ACADEMIC SALES FOR LITERARY PUBLISHERS: A STUDY OF NIGHTWOOD EDITIONS AND THE COLLEGE MARKET

by

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Abstract

This paper examines literary publishing in Canada, looks at the rationale for and methods of academic sales, and describes Nightwood Editions' first academic sales campaign. Literary publishers in Canada face many challenges, none of which is more prominent than the struggle for financial survival. In order to survive, publishers of poetry and fiction must look at every potential sales avenue. One possible market that literary publishers may consider is the academic sector—that is, marketing to college and university instructors. By letting literature professors know about its activities and new books, publishers may successfully gain course adoptions for poetry and fiction titles that have limited sales potential in the trade market. For the literary publisher in Canada, academic sales can be an excellent regular source of revenue; however, it is not an easy market to break into, and may not be right for every company.

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1. Introduction

Literary presses in Canada face many challenges, and none of these is more significant than the constant financial struggle for survival. Though a publisher may produce outstanding, well-reviewed, award-winning fiction and poetry titles by talented writers—surely all measures of success by any standard—this does not always translate into sufficient sales to keep a company afloat. The size of Canada's population, competition in the marketplace from both domestic and foreign publishers, and the small number of members of the book-buying public make struggle a reality for all publishers, but especially those producing literary work.

Granting bodies such as the Canada Council for the Arts and the Book Publishing Industry Development Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage support literary publishers from year to year, and publishers often look to opportunities such as rights sales, US sales and income-generating titles to supplement revenue. But Canadian literary presses walk a fine line between confidence in the future of cultural publishing and harsh financial realities. Even in the best circumstances, profit margins are slim, and small presses wrestle constantly with a lack of financial and human resources. In the past ten years, developments in book retailing and distribution and the unknown impact of changing technology on reading habits have made an already challenging pursuit even more difficult.

Nevertheless, Canada continues to produce a vibrant literature, due in no small part to literary presses. As many independent booksellers—traditionally literary presses' largest market —have closed, unable to compete with Chapters/Indigo, literary presses have had to look to new routes to existing audiences and new audiences in order to survive.

For some, one of those new audiences is the college market (McLean 2002). Some poetry and fiction titles primarily oriented toward the consumer trade market may also have appeal to the academic sector. By having books adopted for college and university literature courses, literary publishers may find an additional source of revenue from an area that has been described as the most professional, stable major segment of the publishing industry (Huenefeld 1993, 10).

Nightwood Editions is one such publisher. Realizing that several of its backlist poetry titles, including *Taking the Names Down from the Hill* by Philip Kevin Paul and *Intimate Distances* by Fiona Tinwei Lam, had the potential to interest scholars in the areas of First Nations literature and Asian-Canadian literature, respectively, Nightwood publisher Silas White made reaching the academic sector one of the press's goals for 2005.

Though Nightwood's distributor, Harbour Publishing, had worked with an academic sales representative in the past, Nightwood had never attempted to reach the academic sector in a strategic manner. For Nightwood, then, course adoption of its poetry titles represented an untapped market—and a potentially excellent way to leverage sales of its frontlist and backlist.

In this report, I will look at Canadian literary publishing, introduce Nightwood Editions, and explore the rationale for academic sales for literary publishers. I will examine other Canadian publishers who are looking to the course adoption market as a way of supporting their lists, including Brick Books and Talonbooks, and describe their approaches. I will then describe the strategy, research and tasks undertaken at Nightwood.

Finally, I will analyze the preliminary outcomes of Nightwood's marketing efforts to the college market and suggest recommended actions, with the intention of making these findings available to other small presses in Canada.

2. Literary Publishing in Canada

2.1 Definition and Objectives

What is literary publishing? It is the publication of poetry, literary fiction and creative non-fiction, with an emphasis on cultural significance and quality of writing over commercial gain. Poetry and literary fiction tend to be more serious and critically acclaimed than popular or genre fiction such as mystery, romance or crime novels. Literary fiction tends to focus more on style and character, while commercial fiction emphasizes plot.

Literary titles are not often bestsellers, though occasionally a literary book captures the public imagination. When it does, it is usually written by a known entity—Margaret Atwood or Alice Munro, for example.

There are currently forty-eight publisher-members of the Literary Press Group of Canada, an association of independent publishers—that is, companies that are Canadian owned and controlled. These include Coach House Books, House of Anansi, The Mercury Press, The Porcupine's Quill, and many others. With some exceptions, the lists of these companies feature emerging and mid-career authors; once established, many fiction writers understandably move on to bigger houses (with their corresponding larger advances).

Some of the larger (multinational) publishers in Canada also produce fiction, and in some cases, poetry. HarperCollins, Doubleday, Knopf, Random House, and Penguin all produce high-quality Canadian literary fiction. Unlike independents, however, these larger companies seldom take risks on new writers, instead focusing on novels with higher sales potential by more established authors. McClelland & Stewart is an example of a larger company that continues to produce limited amounts of poetry (T. White 2005).

Literary book publishing is important. It contributes to a record of a country's culture and its people, and their thoughts, rituals, habits and dreams. "Artists [including literary artists] are a source of pride for Canadians, they speak volumes about the Canadian way of life and they are taking that message to the world" (Canada Council for the Arts 2004).

The way in which Canadian writing and cultural publishing thrived in the 1960s and 1970s—providing an arena for then-beginning authors as Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje and Alice Munro—demonstrates the lasting impact of, and need for, literary publishing. Without independent literary publishers, new poets and fiction writers and those authors writing outside the "mainstream" would have no method of distributing their work professionally in book form.

2.2 Challenges of Literary Publishing in Canada

Literary publishing is not for the faint of heart. In fact, it takes Herculean effort and substantial resources to sustain a publishing program of new poetry and fiction in any country. Because these genres do not generate much revenue, publishers must either be willing to work for little compensation or come up with alternate sources of income—which itself requires a significant investment of time and resources.

The *Quill and Quire*'s Fall 2005 Book Announcements listed eighty-three new poetry titles—a number surpassed only by the fiction category. The next-highest category was biography/memoir. Though literary publishing in Canada is a difficult endeavour, it is obviously also an area that is fascinating to many.

In Canada, a bestselling book of poetry is five hundred copies. Editing, marketing and promoting a book is a time-intensive process, whether a book ends up selling well or not; and with sales of five hundred copies, most publishers are fortunate to break even.

Says American book publishing consultant Steven O'Keefe: "Just as her husky hockey players glide gracefully over ice on a few centimeters of steel, so Canada's publishers produce

graceful books on razor-thin margins. It is a joy to watch them play, even though they seldom score" (qtd. in Inkster 2006, 3).

Tim Inkster, publisher of The Porcupine's Quill, points out that literary publishers *do* score—they just can't win. Even critically lauded, award-winning books from small presses rarely sell more than ten thousand copies. The Porcupine's Quill book *Emma's Hands* by Mary Swan, which was on *The Globe and Mail's* Top One Hundred list for 2003, has sold just 527 copies in Canada, despite the fact its author won the O. Henry Prize for short fiction; Annabel Lyon's *Oxygen*, also universally lauded and on *The Globe* Top One Hundred, has sold 898.

The state of book retailing and distribution in Canada has also added to the challenges of literary publishing. Chapters/Indigo has been sporadic in its ordering of poetry, and sell-through is often poor. Perhaps most telling, the retailer dropped out of an initiative to promote Canadian literature from independent presses in mid-2005. With several key independent booksellers closing in the spring and summer of 2005 in rapid succession, including Vancouver's Granville Book Company and the Double Hook in Montreal, the number of retail allies for literary presses appears to be diminishing quickly.

And as large book publishers buy one another and create multinational conglomerates such as Bertelsmann (which owns Random House, Knopf, and Doubleday in Canada), they can offer significant advances to authors—which means the literary titles that *do* have the potential to sell well usually end up with a larger house.

Despite these many challenges, opportunities exist for companies that are specialized, concentrated and small (Good 2004). "Cultural publishing carries on in every country in the world because ideas are more important than money" (Lorimer 1993, 9). Only independent literary publishers, which are more concerned with artistic expression than the bottom line, are willing to take risks on new writers and books that may not generate a financial return.

2.3 Revenue Sources

With so few financial returns, how do literary publishers in Canada sustain themselves? In most cases, they do so by means of a combination of three primary sources of revenue: sales of literary titles, grants, and the publication and sales of non-literary books that have a better chance of generating income. (Another source of revenue for publishers is rights sales; however, this is not generally an area that Canadian literary publishers rely upon, as poetry and literary fiction by new and non-bestselling writers in this country are not regularly purchased by publishers and readers outside Canada.)

2.3.1 Sales of Literary Titles

As mentioned above, sales of literary titles to the Canadian trade market are limited. It is often the larger publishers who benefit most from publishing the literary "blockbuster authors" such as Margaret Atwood; they also have the funds for large advances and promotional budgets that can help a book get noticed.

A number of collaborative trade sales campaigns for Canadian literary publishers have been attempted over the years. In 2005, the Literary Press Group launched "Take a Joy Read, Canada!", a government-supported program that sought to increase awareness and sales of such books through advertisements and co-op displays. Though the strategies employed were solid, results were disappointing, and the program has not continued in 2006. Chapters/Indigo opted out of the campaign in August 2005, citing lower sales in what was once prime shelf space. The Porcupine's Quill paid $900 to have one of its titles featured in this program, only to have all 668 copies it shipped returned by the bookstores; not a single copy had sold (Inkster 2006, 6).

Apart from the trade market, literary titles also have potential for sales in library and educational sectors—secondary schools, colleges and universities. Getting books accepted as part of elementary and secondary school curricula can be an extremely challenging endeavour. Unless

they publish for children and young adults specifically, few literary publishers devote their time exploring the el-hi market. We will look more closely at the college market in section four.

2.3.2 Grants

The majority of Canadian publishers, literary or not, rely on grants for stability. Literary publishers are eligible for funding from several sources. From the federal government, they can access Canadian Heritage's Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP). Titles deemed "literary" are also eligible for funding from the Canada Council for the Arts. Most literary publishers also apply for support from their provincial arts council, for example the BC Arts Council. Now and then, special grants may become available that literary publishers are eligible for as well.

Government funding is vital for the survival of Canadian publishers. However, it is dependent on the whim of the agenda of the government of the day, and amounts cannot be counted on from year to year. In the case of a not-for-profit literary publishing house with registered charitable status (very few examples exist in Canada), other opportunities for grants exist, including contributions from foundations, individuals, and other provincial and federal government departments. For example, Saskatchewan's Coteau Books, which is registered as a cooperative, receives funding from some of these additional sources.

