, of which very few are located in New York or on the East Coast. That is one of the real strengths of the field—the fact that these presses are located throughout the country. I think an issue in the West is distance. Corby Skinner in Montana has the *Poets on the Prairie Big Sky Radio* program. That is one way to address the distance issue, and there are others that need to be invented.

Corby Skinner, Writer's Voice, Billings YMCA: Our radio station in Billings reaches from Canada to Wyoming—it has a 500-mile radius. I can bring in a writer to do a reading and a workshop and reach 20 to 40 people and then go on the radio and realize that we have a million potential listeners. Unfortunately, what has happened with public radio is that there is less and less funding—like there is everywhere. Because of this, the fact that we can provide the programming at no cost to the station makes our program attractive. Literature really belongs on the radio, and in the West, radio bridges distances that are incredible. In order for me to send a writer to a school program, I may need to send the writer on a 200-mile trip—one way! That's hard for people in other places to understand.

Barber: I remember hearing about a *Big Sky Radio* broadcast where people were calling in from their pickup trucks to discuss ideas about what it means to live in the West.

Judyth Hill, New Mexico Arts: Because of distances, we in the West have learned that one program and/or institution will not serve everyone. We don't need one bookstore or one library. We need many small beautiful, local libraries; laundromats; etc. All of us in the West need to find their place and do their part because that's what creates a whole and rich cultural environment. And that's what brings strong programs and big, loving audiences in because these are heartfelt local events. In rural New Mexico, we have fabulous art resources all over the place. The picture is getting bigger and bigger as our lives are actually becoming more local and more real. By making the smaller hoops, the bigger hoops can actually become more vivid and workable. To me, that is the image I'm holding—not the hierarchy but the hoops–the hoops that can hold the whole by really having the strong, small center.

Phillips: I want to add another thought to the issue of the unique nature of the West. There are currently a lot of trends in foundations here. One of them is identified with the behavior of the new "Microsoft billionaires" and is a form of philanthropy that is driven by measurable outcomes and immediate results. My concern is that it has been very difficult for private phi-

lanthropy to come into the world of literary publishing for many reasons. One of these is that there is not, among many foundations, an understanding of the relationship between the commercial and the not-for-profit sectors in literature. I do not think that this new drive for results and sales will look kindly at this field. Literature has a different time base than a dance performance. A book is intended to last over a long period of time—it's not something that you go and see once. I feel this is one of the challenges that we are up against, particularly in the economy of this region: How we measure who is served.

Jill Bernstein, Arizona Commission on the Arts: Who is happy with the current distribution system? Is there any kind of movement afoot to change the way books are distributed, other than something like Amazon.com?

Heather Peeler, Small Press Distribution: We are trying to find new ways of getting books into the hands of readers. We are experimenting with building partnerships with community-based organizations and working outside of the non-commercial realm. This fall, we are launching a relationship with La Peña Cultural Center in Berkeley that does multi-disciplinary arts programming. The Center is bringing in four writers, Sandra Cisneros, Sherman Alexie, Amiri Baraka, and June Jordan, to lead writing workshops with high school students. Small Press Distribution will provide books that will be distributed to the young people participating in the workshops. We feel that this is an important learning context for those participating in the program and is an important way to build lifelong readers. The challenge for us is to identify other groups around the country that might offer similar types of programs.

Yamazaki: Addressing Bernstein's comment: To further amplify, nobody is happy with the current distribution system. The cost of distributing Graywolf or Copper Canyon work, for example, is very high, and there is very little margin in any part of this business to adequately get in the bookstores, and you absolutely need to do that. When Consortium first started with six presses, I had a long relationship with all six of those presses beforehand. Despite that, once we started seeing reps in the store the first 24 months after Consortium began, I saw an over 100% increase in sales from those presses. As I stated earlier, the wholesaling situation is even more critical. SPD [Small Press Distribution] is the last one. For over 300 publishers, they are my only source.

Hero: Are there any small presses that have web sites?

Yamazaki: There are many.

Hero: What has been the impact?

Coates: I think most people are happy to use the medium to maintain contact and have a richer level of contact with readers, particularly those with whom a publisher may not have been in contact. The issue of selling across the web, however, is a whole different thing. I don't think we are experiencing a lot of impact. But, if I can respond to the question because I think the question is very pertinent because it is also connected to the whole issue of publishing books. The observation that I would like to make is that people think that publishing books is the end—that the object is to publish the book. There really isn't a lot of thought given to the questions, "Are there readers for this book?" and "Who is the actual audience that is going to buy this book?" It comes down to that unless we are going to get into a thing of giving away books—and there aren't many people doing that these days. I don't think publishers are given enough time to really look at the whole process. It isn't only distribution—it's the whole thing of what we are doing with the books, and I think the whole issue is problematic. We point fingers at distribution, and we say if we only had a better distributor, we'd all be so much better off, but that's not really the issue. As Paul Yamazaki

points out, the distributors are having a very hard time because there just aren't margins—but there are plenty of books.

Bernstein: I have worked as a consultant with a non-profit literary marketing and development program, and it's very clear to me that these organizations are editorially driven. They tend to have an idealistic sense of who the reader is. I cannot tell you how many publishers I have asked, "Who is the reader for this book?" Their response is "everybody." In the best of all possible worlds, that might be true. In terms of the process of getting a unit of goods from point A to point B and to the end user, the book industry seems uniquely complicated.

Bradford: I think you raise a very good question, and I don't think it will ever be answered in the perimeters of this room because the for-profit side is going to drive it—not the not-for profit—because it is so much bigger.

Katz: The distribution systems of other art forms face challenges similar to those confronting literature. There isn't an adequate distribution system for independent film, crafts, chamber music, or dance.

Ojeda: To answer your question about the West and what can be done here: I think one answer is that the process in which we are currently engaged is the way we do things in this country. Bringing this group together and hearing these points of view—looking at everything from the writer to distribution issues, the responsibilities of publishers, the role of bookstores and other issues—is our uniquely American way of setting the stage for action. From this symposium, ideas will ferment and bubble, and some problems will be solved. There will always be challenges, but I think you are going to find little pieces of the answers here for particular parts of the problem.

Knight: In the publishing industry, there is no way, as there is in other art forms, to workshop a book. For example, I was very intrigued to learn that when a small musical theater company takes a risk (not unlike the way a small press takes a risk on a new author) and develops a new musical and workshops it and that production develops an audience, it's written into the contract that that small company receives a portion of the profit if the work ever goes to Broadway. You have a different situation with small presses. They have been very good at identifying the new young writers. When those writers' second books subsequently come out from a big press, that small press may be the recipient of a few more orders for those authors' first books, but beyond that, there is no benefit to that small press.

Streitfeld: What will change things in distribution is that the for-profit presses—the big publishers—are no longer making a profit, and this is what's going to change them. This is already beginning. The process may ruin some of them completely, and then we won't have any more "New York publishers," which some will think is a good thing.

Katz: To what extent is this due to under-capitalization? If you had one or two million dollars, which is the size of investment that some foundations have made on an annual basis in literature, and you put it into distribution, could you make a difference? Could you put together an institution that could function in the marketplace on behalf of not-for-profit presses or on behalf of any presses that would include not-for-profit distribution? I don't have the answer, but I think it is an intriguing question.

Jim Sitter, Council of Literary Magazines and Presses: When you talk about forces in the marketplace that are affecting retailing, wholesaling, and publishing, you are talking about waves of tens and hundreds of millions of dollars in a business where philanthropic intervention at the rate of a million dollars or two on an annual basis for three to five years risks just being rolled over in a wave of change. We don't have a good

way of predicting the outcome of such a philanthropic intervention right now. I don't think now is the time for some new major philanthropic intervention in distribution. Pilot funds, something SPD is developing, would be fine, but it would be a "flea on the tail." It wouldn't be something with any predictability of benefit that would last.

Katz: And a million or two couldn't buy a portion of one of the 100-million-dollar changes? That's what I wonder as well.

Sitter: I don't know how you'd pick that change. I sometimes think Amazon.com is a great short—that is my primary reaction to it. Other times, I think that they are setting up a distribution system in a way that no one will be able to break into it later. But I don't know how to evaluate it. It's not like the biotech industry, where the venture capital has done this repeatedly, so I just wouldn't know where to steer philanthropy in terms of a long-term systemic way of resolving distribution problems for literature in America. And we have left out magazines. In the last 24 months, over 50% of the wholesalers and distributors of American magazines have closed. A 45-year-old system, which basically hadn't changed much since World War II, has been wiped out, primarily because Safeway and Wal-Mart decided they didn't want to deal with 190 vendors and, instead, wanted to deal with three or four vendors on a national level.

Streitfeld: In response to Jonathan Katz's capital question, I would answer "yes, absolutely." The business has been steadily under-capitalized since the mid and late 1980s, when publishers realized they were charging too little for their books and started raising prices gradually. However, bookstores, for the most part, did not invest more in their inventory in a thoughtful way. If they sold a copy of *Moby Dick,* that was $2.95 and it was $5.95 when they reordered it; they did not think about the fact that they needed to plan to pay to re-capitalize their entire inventory. This happened gradually and subtly over a long period of time. But, also, the buy-in changed when distribution changed, and, as one of the founders of Consortium, I look back 10 or 12 years later and ask if we really did a good thing because in the 1960s and 1970s, a small press could print 500, 800, or 1,200 copies of a book and enjoy pretty good distribution. All of a sudden, we had access to a marketplace that now includes all the superstores, all the independent stores, Wal-Marts, etc. A print run now has risen to where 7,000 or 10,000 copies of a book are available, and the buy-in is now huge. In addition, paper prices have gone up, as have book prices, and advances have gone up. You can't really be a small press anymore; the definition of *small* has changed in terms of what the money is. If you compare budgets in the book field with those of 15 years ago, there is no comparison.

Coates: We are focusing on current distribution and looking at a model that is in a rapid state of change. We must understand that while we are looking at this model, there are changes that are actually here right now. What we are observing is a distribution system that is old—it is a print and distribution system. You print the books here, and then you send them out to California, Alaska—wherever your stores are. Currently, many of the major corporations are working on systems, as opposed to the print-and-distribution approach. They are working on distribute-and-print systems that work in reverse. Instead of printing books in New York and sending them out across the country, what they are looking at doing is receiving a book order from, let's say, Kinko's, and they will take the order and that book will be published and printed as the consumer orders the book. The book is literally downloaded and printed at the time the book is ordered. Barnes & Noble is investigating a similar system. If you follow *Publishers Weekly,* you know that Baker & Taylor went to an on-demand system. Amazon.com has had a similar system under discussion, and it will fit very neatly into their books-out-of-print

program. If they can get an on-demand system working with those books, we are not only talking about a difference in how books are distributed to people, but we are talking about adding longevity to many of the titles that are currently out of print, which will impact both small and large publishers. I do not know what this means to people who are operating small presses now, but it certainly seems like these are things that we should be investigating. This is technology that is here—it is not futuristic.

