

**ONE THING AFTER ANOTHER: BOOK SERIES AND  
NAVIGATING THE CRISIS IN SCHOLARLY  
PUBLISHING – A CASE STUDY**

by

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## **Abstract**

The number of series published by university presses in Canada and the United States doubled between 1980 and 2000. In the same two decades scholarly book publishers experienced the full onslaught of the crisis in scholarly publishing. Why do university presses develop series in this context? And what role do they play in publishing programs? This study focuses on the development, production, and marketing of series at one medium-sized university press. UBC Press was founded in 1971 and suffered a severe crisis in the late 1980s that threatened its existence. It has since restructured its operations, refocused its publishing program, and transformed itself into Canada's leading publisher of social sciences. An analysis of the Press's experience with series over the long term and interviews with its staff reveals that series helped the Press weather the crisis, and they played an important, if uneven, role in its transformation.

**Keywords:** scholarly publishing; university presses; monograph series; list building; acquisitions

**Subject Terms:** Scholarly Publishing; University Presses; University Presses Canada; Scholarly Publishing Canada Case Studies

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## Introduction

In 2000 the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that the number of book series – multivolume sets and numbered and unnumbered series – published by university presses in Canada and the United States had grown in number from 482 in 1980 to 833 in 1998.<sup>1</sup> The article included commentary from publishers and academics, and it sparked a full-length response from Lindsay Waters, executive editor of the humanities at Harvard University Press.<sup>2</sup> The articles included some discussion of the advantages of series, but the overall tone was negative. Most observers agreed that a series guided by a general editor could be one of the most effective, efficient, and cost-effective ways for a publisher to establish a profile in a subject or discipline. However, as the articles' titles – “Have Book Series Become Too Much of a Good Thing?” and “Are University Presses Producing Too Many Series for Their Own Good?” – suggest, many of the commentators suspected that scholarly book publishers had produced too many series for their own good, and for the wrong reasons. In their modern incarnation, these critics argued, book series may be an effective list building tool, but an overreliance on them renders publishers vulnerable to a variety of potential problems that could dilute the traditional university press mandate to publish, on a non-profit basis, original scholarship that undergoes the rigours of peer review. Although the articles' authors and informants never specifically address the so-called crisis in scholarly publishing that has influenced university press operations since the early 1980s, their response to the alleged “series spree” was coloured by a particular reading of the history of university presses, modern developments in the academy, and acrimonious disputes over the

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer K. Ruark, “Have Book Series Become Too Much of a Good Thing?” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 46 (April 2000): para. 3, <http://chronicle.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/weekly/v46/i34/34a02101.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Lindsay Waters, “Are University Presses Producing Too Many Series for Their Own Good?” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 47 (October 2000), <http://chronicle.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/weekly/v47/i09/09b00701.htm>.

nature and role of university presses. Their criticisms were subsequently picked up by Frederika Teute, a scholar and editor, and Janet Flowers, an acquisitions librarian, as evidence to support their claim that monograph series and the university press mandate had been corrupted by marketing concerns.<sup>3</sup>

The proliferation of book series coincided with the crisis in scholarly book publishing. Beginning in the early 1980s academic libraries began to cut their budgets for scholarly monographs to compensate for an explosive growth in the cost of scientific, technical, and medical (STM) journals; as a result, university presses experienced a proportional reduction in the number of monographs they sold. At the same time, subsidies for university presses declined while operational costs and manuscript submissions (spurred by escalating tenure requirements) rose, which forced publishers to increasingly make profit-based decisions to remain economically viable.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to expectation, university presses did not cut back on the number of new titles they produced, they instead *increased* the number of titles and met budgetary challenges by making other adjustments, such as reducing the size of print runs and, depending upon the press, dedicating a larger proportion of their lists to textbooks or books with wider appeal, rather than scholarly monographs.<sup>5</sup> In 1983 the total number of new books published by university presses was 4,697; by 1995 that number had increased to 8,011.<sup>6</sup> Book series, which had existed for as long as university presses, were influenced by these developments. Prior to the 1980s university presses published relatively few series and they tended to be prestigious, prodigious

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<sup>3</sup> Frederika J. Teute, "To Publish and Perish: Who are the Dinosaurs in Scholarly Publishing?" *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 32 (January 2001), <http://www.proquest.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/>; Janet L. Flowers, "Standing Orders: Considerations for Acquisition Methods," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services* 25 (2001): 323–28.