2.3.3 Sales of Non-Literary Titles

Many literary publishers in Canada subsidize the production of poetry, literary fiction and creative non-fiction by adding potentially income-generating titles in other genres to their lists. For example, in 1980, in an effort to boost sales revenue and qualify for a federal government grant, Talonbooks published a cookbook. The book sold extremely well and enabled Talon to continue with its literary focus. Though Talon eventually went back to its roots and resumed publishing literary titles exclusively, there are many other such examples: House of Anansi now

publishes school workbooks for children; Insomniac produces not only poetry, but books on celebrities, spirituality, true crime, and financial advice; and Turnstone has launched a mystery fiction imprint, Ravenstone. Though the time, effort and learning curve of producing books outside one's area of expertise can be steep, this strategy can help subsidize the production of literary titles for which there is little financial return.

Whatever methods a literary publisher employs to sustain itself, staying true to its mission while keeping the cash flowing is a constant balancing act. In the next chapter, we will look at the background and activities of Nightwood Editions, a literary publishing house that has survived and thrived for almost forty years.

3. Nightwood Editions

3.1 Mandate

Nightwood Editions' primary mandate is to publish new work by emerging writers across Canada. The goal of publisher Silas White is to "put forward a more dynamic and exciting vision of Canadian literature" than what currently exists (S. White, email). Like Stan Dragland, Don McKay and Dave Godfrey before him, White set out to publish the best young writers of his generation who were working in a wide range of styles. Community is important to the press, as is a commitment to a literature removed from pretension. As of 2004, Nightwood is also dedicated to producing high-quality Canadian non-fiction that helps support its literary list.

3.2 Company History

Though many think of Nightwood Editions as a "new" press because it publishes emerging writers, in fact, it has a forty-year history, beginning as blewointment press.

Vancouver poet bill bissett founded blewointment in 1963, publishing mimeographed magazines of experimental poetry. Within a few years, he started publishing books under the blewointment name. bissett published a wide variety of writers and poetic styles, including poets d.a. levy, bpNichol, and Lionel Kearns. He continued producing books throughout the 1970s and 1980s. bissett's own work and publisher, Talonbooks, were lambasted by Canadian Parliament for profanity, which eventually led to the strengthening of the Canada Council's policies to support literature. But in 1982, the Council reduced funding support to blewointment by 42%, and bissett no longer wished to manage the press. Writers/publishers Alan Twigg (*BC*

Bookworld) and Howard White (Harbour Publishing) paid blewointment's creditors and managed the press for a short time (ABC Bookworld website).

In 1983, blewointment was sold to Howard White's brother- and sister-in-law, David Lee and Maureen Cochrane of Ontario, who renamed the press Nightwood Editions. During this era, Lee and Cochrane published books on many subjects, including poetry, fiction, film and jazz.

Governor-General's Award-winning illustrator Kim La Fave, based in Roberts Creek, BC, acquired 40 percent of the press in the early 1990s. He collaborated with Howard White on a line of children's titles with West Coast themes, some of which are still Nightwood's bestselling titles today, including the Legends of the Sechelt Nation series.

In 2000, Silas White took on part ownership (with Howard and Mary White of Harbour Publishing and Kim La Fave) and began running the press. His vision of publishing critically acclaimed poetry and fiction by emerging writers soon became a reality, and Nightwood gave new writers a chance to have their work published in book form. The press's sheer breadth of topics and writing styles began to differentiate Nightwood from other literary publishers, as did a mounting list of awards. Titles included *Breathing Fire 2: Canada's New Poets*, the follow-up to Harbour Publishing's *Breathing Fire*; Tim Bowling's *Darkness and Silence*; Philip Kevin Paul's *Taking the Names Down from the Hill*; *Intimate Distances* by Fiona Tinwei Lam; and the groundbreaking chain-fiction book *Write Across Canada*. In 2003, Nightwood joined forces with Junction Books, a Toronto chapbook publisher, to produce titles such as Ray Hsu's *Anthropy* and Adam Getty's *Reconciliation.*

Recognizing that even award-winning poetry is not financially feasible enough to sustain a publishing company for the long haul, Nightwood purchased Bluefield Books' select non-fiction list in 2004. Founded by Julian Ross, Bluefield had published a number of successful titles, including the *O Canada Crosswords* series and a book on soccer by national coach Shel Brødsgaard.

In 2005, Nightwood enriched its poetry list by starting a blewointment imprint. The first title under this imprint, *False Maps for Other Creatures* by Jay MillAr, demonstrates a desire to honour bissett's original commitment to grassroots and innovative poetry. Though this blewointment differs from the house during bissett's era in many ways, the blewointment name retains the small press ethos.

Based in Pender Harbour, BC, about two hours north of Vancouver (with a primary address in Roberts Creek), Nightwood Editions shows that a company doesn't need to be based in Toronto in order to be a national publisher. It has published work by writers from all over Canada, including Ontario, the Maritimes, and the Prairies. It also maintains a strong connection to BC poets and writers, and acclaimed authors Fiona Lam, Joe Denham, Philip Kevin Paul and Brad Cran are just a few who have published first books with Nightwood.

Nightwood does not have a mission statement per se. In fact, it's variety and spontaneity that keeps Silas White's vision for the press alive:

> ...we're more diverse and individualistic than other presses. By "individualistic" I mean that Nightwood's approach is that every book and writer is unique and should not be packaged or streamlined into one unified aesthetic that is pushed by the press. I'm more proud of the creative differences within our list than any similarities, while other presses tend to select manuscripts based on relatively narrow and strictly defined ideas of what kind of work they're willing to publish... I notice that elsewhere publishers tend to have a strong idea of what is sexy or what suits their tastes or what will pass as a book cover. I suppose I have strong ideas about design, too, but my first priority is to convey and honour the work within rather than to identify the book with Nightwood, or with any certain trendy book designer of the day... Stylistic sameness is something I resolutely want to avoid. (S. White, email)

It can, however, be agreed that Nightwood's primary focus is to publish poetry and fiction by emerging Canadian writers. Nightwood's primary market is the trade books sold to booksellers, who then sell to the public.

3.3 Current Publishing Activities

Since 2000, Nightwood has focused primarily on publishing poetry. More recently, it has begun to publish fiction; Sean Johnston's 2002 collection of short stories, *A Day Does Not Go By,* received positive reviews, as did rollicking military novel *Bonk on the Head* by John-James Ford and the poetic fictional collage *When I Was Young and In My Prime* by Alayna Munce (both 2005).

The purchase of Bluefield Books in 2004 meant that Nightwood inherited a variety of projects that fell outside its primary mandate; however, these income-generating titles are not such an anomaly in Nightwood's publishing program. The non-fiction titles demonstrate the press's commitment to Canada and Canadian authors; *Goals and Dreams* is an exploration of the national women's soccer team, while the *O Canada Crosswords* series celebrates this country's rich history and culture.

In addition to poetry, fiction, and select non-fiction, Nightwood is now also revisiting its children's line. The Legends of the Sechelt Nation series has been extremely popular, as has a picture book called *The Ferryboat Ride.* Diversifying its publishing program while maintaining its original commitment to poetry and fiction will help Nightwood ensure it has the vision and resources to continue for years to come.

3.4 Personnel

From 2000 to 2005, Nightwood Editions was run by Silas White, with some duties contracted out to Harbour Publishing. Though a distinctly separate company, Nightwood has a distribution arrangement with Harbour; Harbour includes Nightwood's titles in its catalogue, and Harbour marketing, sales and customer service staff is contracted to promote and sell Nightwood titles.

The visions of the two presses are quite distinct—Harbour publishes BC regional history, guidebooks, and some fiction and poetry by established BC authors—however, this arrangement works well for both parties.

Other than occasional editorial and typesetting work by Carleton Wilson of Nightwood's Junction Books imprint, Silas White took care of all the duties of the press from 2000 to 2005. He oversaw marketing and sales tasks performed by the staff of Harbour Publishing, including marketing staff Marisa Alps, Stephanie Sy and Alicia Miller; customer service representative Pamela Barclay; accountant Regina Kasa; and sales manager Brian Lee.

Though for the most part, Nightwood makes use of the same sales and distribution channels as Harbour Publishing, Harbour's staff recognizes the unique challenges presented by Nightwood's list. For example, marketing and sales for Nightwood titles is nationwide, whereas sales and marketing of Harbour's titles is largely (though not completely) regional. Like Harbour, Nightwood retains Kate Walker and Company for trade sales representation.

3.5 Internship

From May to September 2005, I completed my Master of Publishing internship at Nightwood Editions. Taking on the role of publisher's assistant, I was the first staff person in Nightwood's history. In true small press fashion, Nightwood provided me with the opportunity to do a bit of everything—from the editing and production of a fall fiction title to the project management and production of a crosswords book, and helping out with marketing and sales.

As of September 2005, Silas White continues to be involved in the press as publisher. I am continuing on with Nightwood in a managing editor role, assisting with editorial and production tasks as well as working with Harbour staff to ensure effective sales, marketing and distribution.

3.6 Revenue Sources

Like most other literary publishers in Canada, Nightwood relies on government support for the success of its publishing program. Unlike many publishing companies, Nightwood has the distinct advantage of being able to keep its overhead costs low. The press has been run out of the publisher's home, and more recently, from the donated office space of its distributor. Nightwood's revenue sources are made up of sales of literary titles, grants, and sales of non-literary titles.

3.6.1 Sales of Literary Titles

Nightwood does all it can to promote and sell its literary titles to the trade market. As has been outlined, this is a relatively small market in Canada. Most of the literary title sales are to bookstores.

In late 2005 and early 2006, Nightwood saw what can happen when a literary title by an unknown author catches on with the public imagination. *When I Was Young and In My Prime*, a poetic first novel by Alayna Munce, became the press's top seller, appearing on the BC Bestseller List for more than eight weeks and even appearing on BookManager's national Canadian fiction bestseller list (compiled weekly from the sales results of more than two hundred independent booksellers). For a book that began as a poetry manuscript, this was a pleasantly unexpected development indeed.

As with all of its titles, Nightwood worked with limited marketing and publicity budgets; the success of *When I Was Young and In My Prime* was due primarily to word of mouth, and to hand-selling by independent bookstores. (In what turned out to be a fortunate printing error, Nightwood ended up with a surplus of this title and was in a position to circulate approximately five hundred reading copies to merchants—something it had never before been able to do.) The book's success is also testament to the quality of the writing and the universal appeal of its subject—a young woman grappling with the decline of her grandparents. For those working in

literary publishing, it is a heartening success story indeed. As of March 2006, the book has sold 1,300 copies, with the number expected to rise as the author has been nominated for the 2006 Trillium Book Award and will be reading at several writing festivals in the coming months.

However, this sort of phenomenon is not an everyday occurrence, and is certainly not something that can be foreseen or planned for. Nightwood continues to look at new ways of marketing its literary titles, and has been looking into securing a US distributor who may be a good fit for the press. A campaign to sell literary titles to the college market began in 2005, and is covered in more detail in section five.

3.6.2 Grants

Government support for Nightwood has come from the Canada Council for the Arts and the BC Arts Council. In May 2005, the Department of Canadian Heritage's Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) approved a one-year grant for intern funding. Nightwood will also apply for BPIDP's Support to Publishers program in 2006; if successful, this will be the first time it will have secured this funding.