Peeler: How do we work in partnership to develop literary audiences, whether the output changes from your traditional book to something that is printed on demand? How do people still find out about the book? How we get people to have access to that book is still a key issue and becomes even more disturbing when you consider that CLMP recently conducted surveys of literary audiences and found that next to word of mouth, the second most common way that people found out about books that they wanted to buy is by browsing, either at a bookstore or at a library. This raises a lot of challenges that we are still discussing and still trying to struggle with, but the core issues are still there.

Hero: Both subjects are relevant. We sometimes lose track of how fast the world changes, but even in the retail and the consumer area, for example, half the revenue of Miller Brewing Company now comes from products they didn't even make four years ago. Consider Hewlett Packard: one-third of their revenues comes from products that didn't exist two years ago. There is enormous change, and I think Paul Coates is really onto something. There is a bicycle factory outside of Tokyo where you can design your own bicycle, and within a year, you'll be able to push some buttons and that bicycle will come out the other end of the factory floor and you can take it home with you. There is this incredible change going on, and I don't have a clue what it is going to mean for the independent bookseller or for the small press, but somewhere out there, there is something coming at us, and we should be aware of it.

Katz: One of the things to which we are going to have to be sensitive is a trend in leisure-time decision making. Today, people make a decision five minutes before they are going to do something. In the performing arts world, the trend is away from subscription buying and toward special events. I travel a lot, and the books I see are in the airports. Browsing is partly due to a point-of-purchase decision. You are there and make a decision to do it. I think we need to brainstorm some additional points of purchase.

Barber: I think that this discussion is suggesting that if we are going to look to the future, we may need to forget about the package and distribution system and talk directly about the ideas and the creator and the recipient, the reader, and worry about the rest as it gets solved. How do we put the creator and the reader together most feasibly?

Katz: That is exactly what the automobile industry is currently doing. Dealers are being phased out, and customers increasingly are able to order directly from the designer/manufacturer.

Streitfeld: Wouldn't the equivalent of that in the literary industry be that you would go to the author to buy your copy of the book? We are all in favor of authors being around and being present because their presence helps people buy books, but they can only go so many places before they have a complete breakdown. There is still the tendency to have the author sell the product, but the author can't be everywhere. Because of this fact, there have to be many systems in place that allow the product to sell by itself, which is something that we are lacking. Many of the authors who sell now are the ones who go out on tour and, somehow, there has to be a system in place for authors who refuse to leave their homes. Many publishers want to meet the author and see what he or she looks like. This phenomenon used to exist only for non-fiction or diet books, but now, it's present

in other fields of writing. Today, before they buy a book, publishers want to meet the writer, and they want to see how good looking the author is and see if he or she is going to be effective on television.

Clark: I think a lot of people in this room who work in rural areas can attest to this because it is happening at the grassroots level and has been for years. Some of the writers we sponsor at Poets & Writers are self-published and have produced beautiful letterpress books themselves. These writers bring them to their own readings and cart them around in the back of their cars. They ask the local literary center to sell the books for them—that approach to marketing is still going on.

Streitfeld: Are they doing this willingly or are they doing this because they have no alternatives? I don't think they would be doing this if they had alternatives.

Zubrick: Writers' conferences and festivals are often an alternative to trucking writers in for a reading, and the benefits to the writers are several fold. At a basic level, they earn some income, and they generally stay at a festival from three days to two weeks. Programs involve different aspects of the communities, such as bookstores, radio stations, schools, libraries, and other non-traditional groups. There is a lasting imprint resulting from the writers being there. People get to know them, and authors have time to write while they are there because it is a sort of short-term residency as well.

Lee Ellen Briccetti

Models for Developing Poetry Audiences in the 1990s

I want to begin my comments by saying what you already know: American poetry is alive and well, and there is plenty of it. There is an abundance of poetry books being produced in the West and throughout the country. Poetry readings of all kinds are taking place in bars, cafes, and nightclubs all across the nation.

There are many American poetries, and there are many poetry audiences. I have found that, as Martin Espada says, non-traditional audiences are, in fact, the most traditional of all—audiences for whom poetry has always been a communal experience.

I have had the opportunity to observe the plate tectonics of American poetry at close range because of Poets House's work with the Poetry Publication Showcase, through which we gather all of the books of poetry produced each year from commercial, university, independent, and micro presses. In 1996, we showcased nearly 1,400 books of poetry produced that year from 520 publishers. This annual collecting leads us to put together the *Directory of American Poetry Books,* which is an annotated bibliography and the nation's most complete documentation of poetry in print in the 1990s.

Here are some observations. First, there is a democratizing impulse at work in American poetry, an impulse that has grown as the means of production has expanded. New computer technologies are responsible for broadening poetry publication and the poet's access to print. The NEA reported a 500% increase in the number of small and independent presses in this country during the last 30 years. More poetry is being produced than ever before. This year, we saw a remarkable expansion in the number of CDs, hypertext, and tapes that were sent to us. You may have noticed that W.W. Norton packaged Willie Perdomo's book, *When a Nickle Costs a Dime*, with a CD in the back flap.

Second, there is a marked decentralization and diversification of poetry-publishing venues. Independent presses are where the action is in terms of poetry in this country, and they have given us a greater range of U.S. voices in print than ever before.

Third, probably more poetry is being read today in this country than ever before, but we are not reading the same things. Our poetry-reading habits reflect a real regionalism magnified by the decentralized production.

Fourth, there is this flowering of poetry production, but public access to books of poetry is shockingly low.

As we started putting the Showcase together, we found that public libraries, beset by budget cuts and the higher costs of academic serials, were not investing in poetry collections at all. Because librarians depend on reviews for their acquisition decisions, but often never subscribe to the smaller literary journals that do review poetry, they are operating in an information vacuum. Most books of poetry are never reviewed at all. The net effect is that books of poetry are invisible in most American communities. Booksellers often fear that poetry, on its own, will not sell. Few retailers give poetry a visible display. Independent bookstores that historically have been the best friends of the small and independent presses are threatened by the chains.

Non-profit organizations often find themselves in the role of bridging gaps in these literary "de-

livery" systems. At Poets House, we began to think structurally about ourselves as a specialized library, packaging what we do effectively at our home site for larger library institutions. In partnership with the New York Public Library, we have launched Poetry in the Branches, which reinforces many layers of programming in three community libraries. Through this program, we provide writing workshops, collection development and display assistance, special needs budgets, and much hands-on poetry "mothering." When we set up the model with our partners, we established that the three very distinct target sites would become poetry laboratories and that they would educate the rest of the library system. So there are two system-wide training sessions each year to which all 82 library branches send their librarians for extensive training and at which the lead PITB librarians mentor their peers.

The display of poetry books was something librarians were resistant to because they didn't have shelf space for it: They didn't have the money to purchase display units or the faith that it could make a difference. We insisted because, in our experience, books of poetry sell one another, and we launched our program with a strong visible presence, having collected 40 books of poetry that were displayed from the outset. We also insisted that when displays of any kind were done—i.e., Civil War or AIDS awareness—that a book of poetry be included. Poetry circulation tripled at each branch we mentored. In addition, we have garnered at least $20,000 worth of poetry acquisitions system-wide that would not have been possible without us.

Poetry in the Branches was developed like a scientific experiment. We set out to prove our theory—that if you can create exposure for poetry and access to books of poetry in new communities, people will make the discovery on their own. We were able statistically to track how this occurred. For example, in Allerton, the smallest library in our program with a large Spanish-speaking population, poetry circulation increased from 25 books of poetry circulating over a month-long period to almost 90 per month within the first three months. This helped prove to librarians that the public actually could be interested in poetry and created a ripple effect of professional enthusiasm. This same kind of program, which creates a synergy among books, events, and professional training, can be re-fitted to help high-school librarians as well as booksellers, labor leaders, and national park rangers.

I am also suggesting that in order to find indigenous models for partnership, literary non-profits in the West must be supported in their evolution toward "capacity." We are all from diverse organizations, and we do co-sponsorships all the time. But I am talking here about partnership, a long-term commitment over time by two institutions to refine their missions together and seek to exponentially increase their audiences. Partnership is not easy. It requires a readiness for change—and, ironically, readiness for change requires stability.

While speaking with Jonathan Katz, I was interested to hear that the catch phrase, the *informal sector,* has become important to cultural theorists (as it has been for a long time in the field of housing). The informal sector consists of the act of informal, non-monetary exchange of goods and services. We have no idea how large the informal sector is in poetry, but, intuitively, we know it is vast. Today, there is a sea of self-publication and self-distribution occurring because of the changes in technology. The informal sector includes readings and recitation swapping. It includes people who feel that Robert Service is part of their background. It includes my grandfather, who recited Dante at weddings, and it includes the person on the airplane who carries one poem in his wallet. Nonprofit organizations not only have to partner with the commercial sector but to realize the enormous potential of the informal sector and be the bridge. (Perhaps we have been snobby about

who can join our club.)

Here is my closing, starting with an adage that you may have heard: "You can't create love, but you can create the conditions for love." So, too, with poetry audiences, and the first condition is exposure. How can we get people to bump into poetry physically in the West? Poetry in Motion, *Streetfare Journal*, radio, poetry maps—in our schools and parks and anywhere that people create a public square. The second condition is access. This is an opportunity for the chemistry—if it is going to be there—to happen. Strategic pairings of programs and books are the agents of access, and strong, well-supported literary non-profits need to find natural partners to deliver their programs to people where they live.

My greatest poetry experience during the last 10 years happened in Elko, Nevada, in January, when I attended the Cowboy Poetry Festival for the first time. I went to a series of events entitled "Beyond the Corral," at which Buck Ramsey, the balladeer, recited by heart. The next day, Wallace McCray recited Dorothy Parker to 300 people. What I found exciting was the many poetries colliding, making connections, challenging thinking about "little corrals." I have never been with a group of poets who respected their audiences more, and it was one of the all-time great audiences I have ever witnessed. People were listening with all the different parts of their minds and souls. They would feel condescended to if they heard me talking about audience development because they were there to have fun, to nurture their life's journey, and to bring the traditions back to their own families.

David Streitfeld

Access to Literary Materials in a Changing Culture

What I am going to do today is talk generally for a minute or two about the on-line world, and then I am going to go through basically seven, eight, or nine observations of how I think the on-line world is going to influence the marketing and the consuming of literature and then end with two or three observations about what I think the danger ground is as book publishing, book selling, and distribution become more rational. It's going to help sales, it's going to help its visibility, but there are also some problems.