<sup>4</sup> Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing, "The Future of Scholarly Publishing," *Profession* (2002): 172–75.

<sup>5</sup> Robert B. Townshend, "History and the Future of Scholarly Publishing," *Perspectives* 41 (October 2003): 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ken Wissoker, "Scholarly Monographs Are Flourishing, Not Dying," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 44 (September 1997): para. 7, <http://chronicle.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/che-data/articles.dir/art-44.dir/issue-03.dir/03b00401.htm>.

efforts that showcased selected or commissioned monographs – that is, a series of books for an academic audience with little crossover appeal or course adoption potential. Since then their offerings have become much more diverse and numerous, ranging from Cambridge University Press’s Introductions to Literature series, which was designed specifically for use in the classroom, to the University of Chicago Press’s new series Culture Trails, which is composed of generously illustrated literary travel books appropriate for an educated general readership, to Columbia University Press’s Popular Cultures, Everyday Lives, which loosely groups together monographs on diverse topics, such as childbirth, reading habits in antebellum New York, and masculinity in Los Angeles’s working-class Filipino communities.

To observers such as Waters and Teute, who believe that university presses and the academy have been overtaken by a corporatist spirit that values quantity over quality, the number and diversity of titles and series announced by university presses in recent decades is cause for alarm. The trend, they argue, has eroded the university press’s traditional commitment to producing original scholarship that would not otherwise see the light of day beyond the lecture hall. Given that a larger proportion of university press titles now appear under the umbrella of a series with a general editor, they also questioned whether control of the acquisitions and peer review process is passing from impartial, professional editors to faculty who might use their position to promote only the scholarship of colleagues with similar points of view or the less-than-polished work of their graduate students. To other observers and some academic librarians, such as Flowers, the proliferation of series, many of which appeared to be ill defined, caused them to question whether series are being developed to advance knowledge or serve a larger intellectual project, or simply as a marketing tool to justify the application for an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), which will help presses convince academic libraries to purchase a series as a complete set through standing orders. According to Peter Agree, a former editor at Cornell University Press who now works

at Penn State, “There are situations when presses announce so many series that one can’t really be sure how seriously to take them.”<sup>7</sup>

Aside from the *Chronicle* articles and brief, largely anecdotal references to the proliferation of series in more recent years, there have been no substantive discussions or in-depth explorations of series development at specific university presses. Have critics unfairly painted all university presses and all book series with the same brush? And is it fair to hold university presses to a narrowly defined mandate that is no longer achievable given recent developments in the world of scholarly book publishing? This study parses the history and development of book series at a medium-sized Canadian university press, from its incorporation in the early 1970s to 2007. The University of British Columbia Press, better known as UBC Press, has produced eighteen series in just over thirty-five years, and it is poised to launch a new series, *Globalization and Autonomy*, in 2008. The Press’s relatively short history and manageable series output lends itself well to a systematic analysis of the role that series have played in the development of its publishing program. Like many university presses, the Press suffered a crisis and near-death experience in 1989 from which it has sprung back to establish itself as the leading publisher of social sciences and the third largest university press in Canada. The Press underwent an external review at the time of the crisis, and it is undergoing another review in 2007; consequently, the Press’s evolving mandate and publishing strategy in response to external challenges and constraints has been well documented. I interned in the Press’s acquisitions and production departments from May to September 2007, where I had the opportunity to observe meetings in which acquisitions editors and the Publications Board discussed manuscripts that could potentially find a place in existing series and in which they made arrangements for series in

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Ruark, “Have Book Series,” para. 5.

development. I also interviewed a wide assortment of individuals involved in all stages of the publishing process at the Press.

To contextualize series development at UBC Press, I explore in detail the recent debate on book series and how scholarly publishing's ongoing crisis has caused various university presses to redirect or refocus their mandates, strategies, and programs. What role *do* series play in this context? And, if scholarly book publishers are now motivated by concerns for the bottom line, does that preclude them from building a list or developing a series that showcases the best scholarship with the highest editorial and production standards? To answer these questions, I examine the history of series development at UBC Press before and after the University of British Columbia nearly closed down the Vancouver operation in the late 1980s, and I examine the role that series have played in the Press's reinvigorated publications program. The first part of the analysis centres on the acquisition department's strategy of focused list building following the 1989 review; the second part widens the focus to highlight the benefits and disadvantages of series from the perspective of individuals and groups whose experiences with series were not elicited in recent debates and discussions: production editors, marketing staff, and series editors.