3.6.3 Sales of Non-Literary Titles

Taking on the Bluefield Books list has opened several new sales avenues for Nightwood. For example, the book *Goals and Dreams: A Celebration of Women's Soccer* by Shel Brødsgaard and Bob Mackin has a very clearly defined niche audience: female soccer players age twelve and up. There are many additional opportunities to market this book outside the usual trade channels; for example, soccer associations and sporting goods stores have been contacted for this title.

In September 2005, five thousand non-returnable copies of *O Canada Crosswords Book 6* by Kathleen Hamilton were purchased by the clothing chain Mark's Work Wearhouse, making the book a bestseller less than a month after publication.

3.7 Challenges

Nightwood faces the challenges that all Canadian literary publishers do, including limited resources. Once printing bills and staff are paid and day-to-day matters taken care of, Nightwood has little remaining for advertising, marketing and sales campaigns, or even its own print catalogue (the press's titles are included in the catalogue of Harbour Publishing). This means that the press may not always be able to participate in trade shows, for example, or give a book as much of a promotional boost as is desired. It must instead look at the most economically viable ways of getting the word out—and that means magazine advertisements are usually out.

When Kitty Lewis, general manager at Brick Books, shared that Brick was having some success with sales to the academic market, Silas White became curious about this strategy. Promoting Nightwood's literary books to the college market sounded like a logical and potentially inexpensive way to open up a new sales avenue. But would it be a solution that would fit the press? Before we went ahead, we investigated the various approaches and philosophies behind academic sales.

4. Academic Sales

4.1 Definition

The term "academic sales" refers to the sales and marketing of books to post-secondary instructors ("the college market"), with the intention of getting those books adopted on the required and/or recommended reading lists of university and college courses. It does not necessarily mean the sales and marketing of textbooks, or books designed specifically for the educational market; it can also apply to any trade book that has potential to be a post-secondary resource.

4.2 Nature of the Post-Secondary Market

American publishing management consultant John Huenefeld describes the post-secondary market as the most professional, stable major segment of the publishing industry. Once a book is adopted for a course, its publisher will benefit from the fact that it will be a bulk buy, repeated year after year. The market is, however, the most conservative (Huenefeld 1993, 10).

It is also a difficult and expensive market to enter. There is much competition, particularly for the independent trade publisher seeking to go up against large multinational educational publishers. But, according to marketing consultant David Cole, "opportunities abound for trade and professional publishers to sell books for supplementary reading on all subjects" (Cole 1999, 144). It is this hope that keeps many trade publishers—even small literary presses—testing the market.

According to Penelope Grows, an independent academic sales representative, one of the biggest challenges of selling to this market is its breadth and diversity:

> Not only do you have different customers (instructors, students, bookstores), but you have different kinds of institutions (universities, community colleges, CEGEPs, two year university style colleges, technical institutes, and private schools). In addition to that, each province organizes its post-secondary institutions differently, such as the CEGEPs in Quebec and the technical schools in Saskatchewan. (Grows, email)

In order to get a book adopted for a course, publishers must successfully appeal to instructors. This means determining what professors require and what their teaching and resource needs are, finding ways that the publishers' books can meet those needs, and presenting their books in a tone and style that will resonate with the instructor.

But winning an instructor over is only the beginning. Even when the professor puts a book on a course's required or recommended reading list, the sale has not been made. The publisher must also effectively appeal to the student who will be purchasing the book.

The post-secondary market is also quickly changing—more to the advantage of students than publishers. Students now have more options than ever before; they can choose to borrow a required title from the library or buy a used copy of the book online, for example. As Michael Harrison, President of Broadview Press—one of Canada's most successful independent academic publishers—states, "I suspect today's students are finding many creative ways of sharing books, rather than buying them. But there's nothing we can do [to change that]" (Harrison, phone interview). Textbook sales at most campus bookstores are declining sharply as students react to rising prices and turn to online used booksellers (Nersessian 2005, 18).

For the publisher who invests time and resources marketing to the academic sector with the objective of having students purchase books, these uncontrollable factors can make academic sales seem like wasted efforts. New models are being created in an attempt to resolve these problems; for example, publishers such as McGraw-Hill are making electronic books available to students at a lower price than print books (Editors of *Book Business Magazine* 2005). For the time being, however, most publishers who market to the post-secondary sector continue to sell print books.

4.3 Size of the Post-Secondary Book Market in Canada

Before publishers invest in reaching the college market, the question of market size and potential revenues is a logical one. Though figures specifically for literary course adoptions in Canada are unavailable, there are some data available on the market as a whole. Net sales of books to campus bookstores and post-secondary institutions in Canada were over $235 million in 1998–1999 (Statistics Canada 2004). This is 17 percent of the total 1998–1999 book market of $1.35 billion.

This figure includes books in all subject areas, from business to medicine and from computers to poetry. Since science, math and business texts tend to be more expensive—and class sizes in these areas tend to be larger than those of upper-level literature courses—it is likely that the dollar figure above skews heavily in the direction of non-literary texts.

However, Broadview Press sells more English textbooks than any other type of book. In 2004, Broadview Press's gross sales were $2,262,470 ($1,661,425 net). English course texts—primarily classics with new introductions and commentary oriented to first- and second-year courses, which have higher enrollment than senior-level classes—accounted for 45.9 percent of net sales (Annual Report 2004).

Before they begin an academic sales campaign, publishers must decide if they are willing to risk the investment. They must also determine whether they've truly "got the goods"; not all literary books are suitable for the college market, and promoting the books with the objective of course adoptions is much more than simply putting a new marketing spin on an existing trade title.

4.4 Academic sales: type of book, audience, or marketing technique?

Most literary publishers are not publishing specifically for the academic market. Educational publishers, on the other hand, design books explicitly for course adoption. An anthology of poetry that spans a hundred-year period, with suggested discussion questions and

other teaching aids, was designed at the outset with educational purposes in mind. In comparison, a first collection of poems by a single author may not immediately seem to have direct relevance for study and teaching at the post-secondary level. The first example is an academic book, specifically intended for course adoption; the second is a trade title with potential suitability for use in an educational context. Publishers of new literature, then, may need to work harder at demonstrating that their books are suitable for course adoption.

Bearing these examples in mind, is "academic" or "adoption" a type of book, an audience, or a method of marketing? Opinions vary and perhaps on some level, the term can refer to all three.

Huenefeld says "academic" is a type of book with a corresponding audience; he categorizes books by both buyer and genre. He puts books that have potential to be used in post-secondary courses into a group entirely on their own. His premise is that there are three types of books: 1) trade titles, which are marketed to bookstores; 2) "direct response" books, which are sold directly to the general consumer; and 3) "adoption" books, which he defines as "sanctified teaching aids and learning resources" (Huenefeld 1993, 10), and are sold to university and college instructors.

While Huenefeld's categories work on some level, they fail to allow for any overlap. Direct response, for example, is a sales technique, not a type of book, and some of its principles can be used to market books to a variety of audiences—including the academic sector. Likewise, putting "adoption" books into their own category fails to note the fact that some trade titles may also have relevance for course adoption.

Cole also distinguishes three types of books: 1) trade titles; 2) professional books; and 3) course adoption titles. Like Huenefeld, he puts "adoption" books into their own category, which does not allow for intersection from the trade book group. He does, however, recognize that direct response marketing may be a part of each one of these categories (Cole 1999, 143). Therefore, he acknowledges that direct response is a technique designed to reach a particular audience, and not

a type of book, and that one of these audiences may be the post-secondary instructors. It is Cole's categorization that we will adopt here.

4.5 Sales and Marketing: A definition

The terms "sales" and "marketing" are often associated with an aggressive selling style and hucksterism—the "used car salesman" stereotype. Because of this, some in the publishing industry may be hesitant to use these terms when discussing the promotion of books to the college market. Presumably, those in the "ivory tower" are removed from ideas and people who are commercially motivated—by choice.

But marketing need not be associated with crass commercialism; in fact, to look upon marketing and promotion as something that will taint a publisher's editorial mission is to provide a disservice to both a book's potential audience and to the publisher.

Marketing is a much broader activity than merely the sales and promotion of a product. It is a group of processes and choices that all organizations—whether for-profit or not—use to make an exchange with others (Shapiro et al. 2002, 4). Marketing and sales are not something "tacked on" to a product at the end of its life cycle, completely removed from its development; they can and should be considered from the beginning of the process, and carried through to ensure a product reaches its intended audience.

The purpose of book marketing is to find the readers and book buyers who will share the publishers' enthusiasm for their particular books. "The world in which we live is large and impersonal, and your prospective buyers have a multitude of books to choose from as well as other source of information and media. You need to provide a lot of help—also known as marketing—if you want them to find and select your titles" (Cole 1999, xiv). Marketing is about sharing information; when done with focus and respect, it need not be crass.

The language and tone of a letter to a scholar that provides information about a new book in her academic field will differ greatly from one that promotes a self-help book to the general

public, but the methods are similar. Books of poetry and fiction, primarily intended for the trade, can be marketed to a scholarly audience using direct response techniques.

4.6 Methods

We have now discussed philosophies of selling books to the college market, as well as the nature of the college market itself. But how does a publisher go about sharing information about its books with university and college professors? Like any effective sales and marketing campaign, reaching the academic sector requires careful thought and follow-through. It also requires a good knowledge of the audience, an idea supported by literary and academic publishers alike.

Opinions vary widely on the most effective ways to approach the post-secondary sector. Some, like Liz Whitton of UBC Press, believe that a book-by-book direct mail campaign using a well-researched mailing list and thoughtfully worded copy can be produced and sent out by a company's staff, with good response. The objective is to make professors aware that a book is available so that they may order an examination copy.

Others, like Broadview Press's Michael Harrison, see having dedicated academic sales representatives, and staff whose tasks include sales, as a primary key to success. Meeting with scholars face-to-face, finding out what they are working on, determining what their needs are and following up by phone and email works well for this public company.

Still others, like Talonbooks' Karl Siegler, believe that only a scholar's peer should approach a professor, and that the best way of "marketing" to this group is simply interacting with them in the context of a collegial personal relationship. (Siegler himself is an adjunct professor at SFU who knows over 90 percent of his company's academic contacts personally.) The most successful strategies for reaching the college market, he says, do not resemble traditional marketing or sales campaigns at all; rather, they are a peer-to-peer exchange of information and ideas.

This wide variation of styles is likely a reflection of the distinctiveness of each company itself. Regardless of which approach is the most effective, the most common ways to approach the post-secondary sector are through sales representatives, desk/examination copies, direct mail and conferences.

4.6.1 Sales Representatives

Textbook publishers, for example Pearson Education and McGraw-Hill Ryerson, have teams of sales reps who regularly visit post-secondary instructors at campuses to determine their needs. There are also several independent academic sales reps throughout the country who work on behalf of book publishers; these include Cariad Services to Publishers International, Fernwood Books, and Savant Books.