First, I want to mention Oprah Winfrey and the impact of her book club. This is slightly off the electronic subject, but it is an introduction because it is probably the most significant thing to happen in literacy and literature since I don't know when. Winfrey has demonstrated there is this huge audience for extremely good books. Some of Oprah's Book Club Segments are better than others; some are basically adequate. Yet, the books all sell in huge quantities, automatically become #1 bestsellers, and if she can do that in 20 minutes every six weeks and sell a million copies, God knows how many copies of this stuff could be sold by a bunch of people trying real hard and trying it in different ways.

One of the spillovers from this involves the head of Starbucks, who decided, partly for reasons of his own, to make Starbucks even greater and more glorious by selling copies of the Oprah book club selection at Starbucks. I don't know how that effort is working out or whether people are spilling coffee on the books or whether they are actually buying them, but in my local Starbucks—and I checked this out in one or two others—there are several other books there, too, including the Polish poet who won the Nobel Prize last year, Szymborska. They're selling her book there, and this book has sold something close to 75,000 copies in the past year with basically nothing. No publicity—she didn't come here—just, I guess, on word of mouth.

And now it's in all of these coffee shops across the country. I saw this across the country and thought the way anybody who loves books or loves literature would think this is really great. Here we have this Polish poet in the leading coffee-shop chain in America. This is really new and different. And then, when I thought about it a while, I thought that it wasn't really that new and different—it had just been gone for a while. Back in the golden age of reading and certainly of publishing, which was during the late 1950s and 1960s, there were no superstores, but books were sold everywhere. They were sold in coffee shops and on the wire racks of drug stores and in bus stations, train stations, and airports, and they were commonplace. They were very cheap, and people really didn't think about the cost that much. They just bought them, and they read them.

There was also much less division than that we got in the 1970s and the 1980s between high and low culture, and you could find the equivalent of a Polish Nobel Laureate in poetry in your drug store wire rack right next to the then-equivalent of a John Grisham or Stephen King book. And, I think, ideally, what we want to go forward to is a situation like that where books are universal—a state where people don't think about them that much because they're universal. I think—or maybe just hope—that the electronic world is going to lead us into this state of affairs again.

Early on, there was a lot of discussion about how electronic media were going to replace books. There was concern that all reading would be

done on-line and that the book, as we know it, would quickly disappear. People involved in the on-line world said a lot of disparaging things about books. My favorite was always, "A book is a collection of dead pieces of wood, wrapped up in a dead cow, and who would want that?" It seemed like a fairly cheap thing to say about books and what they've done for us, but that was the general attitude.

Then we had the backlash, which held that the on-line world is extremely stupid. No one is ever going to read a novel on-line. There's no point to it. It gives you a headache. People aren't going to use it to read serious stuff. That's where we were about a year and a half ago. I think *Silicon Snake Oil* was the leading influence of that kind of thinking, but I think, by this point, things have settled down a bit. You can still look at the negative side if you want, but in a way, it's better to look on the positive side.

First, some definitions: By *on-line booksellers*, I generally mean Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble. There is also, however, an entire group of second-hand booksellers on-line. You type in either the title of a book or the author and obtain quotes. Some of these places have huge data banks of a million out-of-print books.

List serves and interactive on-line newsletters are often devoted to writing and can range from creative writing to journalism to specific authors. There are also on-line publications, some of which—such as Salon, which is based here—are extremely good, extremely professional, and largely devoted to books or printed matter. There are also hypertext and multi-user sites, but these are more obscure for a general audience. So these are what I mean when I say the *on-line world.*

One good thing happening to literature because of the computer is a great increase in access to material of all kinds. Amazon, the frontrunner in this business, has a tendency to over hype itself. I think it says it has over a million or two and a half million books available and out of print, which means many of their books are not available, and they say they'll try to order them for you, but I don't think they have a clue about how to do that.

But even once you strip away the hype, there are a half million titles that they have available, and this is many more than in even the best bookstore. To an extent, they are now starting to describe the material so people browsing on-line know what it is. They can distinguish between the books of Sherman Alexie—this one is poetry, this is a novel, this is the one he won an award for—and it does clue people in a bit. Not as much as standing in front of the book in the store and looking at it, but these books, most of them, are not in the store. So, access to material is getting much, much easier; until relatively recently, there were basically very few bookstores in America. The former head of Random House, Bennett Cerf, memorably said in about 1950 that there were more blacksmith shops in America than there were bookstores.

So now we have a lot of bookstores and we have a lot of super stores and we have the independents, some of whom are here and are still holding on well, but in a lot of places, there was still no access to material; the on-line booksellers are changing this. People have talked about a lot of reading programs in isolated areas and, to a certain extent, very soon, if not already, someone who sees a writer and buys the one book that they have and likes it will be able to go if not to their own computer then to the one in the school library, the one in the local library, and order it, and this seems almost 100% a good thing. If it got to the point where it was cutting into the sales of City Lights or Elliot Bay, it would probably be problematic, but these might be additional sales; no one knows yet. The world is relatively small. Amazon's sales for all of last year were $15 million, which is about what an urban Borders or Barnes & Noble does —perhaps a little more—but this year, it will probably be $100 million or $200 million. That's

adding up to a lot of books.

A secondary point here is that to access this world, you need technology, which will cost you money. You'll have to have the computer, you'll have to upgrade the computer, you'll have to have your ISDN line, you'll have to have the right kind of software, and all of this does cost money and you're going to be paying; people will pay $2,000 to be able to order a $10 book. So there is both the technology component and a class component: if people aren't careful, this whole universe of books out there will be available, but it's only going to be available to the people who can pay for access to it. This is one reason why it seems increasingly crucial to have full on-line access in all sorts of libraries. The libraries are working on it, but many of them have funding problems.

Some other consequences of this is that a lot of things aren't going to be published the way they used to. These days, or soon, a lot of people are going to have to take the middle ground. If they really believe in their book of poems, but no one wants to publish it, they'll publish it on their web page, and this is what a lot of people are doing already. There's a whole Internet site called the "Dead Poetry Page," where people put their entire books of poetry that are out of print. So these were books that were once in print but are no longer in print. This will make the authors feel better, but I am not positive that it is a solution; you've got to be very dedicated to read all of this material on-line, but it is the middle ground. Theoretically, if you meet someone who wants to read your poetry, you can direct them to it, so probably, in the near future, somewhat fewer real books as physical objects will be published. In other fields, a lot of monographs will be published solely on-line because it's just economically unfeasible to do it any other way.

The other thing that will happen—a great trend, I think—is that word of mouth, which is a large part of what keeps literature alive, is going to become much more powerful than it has been for some time. I recall that at one time, when a movie would open, it would open somewhat small, and if people liked it, they would go see it, and the next week more people would see it, and then it would expand further. The way it works with movies now, as we all know, is the biggest night is the first night and, if there aren't enough people in the movie theater by the next week, it's gone. Because word of mouth is no longer possible with movies, some smaller movies barely get distributed at all. What seems to have replaced word of mouth with movies is buzz, which is a phenomenon where people are motivated to see a movie because they've heard from the media that it is good. This information generally surfaces from magazines and articles. Basically, buzz is indistinguishable from hype.

Word of mouth still exists in the world of bookselling. The booksellers here know that better than anyone else, and I believe that the on-line world is enhancing this. People communicate by e-mail about books. Readers and potential readers can now bind together in micro groups and talk about the books they like in ways that were not possible five years ago. Today, we have huge list serves and other sites devoted to Patrick O'Brian who was once considered an extremely esoteric author and now is a bestseller. Books that even I, after ten years of writing professionally about this field, haven't heard of have whole subcultures devoted to them, and these people, by virtue of their interest in them, will convert other people to them, and so I think that is probably a good sign.

The other thing that is clearly happening is that the distance between the author and the reader is shrinking. This is the case in part because of what is happening off line, which is that writers are going around and are talking to everyone. More of the public is meeting them in the flesh, where they are making judgments about whether or not they like them as personalities. That alone is a change from the way it was—at least when I was growing up and when most people here

were growing up—where you found the books on the wire rack in the drug store or you found them in the library and you knew nothing at all about the authors. I still know nothing about the authors that I read when I was growing up—authors that meant more to me than some of the authors I read now. This new phenomenon is probably somewhat problematic for the authors because it makes them much more visible. It makes many people talk about authors' lives in the same way they talk about movie stars—but they have less protection than movie stars, and I'm not sure that all of this exposure for writers is necessarily good. In some ways, they are better off at home writing. But now it is a feature of the business—the public expects to know about the personal lives of writers.

Another consequence of this is that the gap between high culture and low culture seems to be shrinking a bit. Most of the on-line sites are dedicated to literary authors. Maybe I haven't been looking in the right places, but I don't recall seeing too many sites devoted to Tom Clancy or John Grisham, whereas Walker Percy has an excellent site that tells you 86 times more about Walker Percy than anyone would want to know. These sites are increasing the visibility of literary writers. It's usually not the authors themselves who are creating them but dedicated fans—even fanatical. These sites seem to give a boost to these writers and make them somewhat more prominent without them having to market themselves in the flesh.

Along with the profusion of information about authors on the web, newspapers are evolving. Soon, many will be at the point where you can type in the name of a writer and locate everything written about them in that paper for the past several years. This further increases the public's access to authors and information about their work. You can now be out in a remote part of the country and find information that usually would only be available to you at a good urban library.

One result of this greatly increased access to information is that the cultural overlordship that the people in the West often feel those in the East exert over them is diminished. I know that feeling is there because I've interviewed enough writers from the West where this has come up. I don't know whether it's true, but certainly writers in the West do feel that, in the East, the literary establishment doesn't know who they are and doesn't care—it doesn't pay attention. Wallace Stegner, who is, in some ways, one of the more important Western writers, until the end of his life was bitter and cranky about what the *New York Times'* review had or had not done to him. Today, with the greatly increased access to on-line information, the authority of places like the *New York Times* is diminishing. There are more diverse viewpoints. The *LA Times* will write one thing about an author, and *Salon Magazine* may take another view. There is no one place in New York anymore saying "X" is the important writer of today or tomorrow. This greater access to information and the multiplying of authoritative voices are breaking down power. This decentralization could help the West over its inferiority complex.

So, on balance, I think that all of this is good, and we are going to end up with a situation where the old-fashioned kind of books are more available and more plugged into the culture than they probably have been for 20 or 30 years. The two cautionary points I would make are that I am not positive that this can happen as effectively as it did in the 1960s because in the 1960s—well, really in the 1950s—paperbacks were 25¢, and in the 1960s they were $1.00 or $2.00. Even when you account for inflation, they've gone up a tremendous amount. Now a hard-cover book is $25 to $30, and a lot of people, particularly the people you want to reach—who you want to start reading—can't afford them. Unfortunately, there is no ready solution. There are bookstore discounts and Amazon.com discounts, but the fact remains that books are still really expensive. There was a survey or a study completed

recently that I've been told about, but I haven't checked out. Reportedly, the study finds that for the first five centuries of the book's existence as a printed object, book prices declined relative to inflation and that somewhere about 1960, that trend bottomed out, and ever since then, books have been getting more expensive. This is probably not going to kill the book entirely, but it's not going to help it.