Unlike many university presses, UBC Press did not actively pursue opportunities in trade publishing as a panacea for the problems that accompanied increasing production costs and shrinking sales; instead, it put in place measures to produce high-quality books in focused subject areas for academic audiences and, more recently, the course adoption market. UBC Press has, consequently, not left itself open to many of the criticisms leveled at university presses and series in recent years. The Press has, however, experienced some of the pitfalls that can potentially impede the growth of or derail any new series. A number of series got off to slow starts because the general editors brought less enthusiasm and fewer manuscripts to the project than the Press anticipated, while others were aborted because the Press believed that manuscripts would do just

as well as stand-alone volumes in its established lists. Through a mix of trial and error and design, the Press developed an integrated approach to series development in which members of the production and marketing departments get involved at the earliest possible moment to identify and put in place measures to avoid potential problems. With a few exceptions, book series have helped the Press to build its list in new subject areas, attract outside funding, and deepen its presence in traditional markets.

## Book Series & Scholarly Book Publishing's Shifting Terrain

The history of book series is intimately entwined with the history of university presses in the United States and Canada, and the meanings that various groups – publishers, scholars, and librarians – have attached to series has shifted throughout the twentieth century. The most profound changes occurred in two distinct eras. During the postwar economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s universities and governments poured money into presses, and experienced editors from the world of trade book publishing took up jobs at university presses, professionalized the review and editorial processes, and ushered in a golden age of rare but prestigious book series. In the 1980s and 1990s, by contrast, universities and governments reduced subsidies to university presses and academic libraries slashed expenditures on scholarly monographs.<sup>8</sup> In response, many university presses experimented with book series to streamline the acquisitions and production processes and to market their books to libraries, the course adoption market, and, depending upon the press, the general public. Critics such as Lindsay Waters and Frederika Teute feared university presses were reverting to the earliest days of scholarly book publishing, when editors were little more than secretaries to the host university's faculty and the peer review process remained but a glimmer in the eye of an ambitious editor, and they derided the corporatist spirit that appeared to have overtaken scholarly publishing and the academy. Given that university presses no longer have the luxury of publishing books without concern for the bottom line, these critics hold university presses

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<sup>8</sup> James M. McPherson, "A Crisis in Scholarly Publishing," *Perspectives* 41 (October 2003), <http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/Issues/2003/0310/0310pre1.cfm>; Townshend, "History and the Future of Scholarly Publishing," 32–41.

to an outmoded ideal that has perhaps caused them to overlook the myriad ways that a well-conceived and organized book series can help focus and foster a publishing program.

### **Book Series & University Presses, 1870–1970**

From their beginnings in the 1870s university presses in North America struggled to free themselves on the one hand from the control of librarians and on the other from the dictates of faculty members.<sup>9</sup> If the power struggle between university press editors and faculty can be likened to a tug of war, the book series was the rope. Almost all university presses from their inception had faculty boards to represent the parent institution. But unlike current practices and standards in scholarly book publishing, faculty members, rather than press staff, chose most of the content of the press's list, and they exercised control over the decision-making process through series, which dominated university press catalogues. Individual scholars were not typically picked to run the series, but the faculty board determined what books to include in them. Waters examined the history of university presses and series development and observed, "The combination of the existence of series, plus strong faculty control over the publishing list . . . made the editors at many presses little more than secretaries to faculty members who – don't be shocked! – chose books to promote their protégés and friends, often giving their own books to publishers in New York."<sup>10</sup>

This situation changed in the 1950s when the Cold War ushered in a golden age of funding for higher education, university presses became a regular feature on campuses in both the United States and Canada, and presses hired professionals from the world of trade publishing in. From 1950 to 1970 new university presses opened at a rate of one or more per year in the United

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<sup>9</sup> Waters, "Are University Presses," para. 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 5–9, quote para. 9.