Michael Harrison at Broadview Press credits his company's success to face-to-face interaction. Broadview's in-house reps go to universities, sit down with the professors, and discuss what the professors need and the books the company has that meet those needs. The reps also speak with instructors about what they are working on, which can spark ideas for new books. Harrison himself makes regular sales calls, as do many of Broadview's non-sales staff. He states that having in-house representatives provides "the whole story" in a way that hiring sales reps on contract does not.

Few literary publishers whose primary audience is not academic can afford to retain in-house academic reps; therefore, a more reasonable solution may be hiring an independent academic sales representative. This person already has the contacts at universities across the country and saves a press from building a network from scratch. Fees are generally paid on a commission basis; if there is no course adoption, there is no fee. For the under-resourced small press, this route is an attractive option indeed.

But in Karl Siegler's experience, hiring an independent sales rep was not the right choice for Talonbooks; the company's sales actually decreased after they hired a rep. "Professors are the

experts in their fields," he states. "Why would a sales rep know more than the experts?" (Siegler, phone interview). Siegler believes that academics do not wish to be contacted by independent or even in-house reps; they need to be contacted by a peer—another academic, a publisher or an editor—in order for significant sales to be made.

4.6.2 Desk/Examination Copies

Whether they use independent or in-house reps, or contact scholars themselves, the goal of a publisher's academic sales campaign is course adoption. Though a small number of literary publishers have great success with personal sales calls and building relationships face-to-face between publisher and university instructors, the majority simply can't afford the time or resources. For these publishers, direct mail marketing makes the most sense (Cole 1999, 145).

Large multinational academic publishers often use "push" marketing methods, sending a free copy of each book they publish to relevant professors across the country (known in the industry as "blind comping"). However, this is an extremely expensive activity.

Most smaller publishers prefer to provide information to professors through their catalogues or direct mail, then have instructors request copies of books they are interested in. Broadview Press gives away $100,000 in books each year—even with sales of $3 million, this is a significant investment (Harrison, phone interview).

It is generally agreed that a copy of a book must be put into instructors' hands if they are to consider adopting that book for one of their courses. Opinions vary, however, on whether the book should be given to them on a no-strings-attached basis (desk copy), or whether it should be returned if the book does not end up being used for a course (review/examination copy).

Whether they send a desk copy or an examination copy, some publishers have conditions about how the books are requested. For example, some require that instructors fax the request in on department letterhead and specify which course the book is being examined for, and how many students are registered in that course. This information reduces the amount of risk, ensuring

no one takes advantage of the offer to receive a free book and providing the publisher with additional information with which to follow up (Bartlett 2001).

Others believe the process should be made as simple as possible in order to increase the number of requests, and are willing to provide the book to any post-secondary instructor with no requirements and with no expectation of return if the book is not adopted. The ease of process and goodwill that this approach generates is well worth the expense of sampling and mailing (Weir-Williams 1999). The goal is to make the process easy, as college and university instructors are already backlogged with paperwork:

> Aim for a simple direct offer. "Call today, and we will send you a free examination copy" is best... "If you want to consider the book for adoption, write to us on departmental letterhead, and we will send an examination copy with an invoice. If you decide to include the book on the syllabus for a class you are teaching, and we receive a course order within x days, we will cancel the invoice. Otherwise, you must return the book or pay for it" is good for discouraging requests. I do, however, see such offers all the time. (Cole 1999, 149)

In some cases, the benefits to selected "blind comping" outweigh the drawbacks. Publishing consultant Hans M. Zell suggests that samples be mailed out to a limited number of key instructors in a book's potential area of interest, whether requested or not. Even if the book is not adopted, providing desk copies may lead to the instructor providing feedback, tips and leads, or publicizing the book to colleagues (Zell 2001, 64).

Whether given out free or on a conditional basis, sample copies are valuable only if the market knows the books are available. With the number of books clamouring for their attention, including those that larger academic publishers send on an unsolicited basis, post-secondary instructors must be made aware of the fact that desk copies can be obtained. The most natural method to achieve this is through a direct mail campaign of a publisher's catalogue (Weir-Williams 1999).

4.6.3 Catalogue Mailings / Direct Response

As outlined above, selling to the college market can be viewed essentially as a direct response or direct mail campaign. Any successful direct mail campaign makes money as a comprehensive, long-term program, not as a one-time event; "its effectiveness comes from building up a customer base that will buy repeatedly" (Cole 1999, 91).

According to Zell, direct response is "by far the most cost-effective way to keep academics informed... [and] the most powerful marketing tool available to academic and STM [scientific, technical and medical] publishers. Publishers can target the audience of a considerable measure of precision" (Zell 2001, 64). Direct response relies on three key pieces: a mailing list, an initial letter, and follow-up.

The mailing list – A direct mail campaign is only as good as one's contact list. When approaching the post-secondary sector, it is important to start with high-quality, carefully researched contacts. Several companies known as "list brokers" sell mailing lists of academic contacts—for a price (usually about $75 to $150 per thousand names). List brokers in Canada include Prospects Influential, 24/7 Canada Inc., Fixed Address Marketing, Business Information Group, and Scott's Directories.

Purchasing a list may seem a much more effective use of resources than creating one from scratch. However, there are advantages to developing one's own list: publishers can specifically identify the types of contacts they want, they know each person on it, and they can feel confident they are not sending unsuitable information to inappropriate contacts.

Developing one's own mailing list is time-consuming. Maintenance of a mailing list can be a full-time job, as post-secondary instructors tend to be on the move. But, with the amount of information now available on the internet, developing an in-house list is easier than it has ever been. Starting with a list of Canadian universities and colleges, one can visit the website of each, going to the desired department site. Areas of interest and email addresses of instructors are usually available; many institutions now also post course outlines, complete with required and

recommended reading lists for each. These can be particularly useful for the publisher wishing not only to contact appropriate instructors, but to find out what is currently being taught in a given course.

The direct mail letter – Although some publishers prefer to send out one mailing that showcases all of its books, targeted mailings—that is, information about a specific title or group of titles—may have a higher success rate. By focusing on one or a few titles that are thematically connected, publishers can send information to instructors that will fit a specific area of interest. For example, if a professor's areas of interest include contemporary Canadian poetry, women's issues and the diaspora, sending her information about a novel written by an American man is not likely to be an appropriate use of time—for either her or the publisher.

The most important feature of a direct mail letter is that it gives the recipient a simple method of responding—in this case, it encourages the professor to request a sample copy of the book or books of interest.

Direct mail does not need to involve paper and postage. Although it is a relatively new phenomenon, many publishers approach instructors by sending them email instead of a letter. The benefits to this are clear: savings of postage, knowledge that the information will reach the recipient's email inbox directly, and an easy method of response for the professor.

A direct mail campaign by email must be carefully thought out. The amount of "spam" that is received may make some publishers hesitant about sending unsolicited email. However, most publishers who use this method find that they rarely receive any complaints; in fact, they more often hear positive feedback (Whitton, email).

Response rates – Any direct mail campaign must be analyzed in order to evaluate its success. In most types of marketing, the objective of the letter is to solicit a response in the buyer—that is, the recipient is compelled to make a purchase. In the case of academic sales, however, the object of the letter is to encourage the recipient to request a desk copy—and a request for a sample does not equal a sale. Even if the request does lead to an adoption, it can be

extremely difficult to track; the actual order will take place from the university bookstore, and may happen months or even years later. In the case of a letter or email with the intention of having the recipient ask for a desk copy, "success" may be defined as the sample copy request itself.

The average response rate for direct mail can range from 2 percent (Huenefeld 1993, 293) to 3 percent (Woll 1998, 254); for every one hundred names, two to three people may respond with a request for a sample. This response rate may seem low; however, it can be vastly improved when a mailing is sent to a focused, carefully researched list.

4.6.4 Conferences

Direct mail can be a useful tool, but it takes place from within the publisher's office, with no face-to-face interaction between publisher and audience. Perhaps one of the best ways to get to know the college market—without the expense and time of visiting post-secondary institutions directly—is for publishers to promote their books at academic conferences.

In Canada, the Congress of Social Sciences and Humanities (often referred to as "the Learneds" or "Congress") is the most popular gathering for book publishers to display their titles, interact with academics, and perhaps even discover new ideas for upcoming books. This conference takes place each May. For 2006, exhibit rentals will be approximately $1,550 for one booth for eight days ($1,100 for four days).

Though Congress is the largest conference of its kind in Canada, many other such conventions exist. Publishers who wish to share information about their books will find conferences on everything from First Nations literature to avant-garde poetry, and most of these feature book displays.

Collaborative displays can help publishers cut down on the expenses associated with setting up a full display. For example, in September 2005, the Association of Canadian Publishers (ACP) put out a call for additions to its collective display at the 2005 Biennial Conference of the

Association for Canadian Studies in the United States (ACSUS). Any member of the ACP was invited to participate in this initiative, coordinated by Broadview Press.

4.7 Canadian Literary Publishers who Market to the Academic Sector

In October 2005, I surveyed literary publishers to find out if they focused on the academic market to gain course adoption. See Appendix A for complete list of those surveyed and the detailed results. I contacted sixteen publishers by email and telephone with the following list of questions:

1) Is marketing to the academic sector worthwhile for literary publishers?
2) Does your company actively sell to the post-secondary sector?
3) What methods of contact does your company use?
4) What percentage of your company's annual sales is made up of academic sales or course adoptions?
5) What are some of the challenges of selling books to the college market?

Except for one, all of those who responded stated that they do actively market to the post-secondary sector. According to Insomniac Press publisher Mike O'Connor, this is "a vital sales channel—the difference between making and losing money" (O'Connor, email). Estimates of sales from this sector ranged from "very little" (Wolsak and Wynn) to 20 percent (Brick Books), with Talonbooks leading at more than half of its annual sales. For the most part, direct mail / email and conferences were the preferred techniques.

Forty percent of respondents did not know the amount that course adoptions contributed to their company's overall sales. Challenges of selling to this market varied widely, ranging from lack of time to inability to measure whether efforts have a direct result.

This survey led to (and in some cases, was preceded by) discussions with Brick Books, Ronsdale Press, Talonbooks, and The Porcupine's Quill. Though all publishers surveyed had valuable contributions to the topic, I decided to examine two in particular: Talonbooks and Brick

Books. These two presses are at distinct stages in their college marketing strategies. Talonbooks has been marketing to the academic sector since its inception, and the college market comprises 50 percent of its sales. Brick Books is more like Nightwood in this respect, and two years ago it began its own academic sales strategy. How has Talonbooks had such success with this market? How should a literary publisher best proceed in selling to the academic sector? There is much to learn by looking at the specific experiences of Talon and Brick.