The other point I want to make is more in reaction to some of the other things being said here. What, I presume, everybody in this room wants is a world where poetry, literature, and books are taken more seriously, have more prominence, and are up there battling against the schlock in movies, *Jurassic Park II*, the bad television shows. That is what I want, too. However, what is going to get you there is better distribution. The book-distribution process today is a business where a bunch of books are thrown out on the market, and the system waits to see what appeals to the public. It is a tremendously inefficient system, and its inefficiency is one reason the system is breaking down. What is happening is that the electronic world is going to be able to exploit readers' interests much more. Soon, I will buy three books by a particular author on Amazon.com, and you can bet that when that author's new book comes out, Amazon.com is going to tell me. They're going to send me a little e-mail message. You can also bet—and Barnes & Noble is already doing this—that if you become a subscriber, which is the level above "customer," they will take any information you give them and sell it to anyone for any purpose whenever they want to. This is really how the on-line companies intend to make their money, too, because they're selling you the books at close to cost. I mean they're selling them to you at 30 to 35% off, and their profit margin is extremely thin—but they'll be able to take the fact that you bought three novels of a certain type, and they will sell it to publishers who may have a new novel coming out and want to appeal to those readers. So that publisher will say, "You loved x, why not read y?" And this may be a good thing, and there may be people who like it. I'm paranoid enough to think that I really don't want all this information about me out there. I don't want in some data bank the fact that I have purchased four Sherman Alexie books and two books by Walter Mosley and that means that I like x. I think that the relationship between a bookseller and a customer should be almost as private as the relationship between a doctor and a patient, but trust me, that's not the way they're going to do it on-line.

A final point or warning: The reason the literary world has the vitality it does and the reason we all like it is largely because of its diversity. If we polled everyone in this room, probably most of us would report having seen roughly the same set of movies. However, if we polled everyone about the last book they read, probably everyone has read a different book. This is something that I like about the literary world, and that diversity is to be applauded. Books are not like some elements of mass culture. When a new movie opens, there are 25,000 movie screens, and you can see the numbers going up for each new big movie. It used to be that the high-water mark was for a movie to be presented on 6,000 screens, and now it's more like 7,000 screens. Someday, not too soon, *Jurassic Park IV* is going to be on every single movie screen in the country, and you're going to have no other choice but where to watch it. This is where the entertainment industry is heading, and it's what they want. They want you watching movie x, when they want you to watch it, and then the next week they want you watching a different movie. The literary world is somewhat impervious to this approach. To the extent that you make it more orderly, to the extent that you improve distribution, to the extent that you reach more readers, to the extent that you get every conglomerate involved in this, it is going to be more like the other entertainment industries, which I know is not a good thing.

Discussion

Streitfeld: I think it is inevitable—the encroachment of the on-line world.

Coates: I am particularly curious as to how Simonson and Yamazaki, coming from the retail side, see the situation and what strategies are there.

Simonson: I'm not one to invoke the market as a driving force but, again, the cost. As a bookstore, we order books that we don't carry and the handling of that process, when you talk about single copies of books, involves all sorts of inefficiencies. It's interesting that Barnes & Noble, in response to Amazon.com, jumped into it because it obviously handled a lot of these books already in its system and is trying to do its own warehousing and such. But one of the things that Barnes & Noble is not known for is good customer service, which is what Amazon.com is good at. It really takes a lot of labor and dedication to really follow that. Maybe this is part of one of those things where someone has to lose millions and millions of dollars, and maybe they won't be the one that survives, but they will have set in motion these and other changes to happen. Fifty-year-old people being asked their GREs and SATs as their hiring process. It's a funny thing because there is so little book information in them. Several bookstores do have significant data bases on-line; I'm sure these will become more accessible to anyone, and people can tailor them how they want. At this point, it's a big spending of money and time on something that doesn't really yield much money.

Streitfeld: They are not making money, but they are selling books.

Simonson: Oh, yes, but there is a difference.

Streitfeld: Well, they are going to make the money when they sell your name. They don't say this, but I am convinced that is what they are planning to do.

Simonson: There's a lot of other issues like that in the whole on-line commerce field. Today, there are newspapers that are on-line that you can obtain for free. We need to ask at what point such items will cost money and at what point in the transaction they will be encountered.

Yamazaki: There are very few stores in the U.S. that really understand the smaller independent literary presses, particularly those that are based around poetry. City Lights is currently in the process of designing a web page, and we will use independents as our core. This is a major strength of ours—being familiar with the writers and the presses. Putting this information on-line will enable the public to pick up some of that knowledge without coming to the store. I don't think on-line contact with data bases will ever be a replacement for people who are interested in serious literature browsing, but I think it will help us promote poetry and literature. We have an excellent staff, and some of our staff have taken it upon themselves to play an active role in the design of our site. We view the site as a possible tool for us to use in the future.

Simonson: What are the feelings of the publishing side of your business about the development of the on-line side of the business?

Yamazaki: Our publishing branch tends to be somewhat more technophobic than the bookstore branch. The bookstore has been driving the initial investigations into the area, but the publishing side is starting to play with the idea now.

Simonson: Do you think that Amazon.com is going to hurt, help, or not affect at all the books sold in City Lights?

Yamazaki: I don't think that it is going to affect us very much. I think that, eventually, the determining factor in sales is going to be the knowledgeability of the book source. Take Borders, for example. When they opened in

Union Square, we saw a flattening out of our mid-trade paperback sales, particularly in fiction, for about 15 months. In the most recent 18 months, however, we have seen that section of our business grow by about 10%.

Katz: It is very hard to predict what effect on-line communication in the media is going to have on reading and books. Consider television, which basically replaced comic books and card playing. For example, in the 1950s, half of the population knew how to play bridge. The people who read a lot and are also on-line a lot haven't changed their reading habits very much—unless they put so many hours into on-line interface that they don't have enough time in the day to read and be on-line for the amount of time they would like to devote to each—then reading suffers. The same thing is true with television. People who watch television three to four hours a day actually read just as much as anybody else. The research shows that the ways computers are used in people's lives is less a function of the nature of the technology than how that technology is presented to them by their peers, teachers, and family. What people get out of television—when they are given instructions of one kind—is very different from what they can remember or what value they say it has to them when they are given an instruction of a different kind—especially by peers, family, and teachers. That is why putting a computer in every single classroom has nothing to do with the quality of education, but teacher training has a lot to do with it.

Pennie Ojeda

Public Support Systems for Literature in France and The Netherlands

This afternoon, I would like to take you, as a sightseer of sorts, on a visit to the literary cultures of The Netherlands and France. I will examine their arts policies as a context for looking at public and private support for literature. I will address the support available for writers and what is referred to in the European Community as the *book chain*—writers, translators, publishers, booksellers, and libraries. As we go through each country, I will highlight aspects of its support system.

The development of cultural policy and corresponding public support in the field of literature is well articulated in many European countries, in part through the efforts of the Council of Europe. Language—and, therefore, literature—is understood as the most significant manifestation of culture and, as such, of political identity, "of the people of this place," as Kim Stafford reminded us yesterday. In fact, in 1992, the European ministers of culture met and proposed to promote the book industry as a way of disseminating and furthering European culture and values. This effort has evolved into extensive activities, including the development of legislation concerning the book world, with a view toward promoting the well-being of writers, an appreciation of the written word, and growth in the reading public.

I would like to begin with a brief overview of the Dutch process for the development of cultural policy. In light of the current general state of disarray surrounding the issue of government support for the arts in the U.S., it may serve us well to look outside our borders. Contemporary Netherlands includes people from many cultural backgrounds and people from many places. The government there faces the challenge of respecting and honoring the expressions of these different cultures in its society. The current Secretary for Education, Culture and Science (Aad Nuis) looks at the nurturing of a multitude of cultural forms as a unifying force for society. I am going to read a small excerpt from his address to the Dutch Parliament last year. He explained:

> It is vital to remain alert to ways of reinforcing the growth and transmission of culture. How people develop an open attitude toward one another depends on how secure they feel in themselves. Insecurity is the groundbed of narrow mindedness. We must therefore endeavor to create a cultural climate which offers people a sense of security and encourages them to decide what they consider valuable, what they wish to share, and what they wish to explore.

The secretary declared a challenge: Shall culture be an armor to isolate people one from another or the backbone that holds society together? *Armor or Backbone: Cultural Policy 1997-2000* is the title of the Dutch cultural policy document for the years 1997-2000. The preparation of a national cultural policy plan is required by law in The Netherlands at least every four years. It involves an extensive process of consultation and study, including budget projections for the period covered. *Armor or Backbone* is based on the premise that a society of armor-plated individuals drifts apart on the seas of suspicion, while a society with culture as its backbone can grow toward unity. The Secretary's position is that the latter is vastly preferable, and government should do everything in its power to strengthen this backbone. In the area of literature, little support was available to writers outside of copyright ownership until well after World War II. Then, in the early

1960s, Dutch authors waged a protest against the lack of a government policy on literature. They sought recognition of authorship as a profession and financial support to enable them to write. In 1965, their effort led to the creation of the Foundation for Dutch Literature, an intermediary organization funded under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The Foundation pressed for greater support for writers and, at its insistence in 1987, the government funded a study to investigate the financial situation of Dutch authors and translators. This research revealed that royalties and other payments to authors rarely provided an adequate income—$6,100 was the average income for writers and $7,600 was the average income for translators. Based on the persuasive data contained in this study, the Foundation developed a budget for 1989-92 that increased support for writers and translators from $1.4 million in 1988 to $3.2 million in 1992. Currently, the Foundation budget is approximately $5 million.

Now, if we are going to note sites of interest on our cultural policy map, we should give three stars to the Foundation for Dutch Literature for its support of working grants to about 200 writers of fiction, poetry, essays, children's books, and drama. One-hundred translators also receive these grants, which are fixed at a monthly amount ($2,450 in 1997). Full-time writers can claim a working grant for a period of eight to twelve months, and part-time writers can claim up to six months. Beginning writers can obtain a minimum grant of three months. In order to encourage literary creativity and to provide greater economic stability, the grants are given for a continuous period of two to three years. The writers, however, must reapply each year. Working grants are only paid to writers whose taxable annual income from literary and non-literary work totals less than $37,500. In addition, the Foundation supplements royalties to approximately 150 authors and 190 translators. This subsidy is in addition to the royalties paid by the publisher. The supplement is related to the length and quality of the specific text, and the same earnings ceilings apply. The Foundation also provides travel grants and honorary allowances that are paid to older, established writers in the form of working grants.