States, and the number of presses in Canada mushroomed from four to eleven.<sup>11</sup> The new generation of editors wanted to vet potential manuscripts without faculty intervention and work in concert with authors to develop books that bore their press's stamp. To overcome the amateurism that had characterized the early offerings of university presses, editors adopted the peer review process – which had been devised for scholarly journals in the late nineteenth century and institutionalized in the mid-twentieth – and encouraged faculty board members to base the decision to publish on reports written by impartial referees, rather than the book's projected place in a series.<sup>12</sup> University presses had a new mandate to serve the world of scholarship and their host universities by disseminating the fruits of scholarly research to the academic community on a non-profit basis. Press directors and editors were not eager to establish new series for they raised the spectre of unbalanced, amateur lists dictated by the whims of faculty members. The few series that university presses did launch in these decades were ambitious, prestigious, and unprecedented in size and scope, and they only rarely relied on the expertise of general editor.<sup>13</sup> Waters adopts a food metaphor to describe postwar series, "Take a pie, slice it up, and get a single author to serve up each wedge."<sup>14</sup> In 1950 Princeton University Press published the first volume of *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, which became a model for future presidential papers series, and, in the same decade, the University of Chicago Press published its impressive and

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Givler, "University Press Publishing in the United States," in *Scholarly Publishing: Books, Journals, Publishers and Libraries in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Richard E. Abel and Lyman W. Newman (Indianapolis: John Wiley, 2002): para. 10–13, <http://aaupnet.org/resources/upusa.html>; George L. Parker, "University Presses," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/>; John Lorinc, "Publish and Perish?" *Quill & Quire Omni*, November 1994, [http://www.quillandquire.com/features/article.cfm?article\\_id=510](http://www.quillandquire.com/features/article.cfm?article_id=510).

<sup>12</sup> John C. Burnham, "The Evolution of Editorial Peer Review," *JAMA* 263 (March 1990): 1323–329.

<sup>13</sup> Waters, "Are University Presses," para. 6; Ruark, "Have Book Series," para. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Waters, "Are University Presses," para. 5.

influential translations of the *Complete Greek Tragedies* and it launched History of American Civilization.<sup>15</sup>

### **Publishing Programs & the Crisis in Scholarly Publishing**

The type of book series described by Waters ceased once university presses began to experience and take measures to overcome the effects of subsidy cutbacks and declining library sales in the late 1980s and 1990s. In her assessment of the contemporary state of scholarly book publishing, Denise Nitterhouse observes, "University presses are caught between their scholarly missions and business pressures and opportunities."<sup>16</sup> The pressures include diminishing library budgets devoted increasingly to expensive electronic journal and book databases, skyrocketing operational and production costs, and reduced subsidies from governments and parent institutions. In 1986 libraries spent 44 percent of their budgets on books compared with 56 percent on journals; by 1998 the ratio had skewed to 28 percent and 72 percent; and by 2004 the ratio had shifted further to 20 percent and 80 percent.<sup>17</sup> As early as 1992 a collections librarian at the University of Saskatchewan had cause to comment that a market for Canadian scholarly books still existed, "but we have to be a lot more selective . . . Now we're looking more closely: Is there a way we can live without this book? And even if we had the money, we wouldn't have the space."<sup>18</sup> Fewer sales meant much smaller print runs, smaller print runs (combined with the

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<sup>15</sup> Princeton University Press, "A History of Princeton University Press," Press Web site, [http://press.princeton.edu/about\\_pup/puphist.html](http://press.princeton.edu/about_pup/puphist.html); University of Chicago Press, "History of the University of Chicago Press," Press Web site, <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/presswide/presshistory.html>; Waters, "Are University Presses," para. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Denise Nitterhouse, "Digital Production Strategies for Scholarly Publishers" (University of Chicago, 2005): 1, [http://www.chicagodistributioncenter.org/digital\\_prod\\_strategies.pdf](http://www.chicagodistributioncenter.org/digital_prod_strategies.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Mary Alice Ball, "Libraries and Universities Can Collaborate to Improve Scholarly Communication," *First Monday*, 9 December 2004: para 10, [http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue9\\_12/ball/](http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue9_12/ball/); Ad Hoc Committee, "The Future of Scholarly Publishing," 172–75.

<sup>18</sup> John Lorinc, "Scholars vs. Dollars: Tough Times Force University Presses to Merge, Purge – And Rebuild for the Future," *Quill & Quire Omni*, 1 November 1992, [http://www.quillandquire.com/features/article.cfm?article\\_id=5811](http://www.quillandquire.com/features/article.cfm?article_id=5811).

