Alternative publishing

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Alternative publishing

by

Rebecca Sue Bell

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
1979
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Alternative publishing (publishing done by individuals who do not get published by commercial houses or resort to publication by vanity presses) is a rapidly growing phenomenon in the United States. A diverse and exciting body of literature is being produced by small presses. The purpose of this thesis is first to explain commercial and vanity presses and then to explore alternative publishing in both historical and present-day contexts. Next, I will distinguish between four sub-categories of alternative publishing—little magazines, independent presses, small presses, and co-operative presses. Each category will be defined and then supported with at least one example from a questionnaire and telephone survey I conducted during the winter of 1978-79.

For the survey, I developed a questionnaire (see Appendix A) which was sent out to more than sixty small press editors in the six-state area of Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. I later telephoned many editors and recorded personal responses; some editors I did not reach by phone sent back completed questionnaires. The survey was by no means exhaustive, but did include a representative cross section of various forms of alternative publishing enterprises.
The last chapter will deal with my own experiences with CSS Publications, my own small press. CSS Publications, formed in 1977, has published one anthology of poetry by Iowa and other midwestern writers, and has another poetry project underway. My interest in alternative publishing began when I started work as editor and co-publisher of CSS Publications.
CHAPTER II. TYPES OF PUBLISHING

The explosion of small press publishing which began in the last decade continues unabated in the 1970s. According to Len Fulton, "the godfather and mother hen to the littles," the small press movement in its present form started during 1963-64 "between the cold stagnation of the Fifties and the heated Sixties, which that very movement helped to heat up. It seems to me we considered it a last desperate assertion of the individual against the giant machine—social, military, academic, cultural, spiritual. The word was do-it-yourself. . . ." The proliferation of small presses and the quality of work coming from the do-it-yourselfers has prompted Michael Scott Cain to remark, "This nation is rapidly moving towards two separate publishing situations: mass market and alternative."

Commercial and Vanity Publishing

Mass market, in this case, refers to the commercial publishing houses. "Large-scale commercial publishing," notes Roberta Kalechofsky, "by an inevitable process in its nature, tends to become like any other business: the shoe industry, the movie industry, the automobile industry, the oil industry, the housing industry. Its problems are the problems of all industry: how to deal with the vicissitudes of inflation, recession, union fracas, supply and demand, advertising, packaging and marketing. Its problems are not literary, but economic." As Bill Henderson observes,
"Commercial houses seldom take a chance on a book unless it promises to show a profit. Commercial houses are followers: they go where they think the public is, or will be. Quality is important, but profits more so."5

With the main objective being primarily economic, an unknown author's chance of being published by a major commercial publishing house is at best very slim. Commercial houses are going with authors who have good track records or with books that have blockbuster sales potential. They print what Raymond Federman has dubbed "dead books": books which come out, make a lot of noise, usually bring in a lot of money, and then disappear within a year or so. Examples of dead books are Jonathan Livingston Seagull, any title by Jacqueline Susann or Harold Robbins, and most of those on the best seller list.6

New journalism, particularly if it involves some investigative reporting, is what is currently selling well in magazines and books. The salability of poetry and fiction is so minute that many editors in the major publishing houses don't even bother with nonfiction anymore. As Mary Anne Guitar points out:

A good number of publishers have given up reading manuscripts which, as the saying goes, have come in over the transom. (Doubleday used to handle 10,000 a year.) These unsolicited works would end up in what is called "the slush pile" and junior editors were given the thankless job of pawing over the slush in search of a gem worth publishing. (Out of that 10,000 Doubleday found only four a year.) Not only does it cost money to process slush but the production costs of bringing out any book these days have risen so astronomically that publishers are taking
few chances on the book which might sell, at the most, 5,000 copies.

If the figures for Doubleday are discouraging, Charles L. Larson has even more dismal news. "Esquire receives each year roughly 12,000 unsolicited stories (that is, those not submitted by agents)," he says, "and usually publishes two of them. The Antioch Review is said to publish one story for every 2,000 it receives."8

With the odds against publishing by a major commercial house so insufferably high, it is no wonder that new writers—particularly young writers of fiction and poetry—are turning to alternative publishing outlets.

Although vanity (subsidy) publishing technically falls into the "alternative" classification, I do not choose to include it in this category. "Self-publishing," Henderson points out, "should not be confused with vanity press publication. The vanity press is deservedly held in disrepute by both commercial and independent presses, for it publishes anything for which an author will pay, and usually at a loss to the author."9 Vanity publishing is quite like commercial publishing in the sense that the motive is the same for both: profit. If the maxim for commercial houses is, "we'll print anything that will make us money," the maxim for vanity publishing is, "we'll print virtually anything as long as the author pays for it." The vanity publisher does not care if the book he prints sells or not because he has already received his money from the author.
In addition, the vanity publisher cares very little about the content of the books and does little—if any—editing on the manuscripts. As a result, many slipshod manuscripts that would rightfully be rejected by major publishing companies are printed. The quality of the manuscripts is consistently so poor that when reviewers do get copies of the finished books they do not bother to read them. Cain, who once worked for an international wire service which received virtually all newly published books, says "that everything that came from a vanity press was automatically thrown away unopened. Not because we assumed they were bad books but because experience had taught us they were."^10

With vanity publishing being excessively costly for a less than satisfactory product and major houses a virtual closed shop, young writers are turning to other publishing alternatives. More and more, the word is becoming do-it-yourself. Unlike commercial or vanity publishing houses, financial considerations rarely come first to the minds of alternative publishers. "The tragedy of the small press, the self-publisher and the little magazine," notes Henderson, "is that they take the risks while commercial publishers keep the profits."^11 Because quality and experimentation have top priority over profit-making, the existence of the small press, the self-publisher, and the little magazine is at best precarious.
Before discussing types of alternative publishing, it will be helpful to first examine the subject in terms of its literary history and then as it exists on the contemporary literary scene.

Alternative publishing as a literary tradition

"Do-it-yourself" publishing is nothing new. The literary tradition in the United States goes back as far as the eighteenth century. A notable example is Thomas Paine's self-published Common Sense, a pamphlet that helped stir colonial Americans into declaring independence from England. One thousand copies of the pamphlet came off the press on January 10, 1776, and sold out in two weeks. Subsequent editions were published, and more than 500,000 copies were sold. Even though Common Sense was a commercial success, Paine never earned any money for it. Instead," notes Henderson, "the printers--the eighteenth century equivalent of the publisher--made the money."

Perhaps the most well-known American self-publisher of the nineteenth century is Walt Whitman, a poet who also printed, promoted, and distributed his own work. The best reviews of his books were the ones he wrote himself and submitted to newspapers and journals. When Ralph Waldo Emerson praised Whitman's first self-published edition of Leaves of Grass in a letter, Whitman--without permission--splashed a quote from the letter on the back of his next edition, which also included in an appendix the full
text of Emerson's letter and reviews of the first edition.

Whitman never did fare well financially on any editions of Leaves of Grass, including the two published by commercial publishing firms. Thayer and Eldridge of Boston published an edition in 1860. Four thousand copies of the book were sold at $1.25 each, but then the firm went bankrupt. Years later, another commercial firm, James R. Osgood, put out an edition of Leaves of Grass. Sixteen hundred copies were sold before the Boston Society for Suppression of Vice threatened Osgood with court action. Osgood stopped printing the book when Whitman refused to change any words in his poems; the publisher sent the plates to Whitman but paid the poet no royalty on the books sold.

Despite all obstacles, including a stroke in 1873 which left him partially paralyzed, Whitman continued to self-publish his poems until his death in 1892. He was frequently in debt, but as Henderson observes, "because of his promotional craft and determination, his books sold well throughout the world."^13

Henry David Thoreau and Edgar Allan Poe also were self-publishers at some time during their careers. Thoreau published two books during his lifetime, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers and Walden. The first book was published in an edition of one thousand copies in 1849. Four years later, the printer shipped the remaining 706 copies of the book back to Thoreau who stored them in an attic. A journal entry he wrote at this time said,
"I now have a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself."  

In 1827 when Poe had not yet turned twenty, he had a Boston printer produce forty copies of *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Priced at twelve and a half cents, the slim volume of 406 lines of poetry by "A Bostonian" received no reviews and was mentioned only by title by two magazines listing names of recently published books. However, when *Tamerlane* was offered in a New York auction one hundred years later, a copy was sold for more than $11,000.

Mark Twain was a self-publisher, too. His name was a household word in 1885 and he expected to make a profit when he published *Huckleberry Finn* with his nephew Charles L. Webster. He sold 40,000 copies of the book by subscription in advance of publication. After the book came out, the Concord, Massachusetts, public library banned the book. Twain, delighted by the unexpected publicity break, exclaimed, "That will sell 25,000 copies of the book for sure!" In all, more than 500,000 copies were sold.