Now, let's add two stars on the cultural policy map for the public lending rights scheme in The Netherlands that gives authors and publishers a small payment—up to a maximum of $5,000 yearly each time his or her book is borrowed from a public library. This legislation was initiated about 10 years ago. In 1990 and 1991, $6.4 million was set aside for payments made through this program.

In addition to these two sizeable programs, the Dutch government also deserves a star for its support of The Netherlands Fund for Literary Production and Translation, which was created in 1992 to promote Dutch literature abroad and to subsidize unprofitable literary works and literary magazines that serve as platforms for young writers. Another star marks the government's annual literary prizes for prose, poetry, and essays. The award is approximately $65,000, of which $38,000 is allocated to the author and the remainder is utilized for publicity and translation. Every three years, a prize in the same amount is awarded for children's literature.

Approximately 10,500 new titles were published in The Netherlands in 1993; of these, approximately 2,000 were novels, poetry, and drama. Books are not viewed in The Netherlands as a purely commercial product. The government's policy is to strengthen the book trade's economic position and redress market effects through such mechanisms as fixed prices and a low value added tax (VAT). The VAT is 6% on books as opposed to the normal 17.5% VAT. The fixed book price is an issue of controversy in The Netherlands and elsewhere. This national fixed book price program enables a book to be sold at the same price, established by the publisher, at all retail outlets in the country. The regulation is vulnerable in The Netherlands because books

written in the Dutch language are imported from Belgium, which does not have the fixed-price mechanism.

The government also promotes reading as part of its literature policy. There is an Association for Writers, the Schools and the Community that receives support to promote interest in reading by providing information on Dutch literature. The Association also organizes lectures and other activities in which authors have the opportunity to interact with the public.

As we've made our path through this landscape of different funding bodies and support organizations, you will have observed that public funding for literature in The Netherlands is holistic in its approach and a comprehensive part of a larger cultural policy that is developed with a longer term strategy in mind. Theirs is a systematic effort to support writers and a development of the means by which writers' work can reach large, varied, and appreciative audiences. The Dutch government regards the vitality of literature—and of its cultural life in general—as important to the well-being of the nation.

The balance of support for literature in The Netherlands is clearly tipped on the side of public support. In terms of the private sector, support for literature is minimal. In The Netherlands, it is difficult to estimate business sponsorship of the arts and thus also the business sector's support of the field of literature. Private support is more likely to be given to cultural organizations in the form of goods and services. I was told by the Dutch cultural officer, who had previously served as a director of one of the Dutch foundations, that there are three to five prizes for literature that are sponsored by private corporations. To his knowledge, this is the only form of corporate support for literature . He indicated that approximately 95% of all support for the arts in The Netherlands is through public funding.

Our cultural expedition must stop in France as the French state has a long history of support for the arts, dating back to the patronage of the monarchy. Even today, France has the only true cultural ministry model in all of Europe; elsewhere, culture is often combined with other areas such as education and science, as we saw in The Netherlands. Funding for the Ministry of Culture expanded immensely in the early 1980s under the socialist government, and, by 1986, public support from all levels of government had reached slightly more than $1.4 billion. Of that, approximately $12.6 million was allocated to literature. The latest cumulative figures are for 1993-94, and the total public support for culture in France then was slightly more than $3.5 billion, or about $58 per person. This compares to our $3.70 per person.

A key element in the growth of public support for literature in France is the income derived from two taxes: a 2% tax on book sales and a 3% tax on the sale of copying equipment. We should highlight these measures on our cultural policy map as three-star attractions. These taxes, along with Ministry of Culture funds, support several important intermediary organizations that, in turn, assist the field of literature in the broadest sense. The principal such organization is the Centre National du Livre (CNL), which provides grants and/or loans to writers of all genres and to publishers and associations in the field of literature. In addition, the CNL subsidizes the dissemination of literature, especially to libraries and bookstores.

In 1997, the budget for the CNL is approximately $27 million, of which approximately $5 million is derived from the sales tax on books and approximately $13 million from the tax on the sale of photocopying equipment. In other words, these two taxes represent approximately two thirds of the funding for the CNL. The sales tax on books was devised as a way of having popular work, in effect, subsidize work that is less commercially viable. The thinking behind the creation of the tax on copying equipment is that the facility of copying reduces the potential in-

come from sales; therefore, the tax is seen somewhat as a compensation for lost income.

Through the CNL, grants are available to authors to provide them with the opportunity to write full time. In order to receive such grants, writers (not necessarily French but residents of France) must have reached a level of accomplishment demonstrated by a publication record. In addition, there are annual grants for famous writers who are in financial need. Eighty percent of these grants have led to publication.

The CNL funds literary magazines that are important outlets for emerging writers, as well as magazines that include critical writing, history, translations, poetry, and plays. Publishers can apply for interest-free loans for the publication of literary genres such as poetry that generally does not achieve rapid sales. In addition, the CNL provides grants to public libraries for the purchase of new books, sponsors literary events such as public readings, and provides subsidies for cultural groups and conventions to promote literature.

While the CNL provides direct funding for writing, the Ministry of Culture also includes what I will call the *Department of Literature (du Livre and la Lecture*), and we should give it two stars for its coordination of activities of the so-called agents of the book chain—mainly publishers, libraries, and bookstores. The Department of Literature is particularly active in the book industry and in the promotion of reading. In 1995, its budget for projects was around $20 million.

In France, the publishing sector is eligible to benefit from certain government-granted privileges, ranging from special loans to legislation related to pricing. Price-fixing measures are embodied in the Single Price Act. As in The Netherlands, the publisher sets only one price for each book no matter where it is going to be sold.

As I mentioned previously, there are questions as to whether this mechanism is entirely successful, and the issue continues to be debated within the European community. Two papers presented at the 1996 international workshop of legislation for Book World discussed this subject and encouraged consideration of some aspect of price fixing in Europe. There is concern that without controls, publication of poetry, literary fiction, biography, etc. will be threatened. To some extent, this type of legislation is seen as a protection against an influx of reprints and remainders from the U.S.

The French policies of price restrictions and direct grants were developed to nurture the vitality, diversity, and quality of French literature—clearly an important manifestation of its culture. The government's pride and protection of its culture are reflected in everything from the GATT [General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs] talks to President Chirac's refusal to accept a pair of cowboy boots from Bill Clinton at the recent summit in Denver.

In contrast to the strong level of public support, private-sector arts funding is not well developed in France, but it is growing. Through tax changes, the government offers modest incentives to stimulate the private sector's support for the arts. Since 1981, around 2% of the government's cultural expenditures have been allocated to projects "refinanced" (matched) by business. The Ministry of Culture includes a Council for Cultural Patronage that encourages cost sharing with the private sector. In addition, tax measures allow individuals (1%) and companies (1%) a small deduction from taxable income.

ADMICAL is the French acronym for an organization akin to our Business Committee for the Arts. It exists to further corporate giving to the arts. ADMICAL information indicates that approximately 140 publication projects and literary prizes were supported by the organization in 1996. A 1988 survey revealed that the banking sector accounted for a quarter of all arts spon-

sorship and that the visual arts, museums, and music received more than half of all business support of culture. While business sponsorship in France is rising, it is not significant.

Curiously, the most important literary prize in France is privately sponsored. La prix Goncourt, created by the Goncourt family, has a cash value of only about $10; however, it is the most sought after literary award in the country. Winning it is one of the greatest honors an author can achieve, and receipt of the award practically guarantees a significant increase in book sales.

We've been noting our sites of interest on this cultural policy sightseeing tour only in France and The Netherlands. For a future journey, there are a number of legislative mechanisms that have been adopted in other countries that would also merit several stars. One of these is a survey that was conducted by the European Writers' Congress in 1994. The survey report includes a comprehensive outline of the legal and policy needs for writers. For example, as photocopying has exploded in the last several decades, authors and publishers in some countries have set up licensing arrangements to monitor and collect revenue from photocopying. The survey discusses collecting societies, organizations that oversee and administer tax mechanisms, and licensing for the protection of secondary rights.

Another possible source of support is through domain public payment. This is an agreed-upon royalty to be paid on books in the public domain. The revenue accrues to a central fund to support creative and cultural projects and to address the social needs of writers such as retirement or health care. I believe this program already exists in Italy.

Discussion

Knight: In the last couple of cultural exchange opportunities that I've had—one with the state of Jalisco in Mexico and the other with Euskadi (the Basque country)—both of them wanted to consult with me about developing private resources for the arts. In Jalisco, their primary interest was our development of local arts councils because they felt that their public funds were being cut, and they wanted to make their cultural centers more independent and self-reliant. At the same time, I was very interested in quite the opposite and asked what arguments they used for public funding. In some ways, their desire is going to be more easily met than mine because it has to do with the basic philosophy of a country and with the basis upon which the country was developed, and ours is clearly capitalism—and that's probably not going to change. But, those at work in other countries are interested in what we are doing to fund culture here—they want to know how to run museum stores, how to change tax laws. They especially wanted to know how to persuade businesses to give money to the arts. They were absolutely perplexed by this phenomenon and astounded that so much private money in this country is contributed to the arts.

Ojeda: It has to do with our tax system and, if they don't have that model to correspond to, it would not work the same way—the systems are so fundamentally different. There are many countries like Mexico that are developing their arts-support system, and they look to the Endowment—wanting to know how we operate because that's the model they want to emulate. However, if they don't have the tax incentives in their system, the model cannot be easily adapted.

Yamazaki: Do these ministries actively promote themselves? How much is the public aware of what the government does on its behalf in terms of public funding of the arts?

Ojeda: I think they are very aware of the government's role in that area. The citizens of these countries have a different kind of appreciation of the role government plays in the fund-

ing of culture, and I don't think there is criticism of the level of government support for arts and culture. In these countries, people are aware of the government's support, and it is a source of pride.

Yamazaki: So there is a lot of public support and, hence, these programs will probably continue at their levels of budget allocation?

Ojeda: Governments change, and in France right now—despite more conservative elements that are being voiced—there continues to be strong support for culture. There may be cutbacks in the level of government support for the arts in France, but I think that the fundamental position of public arts funding there is not as subject to variation because of changes in government.

Hero: Several years ago, several of we state arts agency directors had the opportunity to spend six weeks in Germany because the Germans were interested in finding out about how private-sector support had been generated in the U.S. for the arts. At that time, Germany was concerned about problems related to massive government spending. There, national cultural policy and the public funding of culture are prohibited in the German constitution. Those activities can only be pursued by the nine states within Germany because they remain wary of the national cultural policies of the Nazis. The interesting thing was that when we talked with business associations and businesspeople and government officials, it quickly became apparent that massive government cultural spending also meant fairly conservative spending, with much of it going to institutions like the Hamburg Opera and the Berlin Philharmonic. This was some years ago, but I doubt if it has changed very much. The interesting, innovative arts funding that was being done there was being done by corporations and small groups.. It's a very interesting twist on where we are in this country. We think of the NEA—or we used to—and state arts agencies as funding more cutting-edge arts activities and being willing to take chances and seek out what is best.

