

White Paper - 9/30/2020

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Project Title: *Resurfacing At-Risk Works of the Feminist Small Press*

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Project Activities & Accomplishments

Resurfacing At-Risk Works of the Feminist Small Press

This white paper discusses a collaboration between Calyx Press, Inc. and Oregon State University Libraries to digitize and make available as open-access ebooks up to twenty-six Calyx titles. The project was made possible through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, under the Humanities Open Books program.

Independent, feminist publishing saw a renaissance from the 1970s through the 1990s when numerous small presses arose out of the women's movements in response to the persistent, long-standing under-representation of published works by women authors. Self-funded and incorporated as non-profits, most relied on volunteer labor to grow their title lists. The rise of corporate publishing and chain bookstores, partially supported the goals and success of the feminist press by making dominant voices of the feminist press more readily available though left other voices behind. Over the years, many feminist publishers either closed their doors or became an imprint of a larger publisher. Fast forward to the early twenty-first-century and we see that the presses that survived, such as Calyx Press, Inc., are undergoing a transformation to attract a new generation of readers and writers as they build their capacity to publish content in both print and electronic formats. This project is one example of Calyx's transformation. The partnership and project are designed to buttress Calyx as it strengthens its place in the contemporary landscape of feminist publishing.

The timeline for project goals covering June 2016-June 2017, as stated in the grant proposal narrative, are:

- January - April 2016: Notify authors of at least nine titles that their books have been selected as participating titles in the Humanities Open Book grant project and begin discussions around Creative Commons licensing of content with authors. Discuss the addition of new prefatory material and potential scholars/authors.
- May - June 2016: Finalize author negotiations and contract language. Ship title content to BiblioVault. Web design for title display on each website (CALYX, OSU Press, OSU Digital Publishing Initiatives). Craft and distribute promotional materials: press release, social media, and brochures for conferences.
- July - September 2016: Digitization process underway at BiblioVault.
- October - December 2016: Conversion completed. Begin distribution through BiblioVault to major outlets. Participate through programming and presentation(s) in the National Women's Studies Association annual conference to promote the ebooks and the project.

- October - December 2016: Conversion completed. Begin distribution through BiblioVault to major outlets. Participate through programming and presentation(s) in the National Women's Studies Association annual conference to promote the ebooks and the project.
- January - April 2017: Notify another set of authors of at least 9 titles that their books have been selected and begin discussions around Creative Commons licensing of content with authors. Participate through presentation in the Modern Language Association annual conference to promote the ebooks and the project.
- May - June 2017: Participate through presentation in the American Library Association and the Association of Writers and Writing Programs annual conferences to promote the ebooks and the project.

In accordance with the timeline, the project team accomplished the following:

- We contacted 8 authors concerning contract renegotiation. Of these, 4 contracts have been reframed to allow for open access electronic publication.
- Four titles were shipped to BiblioVault. They were scanned and are stored with BiblioVault's Chicago Distribution Center. OSU Libraries & Press offered to cover the ongoing storage fee. Since then, we have been able to distribute four titles through Rakuten/Kobo and are progressing on making the titles available through other vendors. Titles include:

Ginseng and Other Tales from Manila by Marianne Villanueva

<https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/ginseng-and-other-tales-from-manila>

Raising the Tents by Francis Payne Adler

<https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/raising-the-tents>

Humming the Blues by Cass Dalglish

<https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/humming-the-blues>

Storytelling in Cambodia by Willa Schneberg

<https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/storytelling-in-cambodia>

- Project directors identified the next set of authors to contact for contract renegotiation.
- We set out to digitize 26 titles and missed this mark for a few reasons. The primary reason was our approach to contacting authors slowed our progress significantly. We took a scaffolded approach to contacting authors as a way to distribute the work over time. In hindsight, we feel contacting as many authors as possible at the beginning would have resulted in more works being digitized at an earlier stage. Authors were surprisingly hard to reach, though those whom we did connect with were intrigued, supportive, and willing to participate. While Calyx Press, Inc. owns copyright to the works

identified for digitization and can proceed, it behooves the Press to discuss the project with authors to secure their buy-in while maintaining the Press' longstanding cooperative approach to publishing.