A highly successful nineteenth century self-publisher was John Bartlett, the owner of the University Book Store at Cambridge, Massachusetts. Bartlett was admired for his knowledge of quotes, authors, and sources, and his store became the meeting place for Harvard University professors and students. Eventually he produced a commonplace book of quotations which he published as *Familiar Quotations* on a regular basis until his death in 1905.
As Henderson points out, "Bartlett was able to self-publish successfully because he had a ready-made audience in the Cambridge intellectual community. They were familiar with and ready to use his product even before he produced it. The social network maintained by the intellectual community was probably all that was needed in the way of advertisement. He was able to distribute his work through his own store."16

In the twentieth century, Upton Sinclair turned to self-publishing when commercial houses—which published his early hack work—refused to publish his first serious novel, *Springtime and Harvest*. His later book, *The Jungle*, was rejected because it contained too much "blood and guts."

With the help of Jack London, who called on the socialist movement in New York to support the novel, Sinclair decided to self-publish *The Jungle*. By running a pre-publication subscription for the book at $1.20 per copy, he raised $4,000—an amount more than the total earnings of five years' labor as a writer prior to this time. Sinclair subsequently self-published other of his novels, including one about Henry Ford entitled *The Flivver King*.

Other American writers turned to self-publishing in order to get their works in print. In Walt Whitman-like fashion, Carl Sandburg self-published his poems by setting the type, rolling the presses, hand-pulling the galley proofs, and binding the books.
In another case, William Strunk, Jr., a "grammatical drill sergeant," self-published his *Elements of Style* and then used it as a text in his Cornell English classes. An updated version of the book, containing comments and additions by one of Strunk's pupils, E. B. White, and republished by Macmillan, is a classic English textbook. More recent examples of self-publishers will be included in another section.

Self-publishing has a long history in the United States which goes all the way back to colonial days and yet thrives on the contemporary literary scene. As Henderson concludes,

> Publishing-it-yourself is in the individualistic tradition of the American dream. Although some writers may claim that the tradition is dead, that it is impossible to gain attention in competition with today's giant commercial publishers, they are wrong. . . . Publishing has been and remains one of our most democratic institutions.

Current trends in alternative publishing

In the past, writers self-published in order to get their works in print and, they hoped, to gain the attention of commercial publishing houses. Now a different trend appears to be developing. Many writers, especially new young ones, are seeking out alternative publishing means rather than going the commercial route; a few are even leaving commercial publishing houses to devote time and energy to alternative publishing groups. This process started in
the 1960s when the whole nature of publishing began to change. Book publishing firms such as Random House and Simon and Shuster "were swallowed by the likes of Gulf Oil and RCA," a practice in conglomeration that continues to occur. David Armstrong comments, "The results have been well documented. Less serious fiction and poetry are being published, smaller cash advances (if any) are being tendered to young writers, and enormous literary power is being vested in ever-fewer corporate cost-efficiency experts." Commercial houses are operating under an atmosphere of immediate, quick gain and simply will not invest in new writers.

Alternative publishing is growing in order to publish the quality and experimental literary work that profit-minded commercial houses will no longer print. As Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie observe in the prefatory note to The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History; Essays, Memoirs, Photo-Documents, An Annotated Bibliography, the massive 754-page edition of the Fall 1978 TriQuarterly magazine:

It is commonplace now to say that commercial magazines and publishers no longer offer the full range of literary services that they once did, and that as a result the little magazines offer newer writers--as well as the more difficult or "literary" authors--their only publishing opportunity. Little magazines generally put experiment before ease, and art before comment. They can afford to do so because they can barely "afford" to do anything; in other words, as a rule they do not, and cannot, expect to make money. Consequently, the ways in which they appeal to their readers
13

need not be coercive, stylistically uniform, or categorically topical, as the ways of commercial presses must be.21

Another change manifesting in the past decade is the shift in focus of the study being done on American literary publishing. In the past, the history, significance, and influence of the little magazine has been the center of attention while the study of the role of the small literary press has been largely neglected. Hence, says Tom Montag, poet, writer, and editor active on the small press scene:

...the detailed factual information and the analysis needed for an understanding of the broader literary processes of which small presses are a part have not been gathered and made. The relationship between the small literary press and literature is only beginning to be examined. When factual material about literary publishing in America since 1950 is finally collected and analyzed, the significance of the small press might well prove greater than the current neglect by students of literary publishing would indicate.22

This change, as Henderson observes, "has spawned important associations, directories, and distributors."23

The two most significant associations in the world of alternative publishing are the Committee of Small Magazines/Press Editors and Publishers (COSMEP), "a must organization for the
small-press publisher," and the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (CCLM), "a tax-exempt, publicly supported organization devoted to the survival and growth of noncommercial literary publishing in America" whose main program is to award grants to noncommercial literary magazines. Both organizations function to help insure the survival of little magazines and small presses.

According to an article in The Publish-It-Yourself Handbook, "CCLM was founded in 1967 by a group of writers and editors who recognized that literature had been largely neglected by American philanthropy and that literary magazines, the natural habitat of young writers and often the only forum open to them, were seriously threatened by the current economic climate." CCLM is the first organization to make an attempt at giving financial support through grants to noncommercial magazines. Besides grants designed to alleviate economic pressures, CCLM also helps magazines "by making grants for special issues, grants to enable a magazine to pay its contributors, if only nominally, and grants for experiments in graphics and printing." Other services provided by the Coordinating Council are the sponsorship of special projects and seminannual regional meetings of the literary-magazine editors and writers. Panel discussions at the conferences provide practical information about areas of publishing concern such as low-cost magazine production, printing costs and opportunities, and problems of publishing experimental
writing. CCLM periodically publishes a newsletter and a Catalog of Literary Magazines, which provides information concerning the type of material published by member magazines, the frequency of publication, and details about the size, circulation, and price of each magazine.

COSMEP began in 1968 as a conference of small magazine/press editors and publishers held in Berkeley on the University of California campus. Small-press publishers met to discuss their common problems—a practice that continues annually. Out of the first conference grew the Committee of Small Magazine/Press Editors and Publishers, an organization dedicated to "getting useful information to members, and in representing the small press in general." Another important task of COSMEP is helping to get small-press publications better known to librarians and the general public. This is accomplished in part by the COSMEP Newsletter, which provides a forum for the discussion of topics of common interest to small press editors and publishers, and the Catalogue of Small Press Publications, an informational guide for libraries and bookstores.

COSMEP is open to any small press, little magazine, or newspaper with a limited circulation; however, the majority of members are literary presses or periodicals. By 1969, COSMEP had 150 members which grew to include 450 members by the end of 1972. The membership rate fluctuates yearly, but the considerable
increase in members indicates a trend in the significant growth of alternative publishing during the past ten years. As is noted in *The Publish-It-Yourself Handbook*:

At last count, there were about a thousand literary, noncommercial magazines in this country, many here to stay, some mushrooming for just a few issues. They are all very different, ranging widely in tone, aims, contents, look. Taken together, they are a symbolic institution in the sense that they represent the seriousness, the openness, the adventurousness, the tentativeness, the precariousness behind all art. Much of the best of American writing has come up through these literary magazines, which reflect the diversity of American life as no other medium could. It is by now almost a cliche about our culture that these magazines, because they are open to new talent and keep the audience for it going, sustain the continuity of literary and intellectual work in this country, in both its traditional and dissenting forms.

To record the growth and incessant change in the world of alternative publishing, a number of directories and publications have come into existence. The most important ones in the small press/little magazine scene center around Len Fulton, as noted above, a man described by Henderson as being "the godfather and mother hen of the littles." The founder and first chairperson of COSMELP, Fulton has also served on the Literature Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts and on the Grants Committee of

Publishing was, at first, a part-time adventure for Fulton. He started Dust magazine in 1963. "In a way," Fulton explains, "Dust was a mini-cosm of the small magazines of its day. We published a little of everything and remained true to our founding goal of openness." Fulton exchanged copies of Dust with other little magazine/small press editors and eventually "began to be fascinated by the fact that with each one also came a story, the human drama not unlike the one behind the founding and publishing of Dust itself." He continues, "The more I knew about it, the more taken I became with what was obviously a larger movement somehow related to ours by its literary and publishing spirit."  

From this interest, Fulton's main concern became the plotting of the "drama" of the alternative publishing scene. To gather knowledge, he set out to find out about the people behind little magazines--who were publishing what and where. In 1965 he brought out the first edition of The Directory of Little Magazines (the
rest of the title, Small Presses and Underground Newspapers, was added for another edition), and continues to do so on an annual basis.

Since Fulton felt that the Directory "gave only standing room each year" to small presses, in late 1966 he started the monthly periodical, The Small Press Review. Since then, Fulton says, "SPR has published hundreds of reviews, and dozens of essays, features, and reports, all calculated to track the energies of the small-press world internationally."