4.8 Case studies

4.8.1 Talonbooks

Talonbooks was one of the first—and is still one of the most effective—Canadian literary publishers to gain course adoptions. Although it does not identify the college market as its primary audience (it primarily publishes for the trade), approximately half of Talonbooks' sales in Canada are derived from the post-secondary sector or college market (Siegler, phone interview).

Talonbooks was founded in 1967. From the beginning it has published poetry and drama, and has since begun publishing books on social issues as well. Even from these early days, the academy was clearly an important part of the press. Its founding members, including Karl Siegler, were professors and teaching assistants, and Siegler's colleagues at universities and colleges watched the birth of the press with interest. Talonbooks communicated its activities to academic contacts as a natural extension of its identity. A phone call here, a catalogue and personal letter there—Talonbooks' founders were excited about the books they published, and genuinely wanted to keep friends and associates in the loop in a natural exchange of ideas. Response was extremely positive; the college market responded with regular course adoptions of Talonbooks titles.

In 1974, realizing there was room for improvement in its trade sales, Talonbooks hired commissioned sales representatives from coast to coast. The company was pleased to see its trade sales double. It also observed that each time it lost a rep, its sales to the trade immediately took a

hit; when it hired a new rep, trade sales resumed at the usual pace. Talon discovered that having a rep was key to successful trade sales.

Following this logic, Talonbooks hired a representative for the college market in 1981, expecting a similar doubling of sales. Its academic representative travelled to colleges and universities across the country three times a year. But the results were startling. Instead of watching sales go up, the company saw its course adoptions collapse significantly. Perhaps, the owners thought, it was experiencing a temporary transition, and that sales would resume in time. But by the end of the second year, they let the representative go, reasoning that the 10 percent commission was an expense the company could no longer afford. According to Siegler, sales to the college market went back up almost immediately.

Surprising? Perhaps, but according to Siegler, he and his colleagues soon found an explanation. By removing the personal contact between the owners of Talonbooks and their university contacts, and relying on a sales rep who was not part of the academy, they had stopped a natural community of discourse. When it started, Talonbooks owners-managers had been speaking to their colleagues in the academic network on a peer-to-peer basis. They were editors discovering new writers, steadily conveying their excitement to the academic networks they maintained.

By going with a sales representative, says Siegler, Talonbooks' relationship with academics changed. Professors had felt neglected and insulted, and missed the peer-to-peer exchange. Through this process, Siegler says Talonbooks rediscovered a respect for scholars, and began once more to "walk the walk and talk the talk." Siegler once again began contacting his network of university and college professors directly, keeping up to date with critical vocabulary, avidly reading their work in journals and remaining current in each discipline.

Today, Talonbooks continues to market to the academic sector in the way it began. Its public face—advertisements, website, and catalogue—are all extremely serious, intellectual and understated in a way that appeals to scholars. An important component, says Siegler, is the way

he addresses letters to academics: "Dear Colleague." In addition, Siegler writes all catalogue copy himself, building in at least three current key words that academics will recognize, and providing cues on how to teach. (Talonbooks provides complimentary desk copies only for confirmed course adoptions.)

The primary reason for its success in the academic market, though, is that Talonbooks has the products that professors are looking for. "You really do have to publish books that are serious, and you have to market them in a way that makes clear they're not populist titles, even though they are 'trade titles'" (Siegler, phone interview). He asserts that though, technically, these activities *are* a form of marketing, they are of a very different type than promoting to trade. Professors and teaching assistants firmly believe *they* are the experts in their respective fields. Sales representatives are not their peers; reps are commercially motivated, while academics put the world of knowledge and ideas first. Sales people arouse their suspicion. According to Siegler, glitzy promotional packages and direct-mail-style letters do nothing to impress this market.

Many publishers have noted a downturn in course adoptions in the past two years; Siegler maintains that this may have more to do with the methods publishers are using than the actual market itself. Like other literary publishers, Talon makes use of direct mail, attendance at the Congress and examination copies; but the key difference is that it has built relationships and respect with its contact list over a period of nearly thirty years. This is obviously not something that can be generated quickly by publishers hoping to expand their markets, and suggests that Talonbooks' success has been hard-won.

4.8.2 Brick Books

Brick Books has been producing poetry by Canadian writers exclusively for thirty years. Since the Canadian poetry market is so small, Brick has had to look at innovative ways of marketing and selling. It began an academic sales program just two years ago, in order to diversify revenue sources.

According to publisher and general manager Kitty Lewis, academic sales are a difficult area. Brick Books did not begin to track course adoptions until 1999, when they realized that universities were in fact ordering books for this purpose. Academic sales had increased from $5,000 in 1999 to $12,904 in 2003—without Brick Books having done anything to attract these sales throughout this period.

In 2004, Lewis began to pay more attention to the academic market and planned a more strategic campaign. The goal, says Lewis, is to broaden readership, increase sales over the long term, and increase course adoptions of books at the college and university level.

Brick does not have an academic sales representative; Lewis believes they do not have enough sales for a rep to justify taking on its list. Brick's primary approach to academic sales was simply to make it a part of a book offer to high schools, universities and college classes and libraries. They felt that providing the books at no cost, and with no obligation to the recipient, would be the best technique. Since May 2001, they have mailed out 10,651 free books to 610 parties (note that these are not all university and college instructor requests).

For Brick, promoting their books to the academic sector was not motivated solely by a desire to increase sales: "We will continue these efforts to get the books out of my garage and onto library shelves and/or into the hands of readers," says Lewis. "We feel it is our responsibility to get these books into the public's hands" (Lewis, email).

Brick Books decided that an email campaign, rather than traditional direct mail, would work best for them. In 2004, they hired a graduate student to compile a mailing list with the names and email addresses for six hundred post-secondary instructors who teach Canadian poetry in literature courses. They also contracted a freelance marketing consultant to come up with the copy. Though they considered collaborating with an academic press, in the end they decided to go it alone.

So far, Brick Books has sent three emails showcasing their list and offering examination copies to post-secondary instructors. Instructors are free to keep the books whether they adopt

them for courses or not. The emails were signed "Kitty Lewis, Publisher." In conjunction with their email campaigns, Brick created a section on its website that showcases its top fifteen course adoptions. The response to the initial email, sent in November 2003, was 12 percent. Fifty of the six hundred email addresses were invalid. There were seven requests for examination copies; two of these were known to Brick Books while the remaining five contacted Brick for the first time.

Total expenses for this first campaign were approximately $1,800. Though they had hoped for a better response, Lewis says getting the mailing list was an important first step they can build on. The company plans to contact these professors on a regular basis to announce new books each season. In a second campaign in May 2004, the response rate was much higher at 8 percent. Academic sales now represent 20 percent of total sales for Brick Books.

Exhibiting at Congress is a part of Brick's strategy. They share a table with one or two other literary publishers, and so far, both years they have participated have not been far from their main office in London, Ontario (the first year was in London and this year will be in Toronto, where Brick is launching a new book). This has helped to keep costs low.

Lewis says being at Congress can be slow going for small literary presses, as many instructors tend to gravitate to the larger educational publishers. But there have been some positive outcomes. In late 2004, Lewis contacted graduate students and professors who were attending a conference on Atlantic writers. The following May, one of the instructors who had been contacted by email approached Brick's table at Congress, picked up two desk copies, and later adopted two of the titles for her courses (a total of one hundred books). "This was a success," says Lewis, "but a lot of work—and you don't always know whether any of your efforts have resulted in a course adoption. Just like advertising, it's very hard to track the results" (Lewis, email).

Though it may not have the organic relationship with the academy that Talonbooks does, Brick's activities demonstrate that consistent effort can help a small press begin communicating with the academic market. Brick Books plans to continue to expand this area through more direct

email campaigns, attendance at conferences such as the Association of Writers and Writing Programs conference (held in Vancouver in March 2005), and advertisements in literary journals.

4.9 Comparison and Analysis of Talon's and Brick's Strategies

What can we learn from the academic sales strategies of Talonbooks and Brick Books? It would be tempting to say that there is one correct way to "do" academic sales, and that those publishers that choose not to operate this way will have limited to success. However, in reality, there are as many approaches to the college market as there are publishers.

Does Talonbooks, which has had undeniable success in this market, owe its market share to its publisher-driven, peer-to-peer methods? Siegler seems to suggest so, and he recommends that others either follow suit or focus on other markets. The methods which Talonbooks uses may indeed be the reason for its success, however, it is difficult to find the direct evidence to support this idea. There are a number of other possibilities which could explain Talonbooks' success. For example, Siegler's academic background is obviously a benefit, and it may be that he is a very good salesman, providing instructors with the framework for their teaching and justification for their choices. Alternatively, perhaps Talon's books are simply more suited to the academic market than those of other publishers. Or, it may be that Talonbooks has conditioned its customers to accept this marketing style. If Talon had not set out with the collegial peer-to-peer communication style, for instance, it would not have raised the expectations, and then disappointed, its constituents when it hired a sales representative.

Most likely, it is the combination of all of Talon's strategies (making the academic market a part of the editorial and acquisitions process, projecting a serious image through catalogue copy, and direct publisher-to-constituent contact), and not one or another, that is so effective—*for Talonbooks*. To say that this same combination of factors would work equally well for other literary publishers in Canada would be oversimplifying. It would also ignore the fact that other publishers have found other combinations of strategies that work for them.

Though it has less experience in the area and has roots in poets and poetry rather than academics and the academy, Brick Books *has* made progress in its college sales. This progress would not have occurred without the press's willingness to invest time and resources into opening this sector of the market. As the saying goes, "You have to spend money to make money"—and be willing to take the risk of no immediate financial returns.

It is interesting to note that many of Brick's editors teach at the post-secondary level (most in creative writing departments). Despite these associations, the company has chosen to communicate with academic constituents directly from its office. Will this tactic fail to grab the market, as Siegler's opinions suggest? Only time and continued experimentation and evaluation will tell. Brick may indeed have found the right combination for its share of the market in the same way that Talon has; the types of poetry books that Talon and Brick publish are quite distinct, and will likely appeal to slightly different academic markets.

4.10 Rationale: The Case for Academic Sales for Literary Publishers

As outlined in section two, one of the keys to long-term success and sustainability for literary publishers is to ensure they are earning revenue from a number of different sources. When publishers rely on one or two sources—government grants, for example, plus sales to the general trade market—they put themselves in a precarious position. Grants are reasonably stable, but amounts cannot be counted on from year to year, and general trade sales can be fickle. Though no single revenue source can provide absolute stability, having a variety of sources lessens the risk.

The academic market is simply another market segment, and as a potential source of additional revenue, it is one that literary publishers can't afford not to evaluate. For Nightwood, it represented an untried market which most other Canadian literary publishers are already reaching—some to considerable success. Nightwood's existing list of award-winning poetry titles make course adoptions a natural potential market. As Nightwood is already trying a number of

other appropriate markets (trade, non-traditional retail outlets, direct-to-consumer online sales), the college sector seemed a logical next step.