Margot Knight

Reflections on Working with Literature in the West

The title of this talk is in the job description of almost half the people who sit in this audience: "Other Duties as Assigned." My topic is developing audiences in rural areas for literature; it's certainly a critical issue for the West. I will describe some of my personal experiences regarding this topic—Idaho examples. But I hope you will, in your own minds, think of examples where you live or near where you live, be that in upper New York State, rural Virginia, or one of the many rural areas across this country. Much of what I will talk about is true for most of those rural areas.

I was very lucky when I first came to the West—which will be 20 years ago this November. I was pleased to locate here because I had grown up with a very odd culture. I'd grown up in a culture where, at 5:00 p.m., you pulled your car over to the side of the road and put your hand on your heart as they lowered the flag. I grew up in a culture where everyone at home answered the phone, "Colonel Knight's quarters, Margo speaking." I grew up in a military culture, which is, in many ways, very authentic when you're on base, but when you're not on base, you have to anchor to anything or anybody or anyplace.

I was very lucky in that I spent my first year in the West as a professional listener of stories. With a newly minted degree in history, I had longed to teach history or government, but I had made the fatal error of not learning how to coach football and thus was virtually unemployable as a high school history teacher. However, in 1977, I was able to get a job for $600 a month, which was then a living wage. I am a CETA [Comprehensive Employment and Training Act] success story. I became the oral historian for the Whitman County Historical Society, which is located in a small wheat-farming county in Washington State that abuts Idaho.

And I heard stories. That's what I did for a living. I heard stories of mining. I heard stories about logging. I heard stories of midwifery and abortion. I know more about wheat farming than anyone in this room. I learned early on—and this is very important because it speaks to what was said earlier about backbone or armor—I learned very early on not to impose my 1960s, feminist, liberal consciousness upon the storytellers. I listened with equal interest to stories of Ku Klux Klan activity that was aimed at Germans and Catholics in that region of the country to anti-Chinese jingles that were the popular songs of children. I listened, and I asked questions. And because I wasn't from the culture—because I was an outsider and I will always be an outsider to that culture—I asked stupid, dumb, naive questions, and I learned a lot. I learned that national chronology is not local chronology. Armed with my fresh history degree, one of my early questions was, "Tell me about the Depression." And this one woman looked at me, and she said, "Honey, which one?" I learned a lot. There was the 1893 depression, then there was the 1911 depression, then there was the 1921 depression, so I learned a lot.

After my year of listening, I couldn't bear the fact that I was the only recipient who knew all of this, and so I actually wrote my first grant. You all remember this. Think back in your minds—a mini-grant for $1,200, in which I promised to produce 20 five-minute radio shows. I know. I figured that I made 11¢ an hour—but I got a grant. I was so excited. And I created a morning drive-time program in which these stories were shared with people who had lived in the area for a long time as well as newcomers to the community because that area of the country

is very transient, having the University of Idaho and Washington State University within eight miles of one another.

A readers' theater followed and audience development—just as someone else said at lunch—audience development was just not an issue. Places were packed—churches and gyms; people wanted to hear these stories. These were the stories of their friends and neighbors and their parents and their grandparents. The day Mt. St. Helen's blew and ash was falling all around the Oakesdale Baptist Church, not a soul moved because they wanted to hear the end of the readers' theater—they didn't move. Heading home was another issue.

The reason I talk about that experience is that it has formed everything I do as an arts administrator related to providing access to the arts. Listening is the key to all of it, combined with a belief that government and not-for-profit organizations exist to mitigate against the excesses of capitalism. That's why they are there. I think we are starting to lose that. I think that understanding is starting to deteriorate in our country, but that's why we exist and why we do things in a variety of ways. We persuade, as someone said, corporations to understand their roles as corporate citizens—or we pull out the humanism in various corporations—but that's why we exist.

The most important point about how this relates to audience development is that while I sat with them, I wanted to listen, and when I first collected these stories, audiences that came to various public events based on these stories sat and wanted to listen. Audience development, outreach, whatever you want to call it, is getting people's attention and keeping it—getting them to listen. In our case, collectively, our mission is to get that attention focused on the written word.

Now, I think you are very lucky in life when you find soulmates in your personal life, and I think you are extraordinarily fortunate if you find soulmates in your work life. So, when, after a stint away from the West in "evil" Washington, D.C., I moved back to the West to take up my current post, my very first WESTAF meeting provided an opportunity. It was like being in the wheat field. There was an opportunity because there was an interest in literature and a growing attention to the field of literature.

There were a lot writers in the West and a lot of writers who were feeling somehow underserved as a discipline by the government organizations set up to serve them, whether it was their state arts agency or their regional arts organization. And we had an opportunity at WESTAF to think very seriously about what our role was in encouraging literature in the West. Fortunately, we were able to identify a person who I perceived to be a work soulmate in Robert Sheldon. I was on the committee that helped to hire him, so it meant a lot to me that he thought the same way about literature that I thought about public programming, and I thought this was fun. It was at a time when we were able to persuade the WESTAF Board of Trustees to allocate $25,000 in the budget with the understanding that the literature committee could be trusted to decide how best to use the monies to benefit literature in the West. And we went about figuring it out. We built on the very successful Western States Book Awards, which filled so many needs, because WESTAF, years before many of the people in this room were associated with it, listened to the field and saw the needs in small press publishing and assumed the responsibility for providing a mechanism to elevate those presses and to help the writers and small presses in the West. So we were building on the flagship program for literature in the West at that time, the Western States Book Awards, and we added to that a mix of listening to writers, of listening to small presenters, of listening to arts organizations of all different kinds, and of listening to audiences. Many of you in this room were involved in meetings that we held at Sundance and also in Santa Fe where we came up with a grid of strategies

we thought would help artists, arts organizations, and audiences. And that resulted in the program that was mentioned here once today, and again I would be remiss not to mention it, a program called *TumbleWords*, which has enjoyed a great amount of success. The program, very simply put, is writers rolling around the West—a way to get writers into the rural parts of the West. The planning also resulted in a very short-lived, if wonderful, publication called *WestWords*, whose intent was to mix the profit and not-for-profit sectors' audience and producer segments of literature and share information between the two. That program was, unfortunately, the victim of budget cuts. But we tried to be all things to all people in a simple way through those strategies.

That work also resulted in a report about the need to network and the need to develop a regular mechanism—a way of speaking to one another across all these artificial barriers of profit, not-for-profit, etc. That report, which was completed with the support of a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund grant, will be the basis of some continued discussion about what WESTAF can do to support literature in the West. The report puts forth a rather forward-looking model of what needs to happen in the communication area—it talks about literature and about ensuring a flow of quality literature.

So, how does this all relate to Idaho? I want to relate it back to the actual audience business again. In Idaho, we bought questions on the statewide public opinion survey two years ago. We modeled the questions after a national survey that asks if you could go to a certain art form more often—as often as you could—would you attend musicals, operas, theater, etc. And we asked about dance and we asked about opera and we discovered that in every single category, Idahoans were far above the national average in saying they would attend these art forms more frequently if they could—which isn't surprising given how rural the state is.

We asked a question that wasn't asked on the national survey, which is unfortunate because I would have liked to have seen the comparison. We asked the respondents if they would go to more literature readings if they could, and 21.5% said "yes," which, when you consider as a portion of Idaho's 1.2 million residents and drop out the 18% who are younger than 18 years of age, totals around 200,000 people. That's the *ready audience*. I love that term. I can't remember who used it earlier. That's the ready audience that's out there for literature readings. So, the trick is for us to start to reach that ready audience. Now, we also asked them why they didn't attend the readings more often. The number-one reason was no time. This, we know, is an illusion. We actually know that because of the mechanization of various tasks, we have more free time now than people did 50 to 75 years ago. Time is an issue of emphasis. Use of time is spending your time someplace. So we probably can work on having people emphasize their time. Lack of awareness was the second reason literature readings were not attended, and no access—too far away—was the third reason.

I think we are in a position—as public agencies and private, not-for-profit organizations—to do something about all three of those reasons for nonparticipation if we think clearly about how we want to address them. In Idaho, there are 198 towns, and 188 of them have populations of 5,000 or less. One third are more than 50 miles from a library, and I dare say, in some towns, there are more blacksmiths than bookstores. My own local library is only open during the weekday—during school hours. So you know what? I've never been to it. But I pay $50 a year in property taxes to support it. Until the last few months, when the big telephone companies changed their long-distance practices, for two thirds of the population of the state, Internet access was a long-distance charge. So there are serious geographical isolation problems.

The biggest challenge (and consider the structure of your own state here) is that when you've seen one Idaho town, you've seen one Idaho town. So, turnkeys don't work very well because every town has its own mix of elements and unique processes. So, we learned through working with TumbleWords that audience development is incremental. It is a bunch of little spots of beauty, and it is extremely labor intensive. If you commission a cost-benefit analysis and take the salary of the director and divide it by how much money you received in TumbleWords program dollars, you are talking in capitalistic terms of a very high cost, and this often doesn't play very well within the arts community. This program is about capacity building, and it is about building social capital. People come to things because their friends tell them to come. People come to an event because there's going to be dinner there. I mean there are reasons people come that have nothing to do with the program—but they are a ready audience; it's just a matter of enticing them.

So, how do we do this? I was going to tell Kim Stafford that I actually know that woman in northern Idaho, the one who says that contemporary literature doesn't speak to her. Actually, I have a pile of letters from her about a lot of things that don't speak to her. If she would spend more time listening as opposed to speaking to me, she would be better off, but she also once told me, "I don't think people here deserve the arts." There's a statement for you. Actually, she's burned out, and that's part of the "how" of what we do. She has done a great job, but she's tired. It's part of our responsibility to recognize that burnout and to try to do something about it because, as we all know in rural towns—and it's true in urban areas, too—20% of the people do 80% of the work. And in a small town of only 1,000, those 20% of the people get very tired because they do everything.

So, the biggest problem with communication, my brother always tells me, is knowing when it's occurred. The biggest problem with communication is knowing when it has occurred. The folks who are in local communities—in not-for-profit organizations, in service organizations—they need support. And when I say *we*, I am also talking about the public sector. We need professional development and communication networks that work, and we need to acknowledge when things don't work. We also need ideas and, yes, money. We need to understand that infrastructure in rural areas just costs more because there's less access to artistic and financial resources. That's just the way it is.