A monthly column in The Small Press Review called "New Listings" gives details on new presses and magazines that have not been mentioned in the latest edition of the international Directory. In 1970, Fulton brought out the first edition of The Directory of Small Magazines/Press Editors and Publishers, which is an annual publication.

Fulton created Dustbooks—an alternative publishing company specializing in small press information—out of Dust, a magazine last published in 1972. In addition to bringing out the monthly Small Press Review and the annual directories, Dustbooks publishes a variety of books about small press publishing. For any study on alternative publishing, the best place to start is with Len Fulton's Dustbooks, P.O. Box 1056, Paradise, California 95969.

Although a discussion of organized distribution services is pertinent to a study of alternative publishing, that subject is beyond the scope of this thesis. The next topic to be discussed is different types of alternative publishing—the little magazine, independent presses, small presses, and co-operative presses.
CHAPTER III. TYPES OF ALTERNATIVE PUBLISHING

Alternative publishing is a broad term which includes a number of sub-categories: independent presses, small presses, little magazines, and co-operative presses. The categories overlap and are not mutually exclusive, but basic working definitions can be made. Perhaps the easiest way of explaining the terms is to break down each method of publishing into the ways it is operated. The table on the next two pages illustrates who does what in the publishing of poetry, from the initial writing of the copy to the distribution of the finished product.

An independent press, according to Bill Henderson, "is a small press, lacking substantial capital, that specializes in the publication of materials which commercial publishers reject. Independent presses are alternatives to commercial publishers." I prefer to think of an independent press as one in which the editors/publishers have their own print shops and work full time to produce books, chapbooks, magazines, and other publications. Examples from my survey which fall into this category are the Toothpaste Press (West Branch, Iowa), the Penumbra Press (Lisbon, Iowa), and Kitchen Sink Enterprises/Krupp Comic Works, Inc. (Princeton, Wisconsin).

A small press is similar to an independent press. An author
Table 1. Who does what in the publishing of poetry

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<td>ROYALTIES TO</td>
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<td>AUTHORS</td>
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b Often with the help of authors and/or friends.

c Often with the help of friends.
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<th>VANITY PRESS</th>
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<td>author&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt; members, including author</td>
<td>little or no editing is done</td>
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<td>author (by contract)</td>
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<td>author (by contract with profit for press)</td>
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<td>author or distributors</td>
<td>publisher</td>
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<td>personal by author and some by mail</td>
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<td>all</td>
<td>varies</td>
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<td>100% (but note that author usually gives away free copies)</td>
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who has a small press does all the work him/herself, from the writing or editing stages up through promotion and distribution; he/she sometimes prints the work, too, but usually hires a printer for that stage of publication. The difference between small presses and independent presses, notes Henderson, is that in the case of small presses "the author invests his own capital and assumes the complete risk or failure that is usually distributed among a handful of persons in the case of . . . an independent press." Also, the editor usually works only on a part-time volunteer basis and has another source of income. Examples from my survey that fall into the small press category are The Spirit That Moves Us Press (Iowa City, Iowa), the Raspberry Press (Bemidji, Minnesota), and Westburg Associates, Publishers (Fennimore, Wisconsin).

Little magazines are like the independent and small presses in that they operate on a shoestring budget and bring out work--usually poetry--that is avoided by commercial publishers because of extremely limited potential on the literary marketplace. Little magazines are often put out by independent presses (for example, the Toothpaste Press publishes Dental Floss Magazine; Westburg Associates, Publishers produces The North American Mentor Magazine),
by small presses (i.e., *The Spirit That Moves Us Magazine*), or by university-affiliated presses (such as Iowa State University's *Poet and Critic*). My definition of the term is simple: if the name of the magazine comes to mind more readily than the names of the publishers or the press, then it is a little magazine. From my survey, *Poet and Critic* (Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa), *New Letters* (University of Missouri-Kansas City), *The Beloit Poetry Journal* (Beloit, Wisconsin), and *Blue Buildings* (Des Moines, Iowa) represent the category of little magazines.

Co-operative publishing is a relatively new phenomenon on the American alternative publishing scene. The term simply means that a group of individuals--usually writers--have banded together to share ownership and responsibilities of publishing. Michael Scott Cain points out that "as the major league publishing industry continues its trend to conglomerate and continues to emphasize the mass market best sellers, more and more literary artists are going to be searching for alternatives. Co-ops are a valid way to go." One example from my survey--Women's Soul Publishing, Inc. (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)--is included in this category.

Each sub-category of alternative publishing will now be examined separately. Little magazines will be discussed first, followed by independent presses, small presses, and then co-operative presses. In the next chapter, my own small press, CSS Publications, will be examined in depth.
Little Magazines

Little magazines, according to poet Felix Pollack, share certain characteristics: "they are primarily literary, often experimental, and typically unfettered. Virtually all have a small circulation, and they are usually published, edited, and financed by one person or a group of persons who are amateurs—that is to say, people without a profit motive."37 To this can be added comments by Robie Macauley, former editor of the Kenyon Review, who states that the little literary magazine "has the freedom of its enthusiasm and its poverty. It is published for a small group of like-minded readers with enormous tolerance for the worst and the best. It can ignore every rule of current taste and fashion, pay no attention to a hydrogen bomb dropped on Washington, be as eccentric as it wishes, and--this is its reason for being--occasionally find a genius."38

Certain characteristics make little magazines necessary and viable in the world of alternative publishing. For one thing, little magazines will print material by new writers who cannot be or have not been published by bigger magazines or in commercial magazines. While the latter will usually consider only authors with established reputations, little magazines welcome work by young and unpublished writers. In addition, little magazines carry little or no advertising and consequently are not subject to censorship by advertisers. Commercial magazines are dependent
on advertising for survival and cannot afford to risk publishing material that would cause advertisers to withdraw their business from the magazines. Also, editors of little magazines frequently resist sponsorship by patrons—particularly schools—so that demands and restrictions by patrons, department heads, college presidents or boards of trustees are not imposed upon them.

Of course, as Michael Anania makes clear, "Literary magazines are failing business propositions. That any survive at all is a tribute to editors skilled at everything from typesetting to downhome flimflam." The editors support contemporary magazines with cash and labor. The circulation of little magazines averages between 200 and 1,000 per issue; magazines sold for $1.00 to $1.50 frequently cost twice that much to produce. "Simply put," says Anania, "all magazines need money, and money for literature is hard to get." Even with the availability of grants from state arts councils, the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (CCLM), and the National Endowment for the Arts, financial struggles are an integral part of little magazine publishing—as well as for all other forms of alternative publishing.

Little magazines, which have always functioned primarily for writers, have been a viable force in the American literary world throughout this century. The second decade, according to Pollak, was "the so-called golden age of the little magazines,
a time of great excitement and of great innovation and of many isms, and schools, and movements."\textsuperscript{41} An intense interest in criticism characterizes the literary magazine movement in the late 1930s up into the 1950s when magazines began to deliberately move away from a reliance on criticism. Regardless of "all the ballyhoo" about recent literary magazines, Anania maintains that "the center of American letters has remained fairly conservative since the 1930s."\textsuperscript{42} He further states, "Literary magazines today fill the same functions they filled at the beginning of the century. They give a place to writing for which no other place has been made."\textsuperscript{43}

Anania divides the category of little magazines into smaller groups:

\dots university-based reviews with eclectic interests; quarterlies with distinct critical frameworks; independent eclectic magazines that have invariably served the centrist literature nobly and well \dots; and adversary magazines, those quicksilver enterprises that hold much of the romance of the little magazines in their invariable insistence that everybody in print is wrong about nearly everything literary and cultural except the few people published in their thirty-two saddle-stitched, untrimmed pages. Distinctions among the very recent magazines--the 69 percent founded since 1970--are less easily drawn.\textsuperscript{44}
From examples in my survey, Poet and Critic will serve to illustrate the "university-based reviews with eclectic interests." New Letters will represent "quarterlies with distinct critical frameworks," while the Beloit Poetry Journal and Blue Building are examples of "independent eclectic magazines." Adversary magazines will be discussed in a different section.

Poet and Critic

Poet and Critic, a "gallery of verse/a workshop in print/a studio of thought," is published quarterly by the Iowa State University Press in Ames, Iowa. A member of CCLM and COSMEP, Poet and Critic has a press run of approximately 200 copies per issue. Subscribers are "chiefly libraries, public and academic," and authors are paid in copies only. Editor is David Cummings, a professor of English at Iowa State University; associate editors are ISU professors Peter LaSalle and Scott Consigny. The business manager is J. D. Beatty, who is also on the ISU English teaching staff.