4.11 Challenges of Academic Sales for Literary Publishers

Despite the many reasons why approaching the college market is a good idea for literary presses, academic sales are not a magic bullet. There are no shortcuts to building relationships with this audience or to establishing the kind of credibility that will encourage scholars to take a press seriously. Selling to the post-secondary sector requires a significant investment of time and resources; it is not something that can be learned over a few weeks with the hope of increasing revenues on a short-term basis. Reaching this market requires a sustained effort, significant follow-up, and the building of relationships over a long period of time. And, even when a publisher does everything "by the book," it may be years before any evidence of course adoption sales are seen.

College sales are also not a project that can be taken on lightly or haphazardly. Small presses are notoriously under-staffed and have little time to devote to new projects. To pursue college market sales without devoting serious and careful consideration to strategy and methods does a disservice not only to the intended market, but to the publisher itself. If a press's communication techniques come across as infrequent, random and slapdash, so too will the audience's impression of the company.

While all literary publishers face significant challenges when approaching the post-secondary market, those publishing new or experimental writers may have an even more difficult time. The academic system does not particularly encourage new writing, working instead from the canon. In Canadian literature classes, one sees the same books listed over and over again on course outlines, including Atwood, Laurence and Ondaatje; in the case of Canadian multicultural or First Nations studies, Tomson Highway, Marilyn Dumont's *A Really Good Brown Girl* (Brick Books) and Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* appear repeatedly.

Despite receiving positive critical reviews, the likelihood of a new writer's book of poems getting adopted for English courses is fairly low. But some instructors do actively seek out the work of new writers. Generally (and anecdotally) speaking, these tend to be sessionals—though even they may prefer to stick to the canon to increase chances of being hired the following year. For publishers trying to reach such faculty members, this could mean that names and contact information are more difficult to gather, as sessional instructors are more transient than tenured professors.

Even if they like a poet's work and want to use it in class, professors adopt novels and short story collections far more often than they do poetry collections by a single author. They are more apt to create a course pack of selected poems or to use poetry anthologies. Literary titles are a particular challenge because there are so many books to choose from, and English departments are often the largest:

> The amount of effort expended in contacting all the instructors about all the possible books they can use is not often worth the rewards. For larger courses, where the greatest profit could be made if there is an adoption, instructors often will use "real" textbooks, or will choose works by authors of a certain canon, and rarely choose a new author or poet... A publisher must ask [him/herself] if the time is well spent. (Grows, email)

Despite these difficulties, the academic market is one more avenue to explore for literary publishers, and can be part of a successful revenue development plan. By diversifying its revenue streams, and not relying on trade sales and grants alone, literary publishers may have a better chance at long-term success. It is with these ideas in mind that Nightwood Editions began its own academic campaign.

5. Nightwood Editions' Academic Sales Campaign

5.1 Background

Nightwood's book *Taking the Names Down from the Hill*, the first book by First Nations writer Philip Kevin Paul, sold exceptionally well for a Canadian poetry title; it also won the 2004 Dorothy Livesay Award. As one of a handful of poetry titles written by First Nations authors in Canada—and a young author at that—*Taking the Names Down from the Hill* would make an excellent text for Canadian literature and First Nations literature post-secondary courses.

Similarly, Fiona Tinwei Lam's collection of poems, *Intimate Distances*—shortlisted for the City of Vancouver book prize—has also sold well, but publisher Silas White felt the book had further potential. With its relevance to courses that address Canadian post-colonial, multicultural and diasporic literature, *Intimate Distances*—along with several other backlist poetry titles by Nightwood authors—presented a clearly defined opportunity.

For Nightwood, course adoption of its poetry titles represents an untapped market—and potentially, an excellent way to leverage its backlist. Although scholars are not Nightwood's primary audience, the press's varied and award-winning literary titles have potential to generate considerable interest from the academic sector. The challenge would be to make post-secondary instructors aware of relevant titles in a series of focused direct mail campaigns, and to give instructors enough of a reason to adopt the books for their courses—despite the possible perception that these books are "new" and "untested" (outside the established Canadian literary canon).

Prior to 2004, Nightwood had had the occasional course adoption, but this occurred through no effort of its own, and not on a consistent basis. For example, *Taking the Names Down*

from the Hill sold just over one hundred copies to university and college bookstores between its publication in June 2003 and June 2005. Fifty-four of these copies were bought for course adoptions; the others can be considered trade sales, and many were ordered for author events. For this title, all of the university bookstore orders came from within BC; evidently, word was not getting out nationally for this title in the academic market.

In 2004, Nightwood's distributor, Harbour Publishing, entered into an agreement with an academic sales representative. The objective was to begin exploring the post-secondary market and to see if literary titles by Harbour and Nightwood could gain course adoptions.

A pamphlet was produced that listed twenty-nine Canadian poetry titles from Harbour and Nightwood, advertising that desk copies were available. Titles ranged from poetry collections by Al Purdy and Patrick Lane to new poetry by Nightwood authors. The brochure was mailed to six hundred Canadian literature professors. Approximately six people responded with desk copy requests. None of the parties—the academic rep, Harbour or Nightwood—were satisfied with the results.

In 2005, it was time to try something new to reach this elusive audience. More focused, book- or discipline-specific direct mail campaigns seemed to be the key. We decided to launch two initiatives, one for "First Nations poetry" and the other for "Multicultural poetry."

These tasks were undertaken from May through August 2005, prior to consultation with the literary publishers mentioned in the previous section, and were the first time Nightwood had attempted strategically reaching the college market.

5.2 Nature of Nightwood's Academic Market

Research of course outlines available on the internet shows that the majority of Canadian literature classes use books published in the 1960s to 1980s. With few exceptions, the most recent poetry and works of fiction studied were published in the 1990s. This suggests that the market in academia for "new" writing (that is, anything published in the late 1990s and early 2000s) could

be a difficult sell, or perhaps that those instructors who do teach newer literature do not post their course outlines online. Most of the titles in Nightwood's backlist we would be attempting to market to the academic sector were published in the 1990s and early 2000s.

However, the instructors Nightwood would be contacting are in two of the "newest" fields of English studies: First Nations literature and post-colonial or multicultural/diasporic literature. Both areas also have a small number of texts available; for example, very few poetry books by Canadian First Nations authors exist, and while the body of Asian-Canadian and multicultural Canadian poetry is increasing, it is an area with room for further growth.

As outlined in the previous chapter, it is often sessional instructors who are willing to take a chance on new literature. Because they are recently out of school themselves, they may be more aware of new books; their areas of interest may also be slightly different than those professors who have been in the field for many years. For example, Wayde Compton at Coquitlam College studies and teaches the black experience in Canada, an area of research that is just now coming to the fore; the area of expertise of York University's Robert Stacey is experimental poetry, a field that is constantly evolving and which requires a reading list reflective of that.

What follows is an account of the strategy, tasks undertaken and results of Nightwood's "First Nations poetry" and "Multicultural poetry" email campaigns.

5.3 First Nations poetry—*Taking the Names Down from the Hill*

5.3.1 Background

Taking the Names Down from the Hill by Philip Kevin Paul is a significant contribution to First Nations literature—an elegy for the author's land and its people. It received many positive reviews upon publication in 2003 and won the 2004 Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize.

However, *Taking the Names Down from the Hill* has not yet been adopted by any First Nations or Canadian literature courses at universities across Canada. As part of Nightwood's new

academic sales strategy, course adoption for *Taking the Names Down from the Hill* would help to increase sales for this backlist title.

By sending an email to a targeted list of scholars who focus on First Nations issues, Nightwood Editions intends to gain course adoption of *Taking the Names Down from the Hill* for 2005–2006 courses. The list will be made up of English literature scholars at Canadian universities and colleges who teach courses focused specifically on First Nations literature, as well as select instructors from university aboriginal programs, adult basic education programs that incorporate native literature, and native education centres.

Stage I	BC & Alberta—July 4 to 5, 2005
Stage II	Ontario—July 5 to 6
Stage III	Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec—July 7 to 8
Stage IV	Other (NS, NB, NF, PEI, YT, NWT, Nunavut)

5.3.2 Objectives

- To increase sales of *Taking the Names.*
- To raise awareness of Philip Kevin Paul's work.

5.3.3 Goals

Course adoption for at least two courses by June 2006. This could result in sales of up to sixty copies.

5.3.4 Existing strategies

Offering desk copies to professors when requested.

5.3.5 Actions

- Compile list of contacts at universities across Canada, with initial focus on BC
- Subscribe to any relevant email discussion lists
- Create promotional email for *Taking the Names*

- Email campaign to university professors, featuring *Taking the Names Down from the Hill* and highlighting Nightwood's rich backlist

5.3.6 Tasks Undertaken

As outlined above, the first task for the *Taking the Names* campaign was to compile a list of post-secondary instructors who teach courses in the area of First Nations literature in Canada. We decided to contact instructors at First Nations education centres as well; even if these institutions were not looking for books for course adoption, a secondary benefit would be raising awareness of the book itself.

Because this area of study is so defined, we decided that creating our own list in-house through internet research would be a better alternative than buying an expensive list that may or may not have the specific information we were looking for. As well, because academics move around so often, we could be more certain that the information we compiled ourselves would be up-to-date.

We created a list of approximately 150 First Nations literature instructors through internet research—a methodical process of visiting the websites of all universities and colleges in Canada and determining if there were any First Nations literature scholars at each. Some names and email addresses were also found at the websites of specific conferences. This task took approximately sixteen hours.

The next step was to create an email that effectively communicated why *Taking the Names* would be a suitable book for course adoption. This also required research to familiarize ourselves with current themes in this area of study and to present the book in a context that would appeal to scholars. We kept the email brief, recognizing it would have a better chance of being read, and gave recipients a chance to "unsubscribe" from further mailings.

Following the lead of UBC Press and Brick Books, we elected to send the emails directly from the Nightwood office under my signature. We considered taking Talonbooks' advice of

obtaining the assistance of a sessional instructor to send out the email (several of Nightwood's authors teach at post-secondary institutions), but it seemed more direct, timely and natural to do it from the office.

Figure 1: Email, *Taking the Names Down From the Hill*

-----Original Message-----
From: **Kathy Sinclair [mailto:kathy@nightwoodeditions.com]**
Sent: **Tuesday, July 19, 2005 3:59 PM**
To: **[email address]**
Subject: **First Nations poetry**

Taking the Names Down From the Hill
By Philip Kevin Paul

An essential text for any Canadian or First Nations literature course
Winner of the Dorothy Livesay BC Book Prize for Poetry

DESK COPY AVAILABLE
Please reply to this message to request a copy

Dear [FirstName LastName]:

First Nations poet Philip Kevin Paul draws upon the oral culture and traditions of his people, the WSÁ,NEC nation, based in Saanich, Vancouver Island, in *Taking the Names Down from the Hill.* The result is a compelling collection of poems that grieves, remembers and reclaims not only a people, but a land and way of life.