Sometimes, people in rural areas just need us to get out of their way. And, sometimes, they need hand holding; what we need is the wisdom to know the difference. We are educators and agents all the time, and when we are engaged in any kind of field work, we have to know where we're needed.

The other piece of this equation, of course, is the artists, the writers themselves. I once insulted an artist friend of mine and confirmed every fear he had about bureaucratic hacks like me by asking him what his career plan was. He was deeply insulted—although he subsequently thought about it and asked me to look over his resume.

Even at Idaho's first TumbleWords gathering, there was a murmur of discontent among the writers. Many of them felt like they were part of some kind of meat market because we were actually having them do readings and the sponsors were there. My feeling was that if you are the local curator in a community, you need to know what you are buying because you are being trusted by a bunch of your friends back home to bring home the goods. My response to the writers was, "It's a choice; it's an option. If you think this is part of what you want to do with your writing in a way you want to promote yourself and your work, go for it. If not—don't."

You know, it is a choice to do that kind of work. Artists must decide for themselves whether and

how they want to interact with people interested in their work. Many artists want to be a part of integrating the arts into the daily lives of citizens. Some of them have a very deep social conscience about these things, and they sometimes need some training to realize their goals in that area. For example, when working with at-risk youth, they can chew an artist up and spit them out if the artist doesn't know what they are doing. It doesn't matter how good of a writer you are because fame and all that goes with it just doesn't matter to some of these audiences. The work and your humanity are what matters.

I do think that something interesting happens in readings on which we can capitalize, and you've seen it happen hundreds of times. People go to readings, and they hear writers read and they think, "Well, I like that. I should have written that. I could have written that." So I think we should say, "go for it." And we urge more participation so that the next century can be the century of creativity.

In closing, I want to say that the keys are networking and cohesion in an era of fragmentation. And what I mean by that is when you analyze the Internet, the central element of its success is its decentralization. It is a totally decentralized structure, and people are making money through it by developing directories and other search functions, and it keeps doing this amoeba thing of being decentralized, centralized, decentralized, centralized, etc. We've got to figure how we can centralize elements of literature development in a way that makes sense and can work for people. This will help us get our mission accomplished.

And, again because I love symmetry and I have been in Twisp—and in the hotel in Twisp—I want you to know about a sign in the hotel that reads, "No dogs, except seeing-eye dogs." I thought that was very odd to be written on the inside of a door of a hotel room. And it suggested to me that they not only have a conscious sense of humor but a very unconscious one as well. I thought about another anonymous song that has to do with the West. I will sing it so that we end with a song—as Kim Stafford began with one—which is a song of the West and maybe one we can dedicate to New York publishers:

> Oh, where is the girl who will go out West with me, we'll live in some deserted shack and happy we will be. We'll build a little cabin with the dirt for a floor and a distance for the window and a plank for the door. Will you go out West, will you go out West, oh will you go out West with me? Will you go out West, will you go out West, oh say will you go out West with me?

Thank you.

Discussion

Streitfeld: I would like clarification on the statistic you mentioned regarding the 22% of people polled. Does that mean, if we reverse it, that 78% of the audience polled said that they wouldn't like to attend more literary readings no matter what? So you couldn't force them with a gun? Wasn't this number on the low side?

Knight: It was the lowest of all the arts forms we surveyed, which suggests a challenge in terms of awareness. The question was phased, "If you could go more often, would you?"

Phillips: Regarding the national survey of Americans' participation in the arts, the most frequent answer to the question, "Have you in the last year done x?" is reading a book. Attending a museum is the second highest answer, and opera/musical theatre is the next most frequent response. At one point in the early days of arts grantmaking, the light bulb went off in the foundation people's minds that a symphony doesn't become more efficient at rehearsing a piece no matter how many times it performs it and, therefore, it needs continuous subsidy. One

question I ask myself is, does audience development ever get to be more efficient? I'm sure you learn to do it better, and I know it's labor intensive. In your experience, does it ever get easier?

Knight: Because it is so personality driven, you always want to make sure that your team is pretty deep. Effort is always needed to make certain that it is not just one person who is working in a community so, when he or she is gone, the effort ends. Again, in rural communities, because the same person is commonly on the planning and zoning and the local development boards and also on the school and hospital boards, although the temptation is to use that person, it's better to find several people to help. But this is difficult for exactly that reason. In fact, this multiplicity of board activity in a small community can result in a great deal of cross-training.

Diane Peavey, Literature Coordinator, Idaho Arts Commission: I remember when one woman came up to me and asked what a read ing was. She said that she had always heard about these things, but she didn't know what to take to read. That experience opened my eyes. We often wonder why people are not coming or how do get more of them out. Maybe we need to tell them what it is to begin with.

Jill Bernstein, Literature Coordinator, Arizona Commission on the Arts: When people buy into literature, it as something they go home and do—it changes the dynamic. It becomes something they own. I think that is part of what we need to be looking at as well.

Michael Shay, Literature Coordinator, Wyoming Arts Council: Regarding audience development and technology, we have experimented a little with distance residencies. We are trying to hatch a scheme across the border to do something with distance learning, press, video, things like that, and I think it's particularly suited to the West, obviously, with all those big spaces.

Katz: We haven't discussed the use of computers for writing. There is a lot of literature in this area in community college journals. Computers afford the ability to write collaboratively, to disseminate work to large audiences, to facilitate community-university interaction, and to break down the barriers of buildings that separate places. I think there is a real opportunity to take a look at the effects computers are having on the writing process.

Clark: I want to speak a little bit about Poets & Writers on-line. I don't know how many of you have logged onto our web site. It's one of the major new initiatives that Poets & Writers is sponsoring right now, and most of our active discussion is writer to writer. Those participating include many who are just beginning to write, as well as people who are just graduating from MFA programs and are looking for some sense of community. It has been interesting for us as staff to look at the kinds of dialogue that have been spawned through the on-line system. One of the most active discussions has been between editors of literary magazines and people submitting work to those magazines. We had a very controversial discussion between the poetry editor of the *New England Review* and writers who submitted work. The issue there was rejection slips and how long it took to return work. I found it amazing to see this wealth of response from people who were so angry that they had sent their work to a magazine, and it had taken six months for it to get returned. We thought we would have to moderate these discussions; however, in most cases, we have stepped back. We are fascinated with the kinds of topics that are coming up. We curate a little bit, but I encourage you to check it out—the address is www.pw.org.

Michael Shay: Are you planning any Internet residencies or workshops?

Clark: We have been approached about on-line

funding workshops, to which we are open; however, no one has come up with a concrete proposal yet. It is something we are certainly interested in and are looking into.

Bruce Morrow, Teachers and Writers: We recently received a grant from the NEA to start Write-Net, which will connect literary arts-education people across the country, and we are going to have a space on our web site for people to talk about how to start a program in a school. We will be available to address issues such as if a writer from Idaho needs to know how to talk to the principal or is having a problem with a teacher or how to edit children's anthologies. We also published a book called *The Nearness of You: Students and Teachers Writing Online*, the result of a five-year program in Kentucky. We are also working with Apple Computers to teach computer writing and collaborative writing. We will soon launch a nationwide project bringing the classics online.

Bob Gale, London Productions: In reference to Knight's comments about rural arts development, I want to note that we often think of a dualism existing between the rural and urban areas. In between these areas, however, are the suburban areas, where many people live without much direct access to the arts. I recently relocated from Minnesota, where I was on the board for the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council, which was responsible for distributing state arts money to organizations with budgets under $300,000. We spent a lot of time and effort working on developing audiences in what we called *the donut*—those areas outside the urban core of Minneapolis and St. Paul. We had difficulty finding people there who identified as artists or even people who identified themselves as community activists and organizers.

Knight: We had a situation in Idaho, in a small school district in rural Elk City, where none of the students had passed the state writing assessment one year. The district adopted a fully integrated fine arts and writing curriculum last year. This year, after one year, three-quarters of their eighth graders passed with a 3.0 or above, and the district had the state's only fourth grader who passed with a perfect score. What is interesting about this is that first, it is the Galapagos Island of school districts, which lends itself to research on this very well. The school district is funded by Albertson Foundation to conduct some serious research about these kids and follow them for several years. Second, I could stand in front of the Idaho legislature from now until the year 2010 with New Jersey's SAT statistics related to the arts and not be heard. Once we have local statistics that one can put on a bar chart that has to do with "their kids," you can be heard. We haven't talked about research at all, and it's very important. Even small, discrete pieces of research that can be used to further literature, literature-based activities, literature in literacy programs, and literature in arts education are extremely valuable. This research is valuable because it accumulates, and it can make a difference over time.

Hill: I would like to comment on what Frances Phillips said about the question of audience development and connect it with what Margot Knight said. I work mostly with women volunteers who want to encourage the appreciation of literature in their communities. I call these women the *symphony ladies*. They are the women who live across the state who always bring the symphony in. They are the ones who are the TumbleWords coordinators. After a while, when you call them, the sound of your voice makes them sick, and you know this. For us, in that middle level of organizing the presenters, the job is to teach, build, and weave development of the arts in a community. To do this effectively, it helps to break the tasks down and divide them so that no significant task is carried by one person. We want to build the communities, not just produce events.

Concluding Comments

Bradford: We have had a very productive day. Among the common themes that have been repeated throughout the day are issues of improved communication, the need for a steady flow of supportive data and research, understanding what is unique about the West, the development of electronic systems that support literature, the need to strengthen infrastructure, consideration of a franchise approach to program dissemination, understanding what is localized and what is generalized, replication of successful programs, the gap between high and low culture, ways to increase access, the need to develop opportunities to improve networking, and the need to develop ways to encourage cohesion in an era of decentralization.

We have heard a lot of information. We have touched on many different issues, and I think the task now is to determine how to bring together some of these observations and comments in the development of an inspired—yet realistic—plan.

Hero: We also heard a lot about partnerships and the different kinds of agencies and organizations that can participate—particularly the libraries—but we also have heard about a lot of potential partners. We heard some fairly untraditional things said and, I hope, that the planning group that is meeting tomorrow will acknowledge in their work some of the new connections and emphases we have heard about and especially consider the need to focus on technology. Sometimes, it seems that many of us starting out on the Internet are driving Yugos and maybe are not as well prepared as we should be, but as people concerned with the arts and thinking about technology in territories as vast as the West, I think that the opportunities are enormous, but only if we shape them and not have us shaped by those forces.

Biographical Summaries of Participants

Presenters

Peggy Barber

Peggy Barber is the Associate Executive Director for Communications at the American Library Association (ALA), a new position created in 1996; previously, she had served as an ALA Associate Director from 1984 to 1995. Prior to assuming her current position, Barber was the first Executive Director of ALA's foundation, The Fund for America's Libraries, which was launched in 1995.