Poet and Critic was started in 1964 by the late ISU professor Richard Gustafson "perhaps to give this science-oriented university a 'humanities' voice," said Cummings. The 48-page, 6 by 9 booklet features poems, criticisms, and book reviews, but also includes articles, art, cartoons, and satire. While book reviews are primarily written by the staff, the other work comes from contributors.
The main difficulties faced by the staff of Poet and Critic, says Cummings, are "problems in getting first-rate material—both verse and critical essays. Contributions often need revision—individual poems as well as prose pieces. And then of course one has a problem finding all the time necessary for editing in a careful, responsible way; we are, of course, full-time teachers, and only the editor has any time off at all—and that only one class a year."

New Letters

In a preface to the Fall, 1978, edition of New Letters, editor David Ray explains the importance of this little magazine in American literary history:

New Letters was founded in 1971, a magazine devoted more to creativity than to scholarship, which its predecessor, The University Review (founded in 1934) . . . had given priority—and with impressive results: e.g., the Chicago school of criticism was launched with major essays first published in this magazine, not in a journal from Chicago, New York, or Oxford. And it often served artists like Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood for their new work. Its poets included Robinson Jeffers, Edgar Lee Masters, e.e. cummings, William Carlos Williams, Weldon Kees and E. A. Robinson.

More recent contributors in the little magazine published quarterly by the University of Missouri-Kansas City are Robert Bly, E. L. Mayo, David Ignatow, William Stafford, Maxine Kumin, and Gary Gildner. Authors receive two free copies of the magazine
in addition to a cash honorarium. Each contributor also gets a
discount on the magazine which is priced at $2.50 per copy.

New Letters, printed in runs of 2,500 copies per issue, has
an international audience. The 128-page magazine is perfectly
bound and measures 6 by 9 inches in size. Contemporary fiction,
poetry, personal essays, and book reviews are set in Garamond
type while the heads are handset Trump Medieval. Each issue also
features art work and photographs (those in the Fall, 1978, edition
were by Lewis Carroll). Subscription rates for individuals are
$8.00 for one year, $12.00 for two years, and $25.00 for five
years. Library rates are $10.00 for one year, $18.00 for two
years, and $40.00 for five years. Besides individual subscriptions
and university subsidy, New Letters is supported by the Missouri
Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and CCLM.

Ray's wife, Judy, is associate editor of the magazine, and
Robert Stewart is managing editor. The staff also includes one
salaried, full-time editorial assistant who does secretarial and
general office work. The headquarters for New Letters is in a
house on the university campus which has been converted into an
office.

According to Stewart, the goal of New Letters is "to provide
a forum for the best creative writing available" on an international
basis. He says that problems with the promotion and distribution of
New Letters are the major difficulties faced by this little magazine.
The Beloit Poetry Journal

The editors of *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, David M. and Marion K. Stocking, have no difficulties with publishing their quarterly magazine of poetry and reviews. Marion K. Stocking says, "We pay the printer ourselves, and we edit the magazine the way we breathe. The only problem is handling the mail when we're out of town."

*The Beloit Poetry Journal* was established in 1950 to publish a magazine of contemporary poetry for a literate audience of all ages. At one time connected with Beloit College (Beloit, Wisconsin), that association ended in the summer of 1958. While the reviews are written by the staff members, the poems are selected from unsolicited manuscripts. The editors indicate that the editorial policy of the magazine has not changed much over the past twenty-nine years. "We publish the best of the poems submitted. No biases as to length, form, subject, or school," is the way the little magazine's entry in the 1976-77 *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses* is stated. In addition, it tries to keep its readers abreast of new directions in current-day poetry, and does this by being among the first to publish works by Adrienne Rich, David Ignatow, Erica Jong, James Dickey, Anne Sexton, David Shapiro, and others.

The format of the magazine has changed very little since it began in 1950. The usual size is about 40 pages, $5\frac{1}{2}$ by $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches; the only art work is on the cover. The average printing run
consists of approximately 1,200 copies, each of which sells for either $1.00 or $1.50; the actual cost of each issue is about eighty-three cents per copy, according to the editors.

The Beloit Poetry Journal is supported by subscriptions, through sales of the published works, and by the publishers. Since 1958 when the magazine gained independence from Beloit College, the only outside sources of support have been one grant from the Wisconsin Arts Council for a special issue and three grants from CCLM. Authors receive three free copies of the magazine.

Blue Buildings

Among the newest little magazines is Blue Buildings: A Journal of Poetry (Des Moines, Iowa), which was just listed in the December, 1978, edition of The Small Press Review. The first issue, which features poems by such nationally recognized authors as Michael Benedict, Gene Franklin, George Hitchcock, David Wagoner, William Stafford, and Peter Wild, was published in October, 1978. Blue Buildings measures 8½ by 11 inches in size, contains 40 pages, and is illustrated by line drawings. It is printed by Hiatt Press in Des Moines, Iowa. The magazine has a circulation of 500; subscriptions are $1.50 per single copy or $3.00 for two issues.

"Blue Buildings is a unique publishing venture in Des Moines," says Norm Hane, a professor of English at Drake University, "and, in hearing the editors discuss their plans for this journal, one
senses a strongly shared conviction that the project will survive." Editors for Blue Buildings are Tom Urban, former mayor of Des Moines, Iowa, and Ruth and Mark Doty, a wife-husband team of poets and teachers of writing. The editors, according to Hane, "view their journal--and poetry in general--as competing for serious attention with other art forms and with the media, and believe that poetry needs and deserves to make itself felt in contemporary culture." 

To get submissions for Blue Buildings, in the summer of 1978 the editors distributed flyers announcing the beginning of the little magazine. More than 400 poems from all over the United States and from some foreign countries were subsequently submitted to the editors; approximately twenty percent of those have been accepted for publication. The Dotys and Urban say that about eighty percent of the poems they received are promising. To encourage beginning poets, the editors personally comment and send suggestions to the writers whose work is not initially accepted for publication.

Blue Buildings is expected to be published two or three times a year. Authors are paid in copies of the magazine, and copyright reverts to the author after publication.
Independent Presses

"Publishing in America," says Len Fulton, "has so long been flummoxed and flim-flammed by corporate maneuver that only shards of 'tradition' remain, for tradition is spiritual, not material. And in this regard, it is only the small, independent presses who seem to be able to preserve it." One way independent press editors preserve the old tradition is pointed out by author Mary Anne Guitar:

The small press movement makes much of its talent for turning out lovingly handcrafted products. Twenty-six year old Roberta Dyer who works for Book People says: "The emphasis with a lot of small presses is fine printing. Letter press printing rather than offset. Beautifully handsewn, beautifully produced books. It's a joy to see them. The little presses are keeping alive old handcrafted techniques that are virtually dying. They're preserving traditions that in a few more years would have been lost."

The independent presses, represented here by the Toothpaste Press (West Branch, Iowa) and the Penumbra Press (Lisbon, Iowa), publish quality material in highly crafted and beautifully designed works. The Kitchen Sink Enterprises/Krupp Comic Works, Inc. (Princeton, Wisconsin), is in this category also because publisher Denis Kitchen, like publishers Allan Kornblum and Bonnie O'Connell, labors full time to produce quality work.
The Toothpaste Press

The Toothpaste Press is an independent press in West Branch, Iowa, run by Allan and Cinda Kornblum. They use handset type and print all books on their own letterpress machine. As explained in the introduction to the Toothpaste Press Catalog:

The Toothpaste Press began in 1970 with a mimeo magazine, TOOTHPASTE. After experimenting with mimeo books, and learning the ropes with a few pamphlets & broadsides, we are now committed to publishing what's new in poetry using what's old in printing: handset type, letterpress printing, needle-&-thread binding. But despite the cost of the quality materials we use, & the vast amount of time letterpress printing involves, we are also committed to producing books priced for poor poets & budget-strapped libraries, as well as discriminating collectors.

The end result of their efforts, according to Michael Lally of the Washington Post: "The Kornblums design, print, bind and publish some of the most attractively produced books in the small press world."52

Allan and Cinda Kornblum are both poets, and they publish their own poems plus work solicited from poets in the Iowa City, Iowa, area. Recent publications by the Toothpaste Press include works by Allan Appel, Joseph Ceravolo, Robert Creeley, Morty Sklar, Anselm Hollo, Steve Levine, and John Sjoberg. About the latter poet's work published by the Toothpaste Press, Doris Grumbach of Saturday Review comments, "This is a limited edition of 500 copies (which always strikes me as the proper
limitation), some offered in paperback for $4, and others signed, numbered, and specially bound. The paperback is satisfying, with the attractive title page re-created on the front cover and printed on especially beautiful, heavy Ragston paper."