Taking the Names Down from the Hill makes an excellent study of First peoples, from both literary and cultural perspectives. It has significant implications for the studies of First Nations identity, attachment to place, and the impact of colonialism. A must for any post-secondary Canadian or First Nations literature course.

In *Taking the Names Down from the Hill*, Paul describes his struggle to hold on to the language and traditions of his heritage. He interweaves his own life stories with the legends of his people, decolonizing and redefining their identity. With quiet grace and clarity, his poems address parents, siblings, cousins and friends with "magic in word, / magic in thought, magic in song / magic in touch, / and yes, magic in the breath / that joins them."

A WSÁ,NEC Indian from the Saanich Peninsula, Philip Kevin Paul has been published in *BC Studies, Breathing Fire: Canada's New Poets* (Nightwood Editions), and *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*. The son of the late Chief Philip Paul—an internationally known indigenous-rights activist and co-founder of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and National Native Brotherhood—Paul lives on his family's titled land in Brentwood Bay, BC. He has worked with the University of Victoria's linguistics department to ensure the preservation of the SENCOTEN language. *Taking the Names Down from the Hill* is Paul's first book.

For a complimentary desk copy of *Taking the Names Down From the Hill*, please reply to this email, or phone 1-800-667-2988.

"These are the poems of a writer who knows that he belongs to the territory on which he resides (not the other way around), knows that he is a member of a people who hold and sustain a particular worldview and language and knows that his ancestral legacy, larger than himself, clarifies his vision and grounds his creative gift."
— Marilyn Dumont

"Paul, whose late father helped found the Union of BC Indian Chiefs in the 1960s, writes of how death has affected Native culture generally and him and his family in particular... Paul naturally draws deeply from Native oral literature, as when, by some wonderful reductive process, he works within short lines, almost as though he were incising the words on the page."
— George Fetherling, *Vancouver Sun*

From "Water Drinker"

You can feel the stream
on that hill like a small animal
shaking in your hands. Its rhythm
comes up through the ground
just where the water is
about to roll over the edge.

Imagine what the Old People thought
when they saw one small red tree
growing between the grey-
white bodies of the maples.
Imagine their thoughts
when they realized
every stream has its own song
from the shape made by the trees around it,
the sound of the water
turning in the hollow,
returning to them from the leaves.

Copyright © 2003 Philip Kevin Paul

Nightwood Editions
Publishing the best new poetry and fiction by writers across Canada
http://www.nightwoodeditions.com

If you do not wish to receive further notices of books suitable for course adoption, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line.

5.3.7 Results

Response to the *Taking the Names* campaign was very positive—a 10 percent response rate. These figures are well above the average direct mail response rate of 2 to 3 percent. See Appendix B for a summary of emails sent, desk copy requests, responses and sales figures. However, as outlined in section four, a response does not equate a sale or an adoption.

As of March 2006, there have been no new conclusive course adoptions of *Taking the Names Down from the Hill.* This is not unexpected; as we have seen in previous chapters, through the experience of Brick Books, for example, adoptions may take months or years and are difficult to track. However, it means Nightwood may not meet the goal of having two course adoptions by June 2006.

There have, however, been some promising leads. Despite our concerns that the scholars we sent the emails to may feel insulted by this style of contact (based on discussions with Karl Siegler), all feedback received conveyed that instructors were happy to be contacted. Even some professors who specialized in First Nations literature had never heard of *Taking the Names Down from the Hill*, and were grateful for notification of what one instructor called "this important book."

Is it possible that the regional nature of *Taking the Names* makes it suitable only for study within British Columbia? For example, would an instructor of a First Nations literature course in Ontario or Saskatchewan be interested in studying the work of a member of a tribe on the West Coast? With the exception of anthologies, literature texts commonly adopted for First Nations courses (such as Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water)* are told from the perspective of a character of a particular tribe. As with all of the study of literature, it is from the specific story of one character or group that larger themes can be drawn. Though the experience of a member of a tribe on the West Coast may differ significantly from that of one from a region in Ontario, the inherent commonalities and differences would make for an interesting point of discussion.

With this in mind, we had hoped *Taking the Names* would garner interest from scholars across the country. One Ontario professor we contacted said he had read the book and enjoyed it. However, the book does seem to have had the most positive response from instructors on the West Coast.

5.3.8 Follow-up

Approximately two months after emails were sent in the First Nations poetry campaign, we contacted those instructors who had requested desk copies to follow up, again by email. We asked professors individually if they had had a chance to review the book and if they would be adopting it for any future courses. The email appears below.

Figure 2: Follow-up email, *Taking the Names Down from the Hill*

-----Original Message-----
From: **Kathy Sinclair [mailto:kathy@nightwoodeditions.com]**
Sent: **Tuesday, September 27, 2005 4:43 PM**
To: **[email address]**
Subject: **Desk copy of *Taking the Names Down from the Hill***

Dear [FirstName LastName]:

Thank you for requesting a desk copy of ***Taking the Names Down from the Hill*** by **Philip Kevin Paul**. As you know, this important book of poems makes an excellent study of First peoples, and has significant implications for the studies of First Nations identity and attachment to place.

We hope you have had a chance to review your complimentary copy of *Taking the Names Down from the Hill,* and will consider using it for one of your courses. We would greatly appreciate your responses to the following questions:

- What did you think of *Taking the Names Down from the Hill*?
- Will you be adopting *Taking the Names Down from the Hill* for any of your courses in the 2005/06 year? If yes, which course(s)?
- If not, are you considering *Taking the Names Down from the Hill* for course adoption in future years?
- Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback. Please let us know if we can assist you with anything else, and be sure to look at www.nightwoodeditions.com for other Canadian poetry and fiction titles that may suit your teaching and research needs.

Sincerely,

Kathy Sinclair
Nightwood Editions
kathy@nightwoodeditions.com
(604) 883-2730
www.nightwoodeditions.com
Nightwood Editions is an independent Canadian literary press.

5.3.9 Response to follow-up email

Response to this follow-up email was also positive. An instructor at Malaspina College reported that she is considering the text for an Arts One First Nations program to begin in Spring 2006. Others stated that they will consider the book for future courses, but because they had either already selected the books for the fall or they weren't currently teaching First Nations poetry, they would not be adopting it right away.

One instructor stated that though she liked *Taking the Names* very much, the price ($16.95) prevented her from adopting it for her first- or second-year classes. She may instead create a course pack using several of the book's poems, following Access Copyright guidelines.

Another instructor at a northern BC college expressed great interest in *Taking the Names*, and inquired as to whether author Philip Kevin Paul would be available to do a Canada Council-funded reading in 2007. Again, though it has not yet resulted in a sale, this is an example of another benefit that can result from a campaign of this kind.

5.4 Multicultural poetry—*Intimate Distances*

5.4.1 Background and Strategy

The *Intimate Distances* / multicultural poetry campaign followed a similar strategy as *Taking the Names Down from the Hill.* However, while planning the strategy, we soon realized that Nightwood had a number of other poetry titles that have the potential to interest this same audience. Thus we presented *Intimate Distances* in a similar fashion as *Taking the Names,* but featured it alongside six other titles that could be of interest to multicultural literature instructors.

5.4.2 Objectives

- To increase sales of *Intimate Distances* and six other Nightwood poetry titles.
- To raise awareness of Fiona Lam's work and of Nightwood Editions.

5.4.3 Goals

Course adoption for at least two courses by June 2006. This could result in sales of up to sixty copies.

5.4.4 Existing strategies

Offering desk copies to professors when requested.

5.4.5 Actions

- Compile list of key contacts at universities across Canada, with initial focus on BC
- Subscribe to any relevant email discussion lists
- Create promotional email for *Intimate Distances,* highlighting Nightwood's rich backlist
- Email campaign to university professors

5.4.6 Tasks Undertaken

As with the *Taking the Names* campaign, we compiled a list of post-secondary instructors through internet research, this time focusing on Asian-Canadian and multicultural / post-colonial literature courses. This list comprised approximately 120 instructors.

The email copy for *Intimate Distances* was more difficult to create than that for *Taking the Names* because the copy needed to appeal to a wider range of instructors. For example, by its strictest definition, the term "post-colonial" does not apply to literature written in Canada, but many academics use the term more loosely. We strove to keep the language of the email general enough that it would appeal to a wide variety of schools of thought, but sufficiently specific to let instructors know that these books would meet their teaching needs. The email was sent directly from our office.

Figure 3: Email, Multicultural poetry

-----Original Message-----
From: Kathy Sinclair [mailto:kathy@nightwoodeditions.com]
Sent: Monday, August 15, 2005 9:42 AM
To: [email address]
Subject: Multicultural poetry - desk copies available

Intimate Distances

By Fiona Tinwei Lam

Poems from one of the Chinese-Canadian community's most insightful young voices
Shortlisted for the City of Vancouver Book Prize

DESK COPY AVAILABLE
Please reply to this message to request a copy

Dear [FirstName LastName]:

Nightwood Editions is pleased to announce the availability of *Intimate Distances* for adoption at post-secondary institutions. *Intimate Distances* makes an excellent literary study for post-secondary courses that focus on Canadian ethnic minority writing, multiculturalism and/or diasporic literature.

Intimate Distances is an exploration of the vicissitudes of interpersonal connection and family relationships, and of growing up while facing a world of conflicting cultural expectations. Fiona Lam writes vividly about her father's early death, the end of marriage, the gradual loss of her mother to Alzheimer's, and childbirth. A stunning first book from one of the Chinese-Canadian community's most insightful and honest young voices.

Fiona Tinwei Lam is a Scottish-born Chinese Canadian who grew up in Vancouver. She has an LL.B. from Queen's University, an LL.M. at the University of Toronto and a MFA in creative writing at the University of British Columbia. Her work has been published in *Canadian Literature*, *Grain*, *The Malahat Review*, *The Antigonish Review*, *Descant*, and *The New Quarterly*, and in the anthologies *Vintage 2000*, *A Room at the Heart of Things*, and *Swallowing Clouds*.

For a complimentary desk copy of *Intimate Distances*, please reply to this email, or phone 1-800-667-2988.

"The poems are explosive—the family in shards, which the book patiently pieces together. The combination is fascinating. I learned something too: that the mystery of this remarkable family (and possibly of all families) is that each birth, each repetition with a difference, is the rebirth of the whole." **—Roo Borson**

"Lam, a Vancouverite born in Scotland, has been appearing in journals, but this is her first book. It's one to be savoured. Her approachable and sometimes spine-shivering lyrics zero in on the turning points in the story of one Chinese-Canadian family, her own. Using simple language about complex events and emotions, Lam shows how childhood is often more a benefit to the parental observers than to the children, and that this fact hopscotches along from one generation to the next."
—George Fetherling, *Vancouver Sun*

"Learning Chinese"

After English school, we took the bus three days a week
to a Chinese church basement and a teacher
who looked like Chairman Mao with a perm.