Under Barber's direction, the ALA's Public Programs Office promotes and supports all types of libraries in their role as cultural centers—the "universities of the people"—by providing programming models and materials, financial and other resources, training and technical assistance, and networking. Public Programs' current projects include traveling exhibitions, literary programming featuring writer appearances, and a thematic book-discussion series.

A frequent contributor to library literature, Barber has led national workshops and taught graduate courses on library public relations and marketing. She chaired the National Coalition for Literacy.

A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of California—Riverside, she holds an M.L.S. degree from Rutgers University and is a member of Beta Phi Mu, the national library science honor fraternity.

Lee Ellen Briccetti

Lee Ellen Briccetti currently serves as the Executive Director of Poets House, a 35,000-volume poetry library and literary center in New York City, a position she has held since 1989. Under her leadership, Poets House established the Poetry Publication Showcase, an annual exhibition of all the year's new poetry books, which has helped Poets House build one of the most inclusive poetry archives in the nation. Poets House's latest collaboration with the New York Public Library, Poetry in the Branches, a three-year effort funded by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, has become a national model for encouraging poetry-collection development and programming in local libraries.

Briccetti is also a poet who has published widely in literary journals such as *The Seneca Review*, *River Styx*, *The American Voice,* and *Hanging Loose*. She has been the recipient of a poetry fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts and holds an M.F.A. degree from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. She recently was awarded a fellowship from the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center.

Prior to her tenure at Poets House, Briccetti was a program coordinator at the Bureau of Neighborhood Preservation at the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, where she raised private-sector dollars to develop creative low-income housing options.

Margot Knight

Margot Knight has served as the Executive Director of the Idaho Commission on the Arts since 1990. Prior to her appointment, Knight served as the Assistant Director of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies in Washington, D.C. She has also worked as an oral historian for the Washington Historical Society, served as Director of the Oral History Office at Washington State University, was regional coordinator of the Washington Women's Heritage Project, and served as Program Associate and then Interim Director of the Washington Commission for the Humanities.

Knight serves on the Board of Trustees of the Western States Arts Federation and the Board of Directors of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies; she is the immediate past Chair of the Idaho Rural Development Council.

Pennie Ojeda

Pennie Ojeda was recently named Acting Director of the National Endowment for the Arts' International Partnerships Program, which supports international leadership initiatives in the arts in cooperation with other government agencies and private foundations. Ojeda began her career at the NEA as an Arts Specialist in the Expansion Arts Program, where she coordinated the Program's research activities related to arts organizations rooted in culturally diverse communities. She managed the CityArts Category in its pilot stage and helped develop the Community Foundation Initiative.

Prior to her tenure at the NEA, Ojeda was a Planning Specialist for the Africa Region of the Peace Corps. She served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Brazil after receiving a B.A. in Spanish literature from Chatham College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Rick Simonson

Rick Simonson is the senior buyer and reading series organizer at the Elliott Bay Book Company in Seattle. Simonson started the reading series there in 1984, and today, the series features more than 500 readings per year by regional, national, and international authors.

Simonson has been awarded the Nancy Blankenship Award, the Governor's Writers Award, and a citation from the Black Journalists Association of Seattle.

As an original founding board member and current president of Copper Canyon Press, Simonson serves on the advisory board of the Seattle Arts and Lectures and the Seattle Review. He has served on numerous panels and committees, including those for the American Booksellers Association, the Western States Arts Federation, the King County Arts Commission, the Western Museum Conference, the Northwest Bookfest, and the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association.

Kim Stafford

Kim Stafford is a poet, essayist, and educator. He currently serves as Director of the Northwest Writing Institute at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, a position he has held since 1979. An accomplished writer, oral historian, letterpress printer, editor, and photographer, Stafford recently presented the keynote address at the Library of Congress Literature program. Stafford is the son of William Stafford, former Oregon Poet Laureate.

Stafford's publications include *Everything Right: Essays of Place*, Sasquatch, 1996, Viking Penguin, 1987; *Apple Bough Soliloquy*, Lone Goose Press, 1995; *We Got Here Together*, Harcourt Brace, 1994; *Wind on the Waves*, Graphic Arts, 1992; *Places & Stories*, Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1987; and *Rendezvous: Stories, Songs & Opinions of the Idaho Country*, Idaho State University Press, 1982. In addition to these works, his writings have been published in numerous literary journals.

Stafford has received two creative writing fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Writer in Residence Award from the Jerome Foundation. His book, *Having Everything Right,* won a Western States Arts Federation Book Award in 1986. He holds a Ph.D. in medieval literature from the University of Oregon.

David Streitfeld

Washington Post reporter David Streitfeld is one of the few journalists in the country who writes solely about the literature field. In recognition of the quality and creativity of his work, *The Washington Post* nominated him for a 1997 Pulitzer Prize. Streitfeld was awarded a 1995-96 Pew Fellowship in arts journalism and recently completed a research project on how the Internet and web sites are affecting book publishing. In addition to his work for the *Post*, he has written for such magazines as *New York, Entertainment Weekly, Details*, and *Vogue*.

Streitfeld received his undergraduate degree from George Washington University and completed additional studies at the Sorbonne and Oxford University.

Paul Yamazaki

Paul Yamazaki is presently the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Council of Literary Magazines & Presses. Since 1983, he has been a buyer for City Lights Books in San Francisco. Yamazaki currently serves on the Board of Directors of Small Press Distribution and has served as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

In addition to his 25 years of experience as a bookseller, Yamazaki is a founding member of the Asian American Jazz Festival. He is currently a member of the advisory boards of the Asian American Jazz Festival and the San Fran-

cisco Jazz Festival.

RESPONDENTS

W. Paul Coates

W. Paul Coates is the founder of BCP Digital Printing and Black Classic Press, which specializes in republishing obscure and significant works by and about people of African descent. A leader in the field of small publishing companies that have carved out a unique production niche in the market, Coates recently founded BCP Digital Printing to produce books and documents using a digital printing technology.

Prior to assuming his current position, Coates was an African-American Studies reference and acquisition librarian at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. A former member and Maryland state coordinator of the Black Panther Party, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Black Panther Party Archives at Howard University.

Coates currently serves as Chair and was a founding member of the National Association of Black Book Publishers. He also serves as an adjunct instructor of African-American Studies at Sojourner-Douglass College in Baltimore. Coates is the co-editor of *Black Bibliophiles and Collectors: Preservers of Black History*, Howard University Press, 1990. He is a graduate of the School of Library and Information at Atlanta University and Antioch University.

Mary Griggs

Mary Griggs is the general manager of Borders Books and Music in Emeryville, California. Since joining Borders in 1990, she has worked as a bookseller, assistant manager, and general manager at four locations in Maryland and California. Prior to assuming her current position, Griggs was appointed by Washington D.C. mayors Sharon Pratt Dixon and Marion Berry to serve two three-year terms on the D.C. Commission for Women. Griggs was responsible for directing the executive branch of the Commission and influencing municipal government policies that affected women and their families in the District of Columbia.

Jonathan Katz

Jonathan Katz is the chief executive officer of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), the collective voice and professional association of U.S. state and jurisdictional arts agencies. In this position, Katz is at the fore front nationally of cultural policy trends and coalition building on behalf of the arts and culture. Recently, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, he helped raise over one-million dollars from foundations and corporations for the Goals 2000 Arts Education Leadership Fund. This money was regranted to states to integrate the arts in their education-improvement agendas.

Prior to assuming his current position, Katz was a professor of public policy and administration at the University of Illinois at Springfield, where he directed the master's degree program in arts administration and the Sangamon Institute in Arts Administration. He also served as the executive director of the Kansas Arts Commission and has taught literature and communication at universities in Indiana, Ohio, and Kansas. His recently completed doctoral dissertation proposes a national agenda for literary activities in the United States based on an analysis of factors affecting literary participation.

Frances Phillips

Frances Phillips is a program officer at the

Walter and Elise Haas Fund and director of the Creative Work Fund. Prior to assuming her current position, she was the Executive Director of Intersection for the Arts and Director of The Poetry Center and the American Poetry Archives at San Francisco State University.

Phillips is the author of three books of poetry: *Up at Two*, 1991; *For A Living*, 1981; and *The Celebrated Running Horse Messenger*, 1979. Her poems and short prose pieces have appeared in a number of publications, including *ZYZZYVA; Volt*; *The New York Quarterly; Feminist Studies*; and the anthology, *The Poetry of Work*. From 1991 to 1994, Phillips served as the poetry-review editor of *The Hungry Mind Review*, St. Paul. She has interviewed a number of writers for the City Arts & Lectures series at the Herbst Theatre in San Francisco, including Nadine Gordimer, Duane Michaels, Susan Sontag, Joseph Brodsky, Louise Erdich, and Gretel Ehrlich.

CO-FACILITATORS

Gigi Bradford

Gigi Bradford is currently Executive Director of the Center for Arts and Culture in Washington, D.C. The Center works to expand the national conversation about arts and democracy, to inform and shape a cultural policy community, and to link practical programming to research on arts and culture. Prior to assuming her present position, Bradford was the Literature Director, Heritage and Preservation Coordinator, and Millennium Projects Director at the National Endowment for the Arts. She managed all grants to literary organizations and individual writers, including the only granting program for individuals open to direct application after the 1995 Congressional cutbacks.

Prior to her tenure at the NEA, she served as poetry coordinator at the Folger Shakespeare Library, where she created the first Poetry Board of the Library. She has also served as Executive Director of the Poetry Committee of the Greater Washington, D.C. area. Bradford is a former Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets, where she administered a comprehensive national program that provided support for literary publishing and awards for American writers. She received an M.F.A. degree in Poetry from the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop.

Peter Hero

Peter Hero is currently the Director of the Community Foundation of Santa Clara County, a position he has held since 1988. The Foundation has total assets of nearly $100 million and annually distributes grants of over $9 million.

Most recently, under his leadership, the Foundation initiated the Silicon Valley Arts Fund, an unprecedented collaboration among 11 major cultural institutions that has raised $12 million in shared endowment and working-cash reserves.

Prior to assuming his present position, Hero was President of the Maine College of Art, a four-year college of art and design, and Executive Director of the Oregon Arts Commission. He holds an M.B.A. from Stanford University's Graduate Business School, an M.A. degree in art history from Williams College, and an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the Maine College of Art.

Hero is currently the Chair of the National Committee on Community Foundations and serves on the Board of Directors of the Council on Foundations, Stanford University's Haas Center for Public Service, and the Mercury House Press in San Francisco.

Symposium Attendees

Dodie Bellamy, Small Press Traffic

Jill Bernstein, Presenting/Touring/Literature Director, Arizona Commission on the Arts

Linda Bowers, Director, Hedgebrook

Karen Clark, Executive Director, Poets & Writers

Michele Dewilliam, Co-Director, Richard Hugo House

Bob Gale, Marketing Director, Management Center

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