The Kornblums have a print shop set up in their home in West Branch, Iowa, that is equipped with a letterpress, an old-time paper cutter, and various other printing equipment usually found only on display in museums. When I visited the Toothpaste Press in December, 1978, Allan, who was wearing the traditional dark blue printer's apron and printer's visor, was just beginning to reassemble a printing press he had not used for about four months; the process of oiling, greasing, and setting up the press for printing took several hours. A perfectionist, he meticulously checks and rechecks everything on the press to insure the proper inkflow and pressure on a page. Only when the ink was uniformly dark on the page was he ready to begin printing one page of the book he was working on. Preparation of the press for operation usually requires more time than the actual printing process.

The Toothpaste Press is supported by sales of published works and by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The Kornblums also do occasional printing of books, pamphlets, and envelopes for others. Allan, who says he likes his work, feels that the major problems facing the Toothpaste Press are the "standard problems faced by those in the arts." He also says
he occasionally faces a "general depression of wondering if you're crazy" for being involved in the world of small press publishing.

The Penumbra Press

Another independent press in Iowa included in my survey is the Penumbra Press in Lisbon. Editor and proprietor is Bonnie P. O'Connell, who studied art (typography) and printing while she was an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin. "I enjoyed printing and wanted to continue to support what I like--poetry and fine printing," O'Connell says. The Penumbra Press was "founded in 1971 for the purpose of publishing contemporary literature and graphics in the tradition of fine arts printing. To date, seventeen titles have been published. . . . Each edition was designed, illustrated (unless otherwise indicated), hand printed from had set type, and bound by the proprietor."

O'Connell runs the press on a full-time basis; her husband, George, works part-time. A press room, set up in the O'Connell home, contains a letterpress press (a Vandercook SP15 proof press) and a 12 by 16 inch standing press for binding. A bindery is housed in a storage closet. The office facilities also include work tables, stands, and an old light table.

Penumbra Press publishes two or three titles per year. Two examples of books listed for 1977 are:

THREE WINTER POEMS: 1977, Robert Dana, Debora Greger, George O'Connell. 120 copies hand printed from palatino types on Nideggan paper and bound in Strathmore
wrappers. Lino-cut landscapes illustration blind printed on the front cover. Each copy contains a paper collage illustration opposite the title page. 12 pages, two colors. $25.00.

**KEEPING THE NIGHT, Peter Everwine.** Thirty-four poems printed on Frankfurt white paper, bound in navy cloth over boards. Illustrations from wood engravings by George Weissbort. 60 pages, three colors. A trade edition was published by Antheneum from this book. $25.00.

The authors, whose works are solicited by the editors, receive a royalty of ten percent of the edition in books or the cash value. All orders for books are by mail, with 60 percent purchased by individuals, 30 percent by libraries, and 10 percent by bookstores.

The press is supported by sales of published works and also by a National Endowment of the Arts assistance grant. The Penumbra Press has become an elaborate and well-established business, which is creating a few difficulties for O'Connell. Keeping track of the business end of running a press is time-consuming, as is distribution. O'Connell says that distribution "is not that hard, but I decided not to go with regular distributors because I can't afford the 30 percent commission they charge." Also, she says she doesn't have enough money to hire assistants.

**Kitchen Sink Enterprises/Krupp Comic Works, Inc.**

The most financially successful independent press in the survey does not publish poems or short stories. Instead, Kitchen Sink Enterprises/Krupp Comic Works, Inc. (Princeton, Wisconsin), publishes
cartoons, art, satire, and letters. The press was started in 1970, says editor Denis Kitchen, "To publish experimental 'underground' comic books and magazines, offering a forum for expression that was not available at the established N.Y. publishing companies. The genre has developed into a strong and popular one, and our independence is absolute. We are not restrained by distributors, critics, competitors, or the Comics Code Authority."

Kitchen's job as editor and publisher is a full-time salaried position. Assistant editor Leonard Rifas is paid for part-time work; also on the staff are two salaried workers, one full-time and the other part-time, who handle the business, secretarial, and shipping tasks. They work in an office which "doubles as an art studio and as a warehouse for our publications and other alternative publications which we distribute nationally and, to some degree, internationally. All are under one roof in part of what was once a hotel in the 'downtown' section." Office equipment includes six typewriters (including two IBM Selectrics), a layout table, three drawing tables, and a photostat camera.

In the past eight years, 125 to 150 books have been printed by Kitchen Sink Enterprises, "with circulations ranging from 400 to 120,000," says Kitchen. "Cover prices range from 10¢ to $2. Pages from 8 to 68." Some of the material printed by this independent
press comes from staff members (a collection of Kitchen's work will be done in Germany in the spring of 1979), but most is "commissioned from free-lancers across the country." Each artist hand-letters his or her work, and they receive free copies of the publication as well as a ten percent royalty based on the number of sales.

Readers of Kitchen Sink Enterprises publications are primarily young adults, but also include many college students and young professionals. "But," notes Kitchen, "all ages are covered." And readers are buying the publications; the independent press is supported 99 percent by sales of the published works.

Explaining the difficulties faced by Kitchen Sink Enterprises, Kitchen states, "Distribution, of course. However, we've been far more successful at this than most presses, mainly because comix 'sell' better than poetry. But they are related and I feel a strong kinship. Many of our artists are poets and writers as well. But we built a strong mailing list and worked hard at designing an effective catalog to promote our publications nationally. As a result, some of our books have been reprinted as many as 12 times."

Small Presses

There is a climate in the United States that fosters the idea that anyone with the proverbial "good idea" and several hundred dollars has the same chance as any other corporate publishing body
to get that idea into print and find a market for it. More and more individuals are willing to learn the craft and machinery of operating a small press in order to see their works published. Commenting about the self-published material on display at the fourth annual New York Book Fair that took place in October, 1978, Doris Grumbach remarks, "the variety of books, posters, records, magazines, and broadsides assembled there was astonishing." The book fair is only one indication of the vast number of works that are self-published each year by small presses.

Marija Matich Hughes, who spent six years writing *The Sexual Barrier: Legal, Medical, Economic and Social Aspects of Sex Discrimination* and then published the work herself when commercial houses wouldn't, explains the phenomenon of self-publishing:

Most people self-publish for the same reason I did: a strong desire to get one's work into the world. The financial and emotional costs are admittedly considerable. I borrowed money to print 2,000 copies, and I continue to worry about expenses for postage, supplies, publicity trips, and typing. I have learned that even a good bibliography is hard to sell, so I no longer dream of making big profits, but I am on the verge of breaking even.

In the process of self-publishing, I've become a skilled writer and researcher in areas far removed from my original field; I've learned how to make hard-headed business decisions; and most important of all, I've turned out an elegant and useful book on my own terms. There is no doubt I would take the self-publishing path again.
Examples from my survey representing the category of small presses are the Raspberry Press (Bemidji, Minnesota), The Spirit That Moves Us Press (Iowa City, Iowa), and Westburg Associates, Publishers (Fennimore, Wisconsin). All editors work on a part-time, volunteer basis and have their magazines printed by offset method, usually by a hired printer.

**Raspberry Press**

Editor and publisher of Raspberry Press is Susan Hauser of Bemidji, Minnesota. In 1974 she started printing essays she thought should be in print. Since that time she has made direct requests to specific individuals and to personal acquaintances to come up with the material for the [Raspberry Press](#) Magazine; no unsolicited manuscripts are accepted. Published annually, the length and size of each issue varies. Usually the magazine is printed in runs of 200 to 500 copies by either mimeograph or offset methods. Hauser sells the magazine at just a little over cost.

The focus of each issue is determined by the editor's whims. "I get a lot of things in print that wouldn't be printed otherwise," says Hauser. Her audience consists of friends and acquaintances.

Hauser works out of a bedroom in her house. The magazine is financed by her husband's teaching job. Hauser lists distribution as her major difficulty, because she only sells the magazines through personal contact. But the press is a "whimsical" thing with her, and Hauser is not too concerned about promoting her magazine or making money from it.
The Spirit That Moves Us Press

The Spirit That Moves Us Press is headquartered in a room at the Catholic Student Center in Iowa City, Iowa. Editor and publisher is Morty Sklar, a native New Yorker who received a B.A. degree from the University of Iowa in 1973. He works approximately 30 hours a week editing The Spirit That Moves Us magazine and books and organizing such activities as poetry readings, a Poetry-in-the-Buses project, and a display of small press magazines at the Iowa City Public Library. Sklar is assisted by a work-study helper who spends ten hours per week handling mailing and other tasks.

The audience for works of The Spirit That Moves Us Press (started as the Emmess Press in 1974) is "all people, especially ... serious artists and writers." The Spirit That Moves Us magazine first appeared in September, 1975, and is issued three times per year. The 48-page magazine measures 5½ by 8½ inches. In addition to the editing, Sklar also does the design, layout, and typesetting for the magazine. Artists included in the first three volumes of The Spirit That Moves Us magazine are Sklar, Anselm Hollo, Hermann Hesse, Tom Montag, Cinda Kornblum, Allan Kornblum, David Ray, and Milhalyi Ladanyi.