rising paper prices, salaries, and freelance rates) meant higher production and printing costs, higher printing costs meant higher prices, and higher prices meant fewer individuals could afford to buy books.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, the academy expanded and became more specialized. University administrators created presses because they recognized that disciplines were becoming more specialized and professional, and they wanted to ensure the availability in print of scholarly monographs for academic audiences. Teute believes that modern standards for promotion and tenure in the humanities and social sciences – which privilege monographs over articles, edited volumes, textbooks, and crossover titles – now undermine that mission because tenure, rather than the production of high-quality scholarship and monographs, has become the goal. In her estimation, university presses are simply producing too many books.<sup>20</sup> In 1999 the Modern Language Association established an ad hoc committee to explore the state of academic publishing in language and literature; it concluded that the pressure to publish in increasingly specialized fields has *narrowed* the term “monograph” to mean any book that lacks the potential for crossover sales or course adoption, and plummeting library sales and the specialized nature of most monographs has reduced the average press run from over a thousand to between 350 and 500 copies per title.<sup>21</sup> University presses began to receive more monograph submissions at a time when they could least afford to publish them. Teute sums up the problem: “Escalating costs, escalating tenure requirements. The two vectors of the marketplace and the professional place seem to be pointing in opposite directions.”<sup>22</sup> To remain financially viable, scholarly book

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<sup>19</sup> Marlie Wasserman, “How Much Does It Cost to Publish a Monograph and Why?” (paper presented at The Specialized Scholarly Monograph in Crisis, Or How Can I Get Tenure if You Won't Publish My Book? Conference, Washington, September 11 and 12, 1997), para. 6, <http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/specscholmono/wasserman.shtml>

<sup>20</sup> Teute, “To Publish and Perish,” para. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ad Hoc Committee, “The Future of Scholarly Publishing,” 175.

<sup>22</sup> Teute, “To Publish and Perish,” para. 8.

publishers had to introduce efficiencies and innovations to tap existing markets, publish more trade books or monographs with crossover appeal, or, quite simply, publish more monographs.

University presses responded imaginatively to the crisis (the director of Penn State Press, Sanford Thatcher, calls it a chronic illness) by restructuring and streamlining their operations and reshaping their editorial programs. In 1996 Columbia University Press decided to broaden its trade and textbook offerings and limit the number of academic fields for which each acquisitions editor was responsible to strengthen its academic profile.<sup>23</sup> Other presses, most notably MIT, Princeton, and New Mexico, likewise reduced the number of fields in which they published, but they also elevated their editorial and production standards. Scholarly publishing remained the primary mandate of most university presses, but many made forays into trade publishing. Smaller state and regional presses such as University of Nebraska Press, University Press of New England, and University of Hawai'i Press turned a significant slice of their publishing programs over to regional titles and series written for non-academic readers and tourists.<sup>24</sup> Larger presses dedicated more of their lists to relative commercial successes, such as *The Kennedy Tapes* (Harvard), *Power to Rise* (Toronto), and *Ireland, a Bicycle, and a Tin Whistle* (McGill-Queen's).<sup>25</sup> Most presses placed more emphasis on cover design, launched Web sites, experimented with electronic publishing and distribution, and beefed-up their marketing campaigns. In 1998 McGill-Queen's launched its War and European Society series with an ad campaign that provocatively juxtaposed the covers with the caption "Books you won't see on Oprah." These initiatives ran against the grain of traditional marketing efforts at university presses, which one industry professional describes as narrow-casting: marketing departments and

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<sup>23</sup> Kate Wittenberg, "Managing an Acquisitions Program: Defining, Creating, and Implementing the Job," *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* 28 (October 1996): para. 5–7, <http://www.proquest.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/>.

<sup>24</sup> Phil Pochoda, "Universities Press On," *The Nation*, 29 December 1997, 12–13.

<sup>25</sup> Scott Inniss, "The New Scholars: University Presses Descend from the Tower," *Quill & Quire Omni*, 1 November 1996, [http://www.quillandquiere.com/features/article.cfm?article\\_id=570](http://www.quillandquiere.com/features/article.cfm?article_id=570).

authors know who will be interested in the book, and they work together to develop highly specialized advertising and direct mail campaigns to reach those buyers.<sup>26</sup> University presses instead concentrated on getting their books into a wider range of distribution channels: independent and chain bookstores, the course adoption market and university bookstores, and academic libraries and book vendors.<sup>27</sup> To a small, exclusive group that held the “pure tobacco” line within the university press community, these forays into trade and textbook publishing weakened the traditional mandate of university presses.<sup>28</sup>