Dreaming of TV, we sat tables
with our textbooks open to rhymes
about cows and sheep going up mountains,
the shepherds who looked for them,
good students who arrived early to school
while mothers made meals and fathers worked.
Each lesson, the teacher conducted
our choir of fingers, new words
poked, brushed and sliced into the air--
the three drops of water,
flat lines like ladder rungs,
lines straight down with slight flicks to the left,
or tapered tails, swept in or out.

We learned how a mouth is a square
with a hollow inside; two trees make a forest;
the sun and the moon side by side
can be bright as a mind; peace
is a woman under the roof of a home;
how man stands in the centre
of both fire and sky.

MORE MULTICULTURAL POETRY TITLES FROM NIGHTWOOD EDITIONS
Please reply to this message to obtain complimentary desk copies.

Slant
by Andy Quan
"Andy Quan belongs to that species of poet who remembers home and family but travels everywhere to make discoveries that deepen his insights into himself." --Wayson Choy

Basmati Brown
by Phinder Dulai
"Here is a real made book... performance poetry, rich nouns, a montage of material for a world you probably haven't seen yet. With puns and jabs, Dulai memorializes his heritage -- and wrestles it to the ground." --George Bowering

As Though the Gods Love Us
by Goh Poh Seng
"One of Asia's finest poets" stakes out a diverse, unmatched poetic territory through Singapore, Ireland, Russia, Newfoundland, Mexico and British Columbia.

Frogs in the Rain Barrel
by Sally Ito
The imagined depths of a rain barrel become a powerful metaphor in these poems, which reflect Ito's experiences as a young Japanese Canadian living and writing in Alberta, the Northwest Territories, the West Coast and Japan.

Season of Mercy
by Sally Ito
The second volume of poems by Ito, examining issues of faith and responsibility.

Taking the Names Down from the Hill
by Philip Kevin Paul
"These are the poems of a writer who knows that he belongs to the territory on which he resides (not the other way around)... knows that his ancestral legacy, larger than himself, clarifies his vision and grounds his creative gift." —Marilyn Dumont

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http://www.nightwoodeditions.com

If you do not wish to receive further notices of books suitable for course adoption, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line.

5.4.7 Results

The response rate for the *Intimate Distances* campaign was 11 percent, and all feedback received was positive. Several Asian-Canadian and post-colonial literature instructors stated that they appreciated being contacted about *Intimate Distances*; others requested desk copies of all seven titles featured in the "Multicultural poetry" email. As of March 2006, there have been no confirmed course adoptions, but we are hopeful that, with follow-up (see email below), this will change.

5.4.8 Follow-up

Approximately two months after emails were sent in the multicultural poetry campaign, we contacted those instructors who had requested desk copies and asked if they had had a chance to review the book, and if they would be adopting it for any future courses.

Figure 4: Follow-up email, Multicultural poetry

-----Original Message-----
From: Kathy Sinclair [mailto:kathy@nightwoodeditions.com]
Sent: Wednesday, October 05, 2005 1:34 PM
To: [email address]
Subject: Multicultural poetry from Nightwood Editions

Dear [FirstName LastName]:

Thank you for requesting desk copies of *Intimate Distances* by Fiona Tinwei Lam and *Slant* by Andy Quan. We hope you have had a chance to review the books, and will consider using them for your courses.

We would greatly appreciate your responses to the following questions:

- What did you think about these titles?
- Will you be adopting any of the books for your courses in the 2005/06 year? If yes, which course(s)?
- If not, are you considering these titles for course adoption in future years?
- Do you have any other comments?

Thank you for taking the time to provide your feedback. Please let us know if we can assist you with anything else, and be sure to look at www.nightwoodeditions.com for other Canadian poetry and fiction titles that may suit your teaching and research needs.

Sincerely,

Kathy Sinclair
Nightwood Editions
kathy@nightwoodeditions.com
(604) 883-2730
www.nightwoodeditions.com
Nightwood Editions is an independent Canadian literary press

Nightwood Editions
Publishing the best new poetry and fiction by writers across Canada
http://www.nightwoodeditions.com

5.4.9 Response to follow-up email

Six of thirteen instructors who requested desk copies responded to the follow-up email. One professor said she was very impressed with *Intimate Distances* and that she may set it in the future, when she returns from sabbatical in 2007. Another said he was very impressed with both *Intimate Distances* and *Slant*, that he was pleased to see a press committed to publishing poetry, and that he was considering both titles for a graduate seminar in summer 2006. Several instructors

said they had already ordered books for the 2005/06 year, but would consider it for future courses. Additional, personalized follow-up with each of these instructors will be crucial in gaining course adoption.

5.5 Overall Results

Overall, these two modest in-house email campaigns to the college market sowed some seeds that may have potential for future success. Other than staff time and the expenses of desk copies and shipping, costs were minimal, and as a result Nightwood may have several future course adoptions.

6. Conclusion

Nightwood's first in-house attempts at marketing to the college sector were fairly successful. The results were promising and were accomplished on a small budget. It may be some time before any course adoptions are confirmed; however, with consistent follow-up and by continuing to market its books to this audience, Nightwood may be able to garner some additional sales. This campaign has also helped bring Nightwood to the attention of the academic community.

Though many of the literary publishers surveyed reported that they do market to the academic sector or are interested in doing so, it is crucial to note that reaching the college market may not be for every publisher. The literary publisher that seems to have the most success with this market—Talonbooks—has had a relationship with its constituents from its inception. From very early on, the company was making academic sales and course adoptions a central part of its audience and market—a tradition that continues today.

As we have seen, there are many strategies a literary publisher can employ to open up the college market. However, publishers should examine their company's core orientation, vision and style before devoting resources to this end. If the publisher's core orientation leans more toward the trade, for example, perhaps a major campaign directed to academics would be misguided—even if the books themselves might be suitable for course adoption.

For example, the concept that Karl Siegler of Talonbooks uses to describe his press is "serious." Even when publishing edgy or experimental fiction, poetry and drama, Talonbooks projects a fairly conservative image in its cover designs, catalogues and advertisements.

For Nightwood Editions—also very much a serious literary publisher—the main idea driving the press is "exciting." Publisher Silas White does not want to produce books that fit

neatly within the existing Canadian literary milieu. As such, though quality is always very high, the writing styles, genres and cover designs vary.

"Serious" and "exciting" are not mutually exclusive terms. It is certainly possible to achieve both, but perhaps books from those publishers that put an emphasis on projecting the former—considering English departments at the outset of the book's inception—have more success with course adoptions than do the latter. Talonbooks seems to have mastered the tone and language with which to communicate with university and college instructors. Talon has also invested many years and considerable time and energy into reaching the academic sector. They have made this a major focus of their marketing strategy, and the results show.

If a publisher does not devote 50 percent of its marketing resources to the academic sector, the chances that 50 percent of its sales will be derived from the college market are slim. The numbers may not be directly proportionate, but it seems to follow that investing small amounts of time and resources will yield smaller returns. If a literary publisher would like to have its books adopted for courses, then in addition to publishing the "right" type of book, it must invest in getting to know constituents, attending conferences, sending out desk copies and taking out advertisements oriented toward this market.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Literary publishing is nearly always run on a shoestring and the loss of even small amounts of funds can be devastating. There is, however, obviously a middle path. By taking small, low-risk steps as Brick Books and Nightwood Editions have, publishers may begin to see results that enable them to devote incrementally larger amounts of time and resources.

Though Nightwood may not participate in conferences such as Congress in the immediate future—due both to cost of the conference and of transportation—eventually, it may establish a presence at various conferences by participating in the ones that take place near Vancouver.

In addition, as it builds relationships with college and university instructors, Nightwood may want to solicit book proposals from scholars who write poetry and fiction themselves. As

Cole states, "Real marketing begins at the moment you conceive the central idea for the intended book and includes a clear sense of who the book is for, how it serves its audience, and how it fits with the competition" (Cole 1999, 2).

Many Nightwood authors are graduates of creative writing programs across the country. These departments have a sense of duty in promoting new Canadian authors and their work (Gidney 2005, 3). Though Nightwood already has strong ties to creative writing departments at many universities, particularly those in BC, creating formalized partnerships may strengthen them. Creative writing classes do not use course texts on a regular basis, however, and this strategy would need to be well-thought and planned in conjunction with creative writing instructors.

Trying to gain course adoptions is a difficult task, and can take an amount of time that is disproportionate to immediate results. However, like any program, it must be continued consistently in order to see benefits. Nightwood may want to focus on academic sales in January through March of each year, keeping an eye out for conferences and contacts year-round. Though it may take months or years, through steady effort, today's "new writing" may soon become part of tomorrow's canon.

Appendices

Appendix A: Publishers' Survey

Publisher	Worthwhile?	Actively market?	Methods?	% of sales	Challenges
Arsenal	Yes	Yes	Mailing lists from MLA / academic catalogue; Congress; desk copies	10–15%	Growing in the US
Beach Holme	Yes	Yes	Direct mail, posters, women's studies, conferences, desk copies	5%?	Getting the word out; keeping database up to date
Brick Books	Yes	Yes	Direct mail (email), desk copies, libraries, conferences (Congress)	20%	Lots of work, you don't always know whether your efforts will have a result
Coach House	Yes	"We try."	Direct mail (email), conferences, desk copies; sampler of drama titles.	Don't know	No time, so can't gear campaigns to profs' schedules; can't take time to become familiar with who is teaching what where
Insomniac	Yes - "a vital sales channel - the difference between making and losing money"	Yes	Academic sales force; conferences; catalogues; desk copies	10%	Keeping up to date on teaching areas; determining which books profs may be interested in
The Porcupine's Quill	Not really - high returns, used book mkt	Used to - reprint classics, Learneds 3–4 yrs, but stopped when no interest	Desk copies on request	Less than 5% (don't track)	

Appendix A, continued

Publisher	Worthwhile?	Actively market?	Methods?	% of sales	Challenges
Ronsdale	Yes	Yes	Catalogues to English dept heads at UVic, UBC, SFU; direct mail (email); desk copies on request	Unknown	Increased competition from academic presses (lack of resources), university budgets that limit # of titles picked up.
Talonbooks	Yes	Yes	Conferences; catalogues; personal contact from the publisher	50%	
The Mercury Press	Definitely	Yes	Direct mail, email, conferences, desk copies, LPG (attends conferences)	Less than 10%	Resources, time & financial; capacity to reach profs to find out what is useful to them.
Wolsak & Wynn	Yes	Yes	Congress; catalogues	"Very little"	Getting profs to consider using newer books, not just the ones they're comfortable with teaching

No response:

Anansi	ECW
Cormorant	Goose Lane
Coteau	Vehicule

Appendix B: Number of Desk Copy Requests and Responses

	Number of instructors contacted	**Number of desk copy requests**	**Number of responses to follow-up email**
Taking the Names Down from the Hill	151	15	5
Intimate Distances / Multicultural poetry	126	13	6

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