- Project directors realized that hiring a project manager would likely have been a more productive and successful approach for handling day to day work activities. Relying on already busy personnel has slowed progress.
- Going forward, we are able to change the approaches to our work by contacting as many authors as possible and by stating that unless we hear from them by a given date we will proceed.

Audiences and Evaluation

- Digitization of feminist publications like this has the potential to attract new and returning generations of readers and scholars interested in the emergent forms of twentieth and twenty-first century feminist art and writing. Looking to the future, we are hopeful that the collection will take its place alongside similar efforts to aggregate and disseminate at-risk work of feminist authors and scholars. Specific audiences for the project are Women and Gender Studies faculty, students, librarians and researchers. The general reader interested in literature published by the feminist press is another audience. When we are further along we anticipate advertising the collection to these communities.
- There was no formal evaluation of the project, just the reflections as noted above. We have not yet reached the promotion stage but we have received positive feedback from audiences such as the National Women's Studies Association and the Women and Gender Studies Section. The other audiences, such as digital humanists, though encouraging in their feedback, appeared to not be as enamored with the project.

Award Products

Project directors have presented multiple times and authored a book chapter about the project.

- The short-talk, "Giving New Life to Old Books: The NEH/Mellon Humanities Open Book Program: Resurfacing At-Risk Works of the Feminist Small Press," was presented at the 2016 American Association of University Presses Annual Meeting. June 17, 2016 Philadelphia, PA.
- The short talk, "Partnering for Digital Publishing: Resurfacing At-Risk Works of the Small, Independent, Feminist Press," was presented at the Global Digital Humanities Symposium at Michigan State University (March 22-23, 2018, East Lansing, MI) <https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/defaults/f4752n41n>.
- The poster, "Partnering to Resurface At-Risk Works of the Small, Independent, Feminist Press," was presented at the American Libraries Association Women Gender and

Sexuality Studies Section Poster Session (June 2018, New Orleans, LA)

<https://ir.library.oregonstate.edu/concern/defaults/mp48sk36c>.

- A short talk, “Partnering for Digital Publishing: Resurfacing At-risk Works of the Small, Independent, Feminist Press,” was presented at the Seventeenth International Conference on Books, Publishing & Libraries, July 5, 2019.
- A chapter, “Resurfacing At-Risk Works of the Feminist Small Press.” In *Libraries and Nonprofits: Collaboration for the Public Good*, edited by Bryant, Tatiana and Jonathan O. Cain. Sacramento, CA: Library Juice Press, was expected to be published in Spring 2020. When asked about the anticipated publication date the Press indicated Fall 2020.
- The partnership motivated OSU Libraries to accept a similar collaboration with another community organization. We worked with the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education (OJMCHE) to create a digital companion to two monographs published with OSU Press, *Embracing a Western Identity Jewish Oregonians, 1849–1950* and *The Jewish Oregon Story 1950-2010*. The companion highlights photos selected from the OJMCHE collection and is hosted on Scalar, an open-source platform supporting born-digital, media-rich publishing developed by the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture. Our hope was to increase the visibility of the books and their carefully chosen photos. An exploratory project, we understand that the site may be ephemeral; what holds is the knowledge gained on both sides during the site’s creation which each organization carries this forward into future projects.

Project Continuation & Long Term Impact

We remain committed to progressing on this project. While we see numerous opportunities for outgrowth, reaching the goal of making and promoting a meaningful collection of works is our primary focus. At that point, we will consider other outputs. Next steps are the continued outreach to authors, conversion of texts, and promotional activities such as creating landing pages on relevant websites.

The long-term impact of this project is the availability of these works to the public at large and the audiences identified earlier. Beyond preserving literature from the independent, feminist press, we are hopeful that our efforts to make this at-risk feminist literature more visible and will spur new research into these primary sources to better understand how they contributed to feminist activism of the twentieth century and their continued impact on feminism today. Title selections were made for their literary value, their value to scholarship, and their value to the classroom. Selected titles form a literary navigation of identity politics and feminist critiques of race, ethnicity, class, colonialism, and sexuality politics in the U.S. and globally in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As a whole, the titles are positioned to expand generational understandings of feminist critiques.