### **The “Series Spree” & Its Critics**

The types of monograph series that prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s – prodigious, expensive, and time-consuming efforts to create definitive editions of the lives or works of great men, or the history of a nation – were less viable by the 1980s. In their stead, university presses collaborated with faculty to develop series that explored a given theme or approach to a subject through individual volumes. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing concluded that presses did so to establish an intellectual profile that would convince academic libraries to purchase the complete set, but some publishers had already started to rethink the strategy and abort series.<sup>29</sup> When Jennifer Ruark interviewed press directors, editors, and scholars in 2000 for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to glean their thoughts on where series fit in the new landscape of scholarly book publishing, she discovered that their attitudes and experiences were more mixed and diverse than the ad hoc committee suggested. Publishers and scholars continue to

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<sup>26</sup> Nadia Halem, “The New-Look Scholarly Press: Academic Publishers are Jazzing Up Their Image to Reach a General Audience,” *Quill & Quire Omni*, 1 November 1998, [http://www.quillandquire.com/features/article.cfm?article\\_id=1232](http://www.quillandquire.com/features/article.cfm?article_id=1232).

<sup>27</sup> “Changing Course? With Academic Sales Dwindling, University Presses Target the Trade Market,” *Publishing Trends.Com* (December 2003), <http://www.publishingtrends.com/copy/03/0312/0312upresses.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Pochoda, “Universities Press On,” 13.

<sup>29</sup> Ad Hoc Committee, “The Future of Scholarly Publishing,” 175–76.

believe that a book's inclusion in a series conveys prestige, and many academics track developments in their field not simply by reading journals and attending conferences but also by paying attention to the books published in series. From the publisher's perspective, series are an efficient way for an acquisitions editor to build a list in a new area of focus; from the general editor's perspective, they provide a unique opportunity to shape a discipline, influence the work of junior scholars, and enhance their careers. And from the perspective of scholars, publishing in a prestigious series may garner more attention for their work or, if the series is resolutely academic, it may allow them to publish scholarship that might be considered too specialized to sell.<sup>30</sup>

Some observers, however, viewed the number and type of series being produced by university presses as symptoms of more disturbing trends. Nina Willdorf first drew attention to the proliferation of book series when she reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that the field of media studies had been defined largely by series. Whereas only one series, Harvard's Film Studies, existed in 1980, that number had increased to eleven by 1998 as other university presses launched series with titles such as Contemporary Film and Television; Studies in Film; Film and Culture; and Commerce and Mass Culture.<sup>31</sup> Using data collected from the annual directory of the Association of American University Presses, Ruark fleshed out the general contours of the series explosion: "University presses have gone on a series spree, many of them starting two or more every season. Indiana University Press, which listed about six series devoted to new scholarship in 1980, listed 42 such series in 1998 . . . the University of Minnesota Press went from 8 series to 18; New York University Press went from 7 to 33; and Duke University

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<sup>30</sup> Ruark, "Have Book Series," para. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Nina Willdorf, "How Series Have Proliferated in One Hot Field," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 46 (28 April 2000), <http://chronicle.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/weekly/v46/i34/4634series.htm>.

Press went from 4 to 21.”<sup>32</sup> The University of California Press Web site now lists well over one hundred series, Minnesota publishes thirty-two, and Duke University Press has launched fifty-seven. New York University Press, in contrast, now offers only twenty-seven series, eleven of which are designated as “new.” North of the forty-ninth parallel, the history of series production at university presses has followed a similar trajectory. Canada’s largest university press, the University of Toronto Press, has published eighty-seven series since it was founded in 1901, while the second largest, McGill-Queen’s University Press, lists forty-five series on its Web site, one-third of which have been launched since 1999.

Ken Wissoker, the editor-in-chief at Duke University Press, informed Ruark that, even if inactive series (which are listed in press catalogues and Web sites) and the rising number of titles are taken into account, university presses produce many more series than they used to. Directors and editors reported a variety of problems they ran up against as they experimented with series. Although the best series pose questions, raise topics, and encourage dialogue, some series were poorly conceived and defined and the monographs that appeared in them appeared to be nothing more than the idiosyncratic choices of their series editor. In other cases, such as media studies, series came to be so narrowly defined and specialized that they upset the important balance between depth (concentration) and breadth (diversity) that university presses were trying to establish in their lists. Other informants reported that although there is a general sense in the academy that university presses pour more money into the marketing of series, their experience with series had caused them to realize that series were not a good vehicle for promoting high-profile authors or books with strong sales potential because the titles tended to get lost in the series and their promotion was limited to a