Books are published by the small press "as they seem right." Four had been published at of September, 1978, including The Actualist Anthology, 1977, edited by Darrell Gray and Morty Sklar. Forthcoming in August, 1979, will be Editor's Choice: An Anthology of Literature & Graphics from the U.S. Small Press, 1965-1977.
The Spirit That Moves Us Press is supported by the editor, by sales of published works, and by grants from the Iowa Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and CCLM. Publications from the press are available from several distribution services, including the Plains Distribution Service (Fargo, North Dakota), Truck Distribution (St. Paul, Minnesota), COSMEP-South Book Bus, and others.

Sklar cites distribution as the major problem he is faced with as a small press editor. The distribution services are fine, but he says that people just do not buy much poetry. The $100 advertisement he placed in a recent edition of Coda: Poets & Writers Newsletter to advertise publications from his press brought minimal results--mostly from poets wanting their work to be published by Sklar but who were unwilling to buy anything from The Spirit That Moves Us Press. In addition, Sklar says that institutions are also unwilling to buy small press publications. "Individuals from Europe subscribe to The Spirit That Moves Us magazine," he laments, "but the Des Moines Public Library will not even buy one copy. Why?"

Westburg Associates, Publishers

Westburg Associates, Publishers is a family affair: John Westburg is general editor, Mildred W. Westburg is managing editor.
and business manager, and Martial R. Westburg is art editor. All work on a part-time, volunteer basis to produce *North American Mentor Magazine*, as well as chapbooks and books. The questionnaire returned by John Westburg states that the small press was started in 1964 because "there was, and is, a need for this kind of magazine. I knew I could do it. I felt it had to be done, and I felt a compulsion and a duty to do the best I could with it. But who knows what motivates any one? What motivates a flower, motherhood, etc. motivates also the poet and publisher of poets."

The poetry published by Westburg Associates, Publishers is for "persons interested in poetry and creative writing--all kinds of people, all walks of life."

The *North American Mentor Magazine*, according to the 1976-77 *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*, publishes "Poetry, fiction, articles, photos, satire, criticism, reviews, parts-of-novels, long-poems, plays." Four issues are published yearly in an 8½ by 11 inch format that varies in page length from 60 to 90 pages; individual copies sell for $3.00. The art work consists mainly of black and white drawings. Sometimes photographs are used, and occasionally color drawings are used for the cover. Each year the publishers sponsor a creative talent contest with cash awards of up to $125 given to contestants; contestants must be paid subscribers to the *North American Mentor Magazine*. 
The office equipment and facilities of Westburg Associates, Publishers is the most elaborate of all small presses in my survey. In the basement of the Westburg house is a writing studio equipped with writing tables, files, and business records. The attic is a library which houses "several thousand volumes and library tables and chairs." A printing shop in the rear of the house has an offset press and a Bruning 2000 electrostatic copier. The Westburgs also have layout and light tables, and several typewriters, including an IBM selectric.

The small press is supported financially through subscriptions, by sales of published works, by entrance fees to contests, and by the publishers. John Westburg says, "In 15 years we have had but one grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines." Explaining why the press was started, he remarks, "We felt it would be a good and useful thing to do, to encourage writers, contribute to American arts and letters, and perhaps even to make a profit. We could have made more money bootlegging, of course, but that was not what we wanted to do."

A dozen chapbooks are scheduled for publication in 1979 by Westburg Publishers, Associates. John Westburg explains that his main problem with the small press "is trying to learn how to use an offset press properly and to do a good job of printing, since I have to do the printing myself."
Co-operative Presses

The idea behind co-operative publishing is that individuals band together with others who have similar goals and ideas so that the combined group will have the necessary resources to publish poems or fiction. As an article in Coda: Poets & Writers Newsletter states:

"Book cooperatives are begun by writers who want to control the production and distribution of their books and who can put up the money or contribute long hours of work to accomplish this. Shared money and/or shared work are basics. New co-ops signal that more and more writers are not going to wait for the tight commercial market to loosen--they will take matters into their own hands."

Co-operative publishing is the newest wave in alternative publishing and seems to be gaining in popularity. Since the Berkeley Poets Cooperative started in 1970, more co-operatives have been started all over the country. In 1977 Coda reported that eight book co-ops were in existence, and Michael Scott Cain reports the existence of fourteen co-operative in his book, The Co-op Publishing Handbook, published in 1978.

A characteristic of all co-operatives is that they are located in a place which is a center of writing activity by a great number of individuals. The writers all have a strong common interest, whether it is simply in good poetry or in the same social-political ideals. The Berkeley Poets Cooperative, for example, grew out of
the Berkeley Poets Workshop, a weekly gathering of fiction and poetry writers who read their work and participated in discussions. Also to come out of the workshop is a book series; any person who has participated in the workshop or has been published in the magazine can submit a book manuscript. The whole organization is now called the Berkeley Poets' Workshop and Press. The Alice James Poetry Co-operative, Inc., is a nonprofit writers' collective with an emphasis on publishing women; the group was formed from members who worked together in workshops and readings. Lollipop Power, Inc., is a co-op that publishes feminist children's books, and Fag Rag is produced by a co-operative of homosexuals.

An example of a co-operative in my survey is Woman's Soul Publishing, Inc., which was located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, before being taken over by Calliope Publishing in Chicago, Illinois.

**Woman's Soul Publishing, Inc.**

Woman's Soul Publishing, Inc. (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) was formed in 1974 to publish *Paid My Dues: Journal of Women & Music*. According to past editor Dorothy K. Dean, the group was started "to fill the void in publication of woman-made music and related articles. . . . There was no one publishing anything like [this] and a need for it existed (still does)."
Besides serving as editor of copy, Dean was also the publisher. Lucille Allison was the music editor, and at one time six other volunteers helped with the typing and copy preparation chores. The office was in Dean's basement, and the attic served as a storage place.

The audience for Paid My Dues, reports Dean, is "any person interested in women-made music, primarily feminists." The material for the magazine, published on an irregular basis, comes from women all over the world. Authors receive free copies of the publication and from two to ten dollars in cash.

Dean served as editor of the publication from February, 1974, until late 1976 "when 3 valuable staff people left to pursue their careers in other cities." The periodical is now published in Chicago, Illinois, by Calliope Publications.
CHAPTER IV. CSS PUBLICATIONS

Although we bill ourselves as being a "not-for-profit cooperative publishing group," CSS Publications is, for all practical purposes, a small press. We hit upon the "not-for-profit" designation before we fully realized that alternative publishing is a failing financial endeavor and that all the odds are against breaking even financially, let alone making any kind of profit. We use the term "cooperative" to indicate our primary funding procedure--everyone who enters our competitions "cooperates" with us by submitting an entry fee of two dollars per poem; the high cost of publishing a book is thus spread out over a broad base and no one (except the editors) has a very significant investment in the project. The word "group" is used to gloss over the fact that CSS Publications is run solely by me and my business partner, C. Sherman Severin; we're two optimistic and enterprising individuals but, nevertheless, when we started CSS Publications we lacked in any kind of practical experience for the mammoth task we were about to undertake.

Beginnings and Goals

Severin and I are both graduate students at Iowa State University--I am working for a master's degree in English and he is earning a Ph.D. in metallurgy. We met in early 1977 when Severin was elected by the Graduate Student Senate to serve as
the chairperson of the GSS communications committee and I was named editor of the GSS newsletter, *The Communique*. We discovered that we worked exceptionally well together. As is stated on the back inside cover of *Emotions, Emotions*:

Together Becky and Sherman make a dynamic duo; they complement each other in working style and offer one another an inexhaustible supply of inspiration. Sherman, despite his scientific background, dreams up the sometimes brilliant, sometimes crazy—but definitely impractical--ideas, and Becky uses her resourceful creativity to make them practical and bring them to fruition. From Sherman's rough drafts, Becky produces a work of art.58

Severin researched and wrote the copy for the newsletter and I did all the production work from the typing to the final layout. We continually tried out new ideas, but eventually--after six or seven issues--realized that a four or eight-page 8½ by 11 inch house organ for the Graduate Student Senate which came out twice a quarter had its limitations. Some other project which better utilized our combined talents and energies was needed. The project turned out to be a poetry contest which ultimately led to the formation of our own publishing company, CSS Publications.

I first heard about the plan on November 30, 1977, after Severin and I had just attended--appropriately enough--a poetry reading at Ellsworth College in Iowa Falls and were on our way back to Ames. Severin explained how he had once paid six dollars
to have one of his poems published in 1976 in "a collection of assorted works" called *Iowa Poets One*. The printing of the booklet was of third-rate quality, and Severin decided that he could—and someday would—publish a better book himself. "Someday" had arrived, and he decided that he either had to follow through with the idea or give up on it altogether.

