

## **The Teaching Press as an Agent of Change**

113C, Pennsylvania Convention Center, 100 Level  
Saturday, March 26, 2022, 9 to 10:15 am

**Panel description:** Teaching presses and apprenticeships in the art and craft of publishing prepare student writers to submit and publish their work. They also provide the foundation for a more inclusive, innovative, and accessible publishing industry. Join panelists from Kaya Press, LARB Books, Lookout Books, and Ooligan Press as they discuss their respective publishing models and demonstrate how their work as publishers, editors, and teachers empowers future generations to lead meaningful change.

**Panel category: Teaching, Editing, and Technology**

### **Organizer and Moderator:**

**Emily Louise Smith** is the founder and publisher of Lookout Books and its sister magazine, *Ecotone*, both housed at the University North Carolina Wilmington, where she is an assistant professor and the director of The Publishing Laboratory. She coordinates the creative writing department's certificate in publishing program and teaches courses including Introduction to Book Publishing, the Publishing Process, Bookbuilding, Book Marketing and Publicity, Grant Writing, and the Book Publishing Practicum that supports the work of Lookout Books.

Lookout titles published under her leadership have won or been nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, the National Book Award, the PEN/Bingham Prize, the Young Lions Fiction Award, the Los Angeles Times Prize, the Independent Publisher Book Award, and Foreword Book of the Year, among many others.

Her writing appears in *Best New Poets*, *Boulevard*, *House Method*, *Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century* (Milkweed), and the *Southern Review*. She has been named Wilmington's Woman of Achievement in the Arts, a finalist for *Wilma* magazine's Women to Watch Awards in the education category, and UNCW Lecturer of the Year. In 2022, she received UNCW's innovation in teaching award.

### **Panelists:**

**Neelanjana Banerjee** is the managing editor of Kaya Press. Her fiction, poetry, and essays have been published in *Prairie Schooner*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *PANK*, the *Rumpus*, and several anthologies. She teaches writing and Asian American literature at UCLA and Loyola Marymount University.

**Robyn Crummer-Olson** is the Publisher of Ooligan Press and oversees its operations, in addition to mentoring students and teaching Publishing Studio, Publishing Lab, Book Marketing, Book Publishing for Writers, and Management Skills in Publishing courses.

She has spent more than fourteen years as a marketer in freelance, agency, and client-side roles. As a freelancer, she has worked with authors on book project management and book marketing strategy. In her agency roles, she has worked as a content strategist, marketing copywriter, and copyeditor for brand accounts such as Condé Nast, Intel, Microsoft, and Wacom. And she was previously the Editorial Director and Marketing and Communications Manager for IT Revolution, overseeing the marketing and communication strategy for four books and three international events each year.

She earned a BA in Communication and Women's Studies from Southwestern University in 2001. She graduated in 2011 from Portland State University with an MA in Writing and Book Publishing. Robyn enjoys knitting, axe throwing, canning, and powerlifting. She lives in

Portland with her husband, Elliot, and daughter, Frances, and her two cats, Hank and Cloud.

**KaToya Ellis Fleming** is editor at Lookout Books and an assistant professor of Publishing Arts at University of North Carolina Wilmington. She earned a BA in English from Spelman College and holds an MFA in narrative nonfiction from the University of Georgia. She is the former *Oxford American* Jeff Baskin Writers Fellow and a current Richard S. Holden Diversity Fellow, which she was awarded by the American Copy Editors Society and the Dow Jones News Fund in recognition of her demonstrated commitment to publishing work by marginalized authors.

Her writing appears in the *Oxford American*, the *Rumpus*, the *Georgia Review*, and elsewhere. The first title that she acquired for Lookout, *Bigger than Bravery: Black Resilience and Reclamation in a Time of Pandemic*, is forthcoming in September 2022.

**Irene Yoon** (she/her) is executive director of the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. She holds a PhD in English from UC Berkeley, and she is the director of the LARB Publishing Workshop since 2018.

Moderator welcome, introduction of panelists.

Moderator questions for all panelists:

- 1) By way of introduction, I wonder if each panelist could share a little about your respective presses and/or publishing programs, as well as your apprenticeship models. You might describe how teaching, mentorship, and other opportunities are integral to the daily work of your press. If affiliated with an academic institution, please contextualize that relationship for attendees—whether your press is part of a publishing degree program or another partnership.

2) How do you think that your press mission, specific titles, or other initiatives influence opportunities and projects available to students and interns? How do those opportunities to practice the art and craft of publishing shape their approaches to and later work in the field? Could you give examples of alumni publishing leadership or others initiatives your grads are currently involved in?

3) Publishing often involves steep barriers to entry—from geographic restrictions (internships, especially with big five houses, can require relocating to New York) to economic, including cost-prohibitive publishing programs. In *Publishers Lunch* earlier this month, the meal addressed the average amount borrowed versus the annual median income for entry-level positions in publishing. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, “At New York University, graduates with a master’s degree in publishing borrowed a median \$116,000 and had an annual median income of \$42,000 two years after the program.” Still, many interviewees reported to *Publishers Lunch* that they wouldn’t have a job in publishing at all without the networking opportunities provided by their masters programs. [Added context as needed: Comparing the dozen or so publishing programs across the county, Pace University charges approximately \$46,000 for a two-year program. Emerson College is about \$53,000. Beginning this fall, NYU will charge about \$71,000. Summer courses like the Denver Publishing Institute, Columbia Publishing Course, and NYU’s Summer Publishing Institute run around \$5,000.]

Could you respond to these reports, bearing in mind your respective publishing offerings and associated costs? Please share, if applicable, any specific ways that your publishing programs disrupt traditional paths to entry and make way for increased access.

4) Do you think that these initiatives are specific to independent publishing? What might peer presses or even larger commercial houses and literary organizations learn from and adopt based on your model?