

Ooligan Press

By Matthew Warren

Ooligan Press is a student-run teaching press affiliated with Portland State University (PSU) and its College of Liberal Arts & Sciences. Founded in 2001 by publisher and writer Dennis Stovall, Ooligan Press houses one of PSU's two master's programs in writing.

While other teaching presses operate in the United States—for example, New Rivers Press at Minnesota State University Moorhead and Lost Horse Press at the University of Montana Western—Ooligan is unique for its student-led structure and operation. According to Ooligan alumnus and core faculty member Abbey Gaterud, “at Ooligan we feel that the most powerful teaching and learning moments come from the responsibilities associated with making real-world decisions about real-world books.”

This learning model is facilitated by students at every turn, with as many as thirty students working on each title. Students are involved through the entire process, from acquiring a manuscript through its promotion and release. Each of the press's departments is staffed by graduate students, including rotating pairs of co-managers who report weekly to a student-led Executive Board. The graduate students are supported by faculty comprised of publishing professionals.

The name Ooligan comes from a Chinookan word for candlefish, a type of smelt that was a valuable trade item for indigenous tribes of the Pacific Northwest. Scholars have speculated that the word also may be the origin for the name “Oregon.”

The mission of Ooligan Press, in part, “aspires to discover works that reflect the values and attitudes that inspire so many to call the Northwest their home.” The press publishes fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and young adult publications, including a new edition of Robin Cody's *Ricochet River* (2005), a coming-of-age novel set in rural Oregon.

The press has published over two dozen books to date, including Michael Munk's *The Portland Red Guide* (2007; second edition, 2011), Charles Heying's *Brew to Bikes: Portland's Artisan Economy* (2010), and *Rethinking Paper & Ink: The Sustainable Publishing Revolution* (2010). The last title, along with *Classroom Publishing: A Practical Guide for Teachers* (2010), the second edition of a book originally written by Dennis Stovall and Laurie King, were written by graduate students in the publishing program. Both titles, along with *Brew to Bikes*, are part of Ooligan Press's OpenBook Series, which is dedicated to sustainability in publishing.

From 2006 to 2011, Ooligan Press tripled its student enrollment and expanded its course offerings and publishing practices to reflect changes in the industry, particularly those dealing with new distribution technologies. Approximately 260 students graduated from the program during those years, some moving on to careers in publishing and education. Stovall retired from the press in the fall of 2011.

Sources

Ooligan Press. <http://ooligan.pdx.edu/>

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