The idea was to publish poetry by Iowa and other midwestern poets in a book of high quality printed on heavy textured colored paper. The poems would be gathered from a poetry contest, and the project would be funded by having contestants submit an entry fee along with their poems.

The discussion of the poetry project continued all the time we were on Interstate 35. Gradually Severin's use of "I" turned into "we" and my use of "you" turned into "we" also. By the time we had arrived in Ames, we had decided to combine efforts to see the idea brought to fruition. To accomplish that goal meant that we had to organize a publishing group which would sponsor a poetry contest to bring in the needed material to go into the book.

We decided to use Severin's address because we thought "103 Stanton--Box 30" made an impressive-sounding business address—it was certainly better than using my dormitory address. Next we needed a name to go with the address, preferably something using Severin's initials (C.S.S.) so the mailman would deliver mail to him. No name resulted from that, but the initials appealed to
us more than any other title—we liked to joke that C.S.S. stood for "That's a classified secret. See ('C') Sherman Severin for details."—so we became CSS Publications. We had a name, a mailing address, and a big goal. Also, Severin had forty dollars to invest in the enterprise; we opened a checking account and were in business.

Since forming CSS Publications in 1977, Severin and I have sponsored two poetry contests and published Emotions, Emotions, a book of poetry by Iowa and other midwestern poets. Our second book, titled Feelings... will be released in September, 1979.

The Poetry Contests

The rules for the CSS Publications poetry contests are simple: any person of any age who lives in Iowa or surrounding states can submit poems—based on the general theme of human emotions—to our contests. The only stipulations are that a two dollar entry fee must accompany each poem and that the poems reach us by the closing date of the contest, which has been March 15 both years. From the contest, the best fifty to fifty-five poems are selected for inclusion in a book of poetry, and one poem is awarded the top prize of twenty-five dollars.

To publicize the contests, we use posters, flyers, radio announcements, press releases, and newspaper advertisements. Press releases, we have found, produce the best results. Posters are usually successful only when brought to someone's direct attention by a friend of ours, or by someone familiar with the first CSS
Publications poetry contest. (More than half of the poets published in Emotions, Emotions submitted entries in the 1979 contest, and many urged their friends to enter poems.) Least successful are paid advertisements because we rarely earn back the initial financial investment. Placing a display advertisement in the Des Moines Sunday Register, for example, did bring us a lot of poems, but not enough to pay the full amount of the ad.

More than 250 poems have been submitted in each contest we have sponsored. That amount is sufficient to enable us to select quality poems for a book, but not nearly enough to pay for the complete cost of printing, promoting, and distributing the finished product.

The Judging Procedure

For each poetry contest, CSS Publications establishes a panel of five individuals--all English professors or teachers at various Iowa universities and colleges--to serve as judges. In 1978, our judges were Will C. Jumper and Scott Consigny from Iowa State University (Ames), Daniel M. and Ilona M. McGuiness from Ellsworth College (Iowa Falls), and Philip N. Gilbertson from Wartburg College (Waverly). In order to stay flexible and offer variety, Severin and I have decided to have different individuals serve on each panel; only Dan McGuiness will again serve as a judge in 1979. Others on the panel are David Cummings, Robert Boston,
and Hazel Lipa from Iowa State University, and Sam Michaelson from Wartburg College.

In the preliminary round of judging, each judge is given one-fifth of the total poems (about 50 or 55) submitted in the contest. From this batch, the judges determine: (1) the top five best poems, (2) the next best poems (usually 10 to 15), (3) the poems marginally acceptable for publication, and (4) the poems not acceptable for publication. All the poems are then returned to CSS Publications. Those ranked in the first category—twenty-five poems in all—are automatically accepted for publication and also are eligible for the final round of judging, a process by which the prize-winning poem is determined. Judges receive identical batches of poems and are asked to select the top five; by use of a point system, the most highly ranked poem is awarded the top prize of twenty-five dollars. Three or four other poems highly recommended by the judges are awarded honorable mention.

While the judges are involved in the process of selecting the prize-winning poem, Severin and I select twenty-five to thirty poems from among those placed by judges in the second-best group. The poems found unacceptable by the judges are automatically rejected, as are most of the poems in the "marginal" category.
When the judging procedure is completed and all the poems selected for publication, Severin and I send notification to all of the contestants about the results of the contest. Then we concentrate on producing the book.

The Manuscript Process

Once we have all the poems that are going to be included in a book, we compile a completed manuscript which is duplicated at a copy center. Severin and I study the poems individually, and then we have a meeting to determine the order that the poems will appear in the book. Some minor changes are inevitably made during the actual layout process, but we establish a working manuscript at this stage. At this point we also decide on the basic design of the book and commission art work by our artist, Peg McClure, a former Iowa State University student who now lives in California.

For Emotions, Emotions we could only afford to use typewritten script, so I typed up each poem on an IBM Selectric II typewriter using a Letter Gothic typeface. This year we have access to an IBM Composer, a typewriter-like machine which produces typeset-style print. Titles and authors' names and hometowns are typeset by Severin's sister who works as a typesetter for a printing company in Washington, D.C.
Book Production

After the manuscript has been typed and proofread, the actual layout begins. From copies of the final manuscript, I make a dummy version of the book, complete with art work and titles. Only after Severin and I are satisfied with the plan do I begin the paste-up of the final, camera-ready version of the book. Since we do not have the proper work facilities here in Ames, I take everything to Wartburg College in Waverly. (I got my B.A. degree there in 1974 and my journalism professor, Robert C. Gremmels, lets me return to use the facilities in the communications building on campus.) On the light-tables in Neumann House, I do the final layout and paste-up of each page. Once this is completed, I return to Ames and Severin and I proofread the copy one more time.

The camera-ready copy of the book is then taken to the printer, and, for the first and only time during the whole book production process, the book is completely out of our hands. Carter Press in Ames, Iowa, did the printing for Emotions. Emotions. Severin and I faced so many delays and disappointments with this press that we are going to do a better job of selecting the printer for Feelings...; we are going to send out bids to different companies and carefully consider all factors--time,
cost, quality, and so forth—before committing ourselves to one printer. For the first book we were pressed for time and had to make a hasty decision about the printer; we will not make the same mistake again.

We had 500 copies of *Emotions, Emotions* printed, and will have the same number of the next book, *Feelings,...*, printed. That number seems to be adequate for our purposes; approximately 100 copies of *Emotions, Emotions* remain, and we expect to improve those figures slightly with *Feelings,...*.

Promotion and Distribution

CSS Publications handles all promotion and distribution for its books. These areas of book production were completely foreign to both of us; for the first project we concentrated all of our energies on producing *Emotions, Emotions* and did not do much planning for this stage of the publishing process. We quickly learned, however, that if we were to regain any of our financial investment into CSS Publications that we would have to develop successful tactics for selling and promoting our books.

With this realization has come a shifting in the roles that Severin and I perform for CSS Publications. For the first book, we served as co-editors and co-publishers. Since we lived within two blocks of each other on the Iowa State University campus, we met frequently and handled all CSS Publications business
together. When I moved to Nevada, Iowa, in August, 1978, this routine no longer was practical. As a consequence, our roles have become more differentiated. Now we are still co-publishers, but I am the editor and Severin is the managing editor. I handle all editorial responsibilities of CSS Publications, and Severin has taken charge of all the financial aspects, including promotion and distribution. Severin handles the mail as it comes in, and I am in charge of getting mail--press releases, brochures, letters of acceptance or rejection to our contest entrants, and the like--ready to be sent out.

We hold business meetings on a regular basis to keep up to date on all activities. At these meetings, we also determine what things need to be done for the next phase of production and how we are going to accomplish the tasks. Severin and I are getting more organized and efficient, and as a consequence CSS Publications is becoming more and more professional and business-like.

Future Prospects

At this point, neither Severin nor I know what direction CSS Publications will take. We have been successful in publishing one book are are committed to producing another. The experiences of producing *Emotions, Emotions* and *Feelings...* have given us
much knowledge and expertise in the area of small press publishing.
Given enough time and sufficient capital, we feel that we could
turn CSS Publications into a full-time, financially solvent
publishing company doing much more than producing one book of
poetry a year. However, at present we are both donating our
time and energies, and that will continue to be the situation for
several more years. The question of how long CSS Publications
will survive is one that will be answered in time.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION

From my experiences with CSS Publications, I can see the truth in Michael Scott Cain's statement: "Publishing is a disease. You can either be a carrier or a victim and it's better to spread it then [sic] to die from it. Either way, the infection is unavoidable." Severin and I, along with all the small press editors responding to the questionnaire, are caught up in what Len Fulton describes as the "tribal spirit," an indefinable energy that initially prompts individuals into self-publishing ventures and then grows within until they're completely enmeshed in the world of alternative publishing.

No longer are articles being written about unusual and novel self-publishing efforts. Instead, the main fare is how-to books and articles that explain every step of the alternative publishing process from the writing of the manuscript to the proofreading of the galley or page proofs, and maybe even the running of letterpress or offset presses. The latest how-to material deals with distribution and promotion, two difficult areas that all small press publishers must come to terms with if they are to succeed.

The worth of the material being published by alternative publishers is not going unrecognized, either by the major commercial houses or by the discriminating literary audience.
Many governmental agencies—such as state arts councils and the National Endowment for the Arts—and other supportive groups such as the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (CCLM) and the Committee of Small Magazine/Press Editors and Publishers (COSMEP) have been formed to ensure the survival of small presses. The path of self-publishing is not an easy one, but it is an exciting challenge for those caught up in the small press spirit.

Alternative publishing is here to stay. As Fulton observes:

> Fresh mags and presses continue to arise everywhere and anywhere. No geography explains it. There are over 1,000 small presses in the United States alone, and more than 400 in Britain. The force and tenacity of the movement came unabated into a new decade, all the more dramatic than most of us could have foreseen. It is a continuous reconnection of the individual and tribal human being with that most fundamental liberty: thought, and another: feeling.

Being involved in the world of alternative publishing has been, and continues to be, the most challenging and rewarding experience I have ever had. I am proud to have contributed Emotions, Emotions and Feelings... to the world of contemporary literature.
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Response to questionnaire administered Dec. 1978. Unless otherwise noted, all further undocumented quotations come from the questionnaire survey outlined in the appendix.


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Contends that historical literary consciousness is largely absent from the little magazines of the past two decades.

Gives a comprehensive view of little magazines and small presses.

Talks about cooperative publishing and explains what the co-ops publish.

Discusses differences between small press publishing and commercial publishing.

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Provides discussion and analysis as well as stories of co-ops told by individual groups. Valuable and interesting source.


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Discusses two important small press publishing events of 1974—the publication of *The Whole COSMEP Catalog* and the first New York Book Fair, which demonstrated the diversity among small presses and the interest of the public in alternative publishing.


Chronicles the evolution of the author from his early beginnings in publishing, through the time he edited *Dust*, until he decided to specialize in one area: small press information.

"Touching the Biosphere." American Libraries, 6 (Feb. 1974), 73-76.

Discusses recent trends in the small press world.


Details how he got into the small press movement and decided to share information--and the drama of self-publishing--with other small press people.


Gives clear directions on how to cope with difficulties in the areas of operations, distribution, advertising, and collective working styles.


Praises the variety and quality of small press books that were on display at the fourth annual New York Book Fair.


Explains the difficulties of getting into print via major publishing firms, and discusses various successful small press publishers.
Explains the origin of this new little magazine.

Hauder, Paul. "Fulton's Volley (This Self-Publisher's Shots Have Been Heard Around the Literary World)." Writer's Digest, 17 (Aug. 1978), 20.
Says Len Fulton "remains in the vanguard of the small-press revolution."

Gives a good overview of the history of the independent press movement and offers concise definitions of the terms independent press, self-publishing, little magazines, and vanity publishing.

Qualifies as the bible of self-publishing. Gives a history of self-publishing and assorted how-to tips, and includes self-told stories by successful self-publishers.

Presents exhibits of active members of the Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers. Useful both as a social document and a small press bibliography.
Tells the story of Xtras, which is defined as lying "somewhere amid the territory between the usual small press publishing venture, self-publishing, and co-operative publishing." Includes a useful table that clarifies the various ways in which different types of publishing groups handle publishing tasks.

Gives helpful hints on self-publishing while telling the story of how The Sexual Barrier: Legal, Medical, Economic and Social Aspects of Discrimination came into existence.

Theorizes about publishing in general and defines the ideal goals of publishing cooperatives. Also explains why The Montreal Writers Cooperative failed.

Mentions approximately 100 small press works considered the best of 1973. Includes a directory of publishers.
Says that the Kornblums design, print, bind and publish some of the most attractively produced books in the small press world.

Gives an interesting view of how the oldest and most successful poetry cooperative in this country operates.


Discusses The Kenyon Review in detail and also talks about little magazines in general.

Points out the importance of small presses in literary history.

Gives the background history of the Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers and explains the function of COSMEP.


Discusses the function and importance of little magazines in contemporary literature.


Gives descriptions of books published by the press.


Notes the significance of this little magazine to the Chicago school of criticism.


Provides details on four basic organizational structures used successfully by co-ops: share work, share money, share compilation, share commercial.


First book of poetry published by CSS Publications.

Gives a brief background on the press and then lists the books available from the Toothpaste Press.


Gives an inside story of subsidy publishing and the history of Exposition Press, which has become the sixth largest (and largest subsidy publisher) in the United States.

Includes a useful bibliography.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to the individuals who had faith in me and who helped me along the way. I must thank my parents, Dan and Loni McGuiness, Robert C. Gremmels, Walden Baskerville, and Sandra Hugg for their support. A special thank you goes to Quentin Johnson for his encouragement and support. I also want to thank the members of my committee for their patience and help.

Of course, no dedication would be complete without mentioning C. Sherman Severin, my friend and business associate. Without him, there would be no CSS Publications and I would not have written this thesis on alternative publishing.

And not to be forgotten is Clem Eyo for his undying love.
APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE
Dear Small Press Editor:

As co-editor and co-publisher of CSS Publications for the past year, I have become aware of the difficulties small presses face. From this experience, I have chosen to do work in the area of small presses as part of my graduate work at Iowa State University.

To better learn the needs and problems of small publishing companies, I am conducting a survey on small presses in the Midwest. Of primary concern is the survey is background information (i.e., when, why, where, and how your small press was started), as well as information about funding difficulties. Eventually I plan to publish a handbook about small presses in the Midwest which includes this type of information.

During the week of December 11-15, I will be making a telephone call to you in order to talk to you about your small press. To facilitate the telephone interview, I've enclosed a copy of the questionnaire that will be used for this project.

I hope that you will be able to help me. Your information will be of great help for the project. If you wish, the information you provide will be kept confidential.

If you would like a summary of the project, just let me know when I call and I'll provide you with the information as soon as the project is completed.

Also, if I should somehow fail to reach you by phone next week, please return the completed questionnaire by December 20 if you'd like to be part of this project.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm looking forward to talking to you soon!

Sincerely,

Rebecca S. Bell
Editor
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of small press ____________________________________________

2. Small press address ____________________________________________

3. How long has the press been in existence? _________________________

4. Name of editor _______________________________________________
   A. ____ salaried ______ volunteer
   B. ____ full time ____ part time

   Name of editor _______________________________________________
   C. ____ salaried ______ volunteer
   D. ____ full time ____ part time

5. Name of publisher(s), if any _____________________________________
   A. ____ salaried ______ volunteer
   B. ____ full time ____ part time

6. Number of staff workers (other than editors) ______________________
   A. ____ salaried ______ volunteer
   B. ____ full time ____ part time

   C. Duties and responsibilities: ____________________________________

7. Why was the small press started?

8. For what audience is the small press publishing?

9. What office equipment do you have?
   _____ typewriters ______ mimeograph machine
   _____ manual ______ offset press
   _____ electric ______ compugraphic composer
   _____ IBM Selectric ______ other (please list):
   _____ layout table(s)
   _____ light table(s)

10. Describe your office facilities:

11. Where does your small press get the material that is printed?
    _____ written by staff members ______ other (please list):
    _____ sponsored competitions
    _____ subscribers

12. How does your small press pay its authors? (check all that apply)
    _____ free copies _____ cash _____ no payment _____ other
13. Subscriptions -- please indicate the approximate number of copies.
   ____ library subscriptions  ____ magazine distributor
   ____ other institutional
     subscriptions  ____ affiliation with a society or
     organization of some kind
   ____ mail order  ____ distributed free
   ____ bookstores  ____ individual subscribers

14. How is your small press supported financially?
   ____ through subscriptions
   ____ by sales of published works
   ____ entrance fees to contests
   ____ by the writers
   ____ by the publishers
   ____ by special grants (such as: ________________________________
                          ________________________________
                          ________________________________

15. Please explain the major problems and difficulties you have with running your small press.

16. What type of art work do you use in your publications? Explain any typographical uniqueness in your publication(s).

17. Are any of your works published in translation form?
   ____ yes  ____ no

18. PUBLICATION RECORD
   Title of publication ________________________________
   Description of Work ________________________________
   Date published ________________________________
   Length ________________________________
   Size ________________________________
   Number printed ________________________________
   How printed ________________________________
   Total cost of publication ________________________________
   Individual cost of each copy ________________________________
   Price per copy ________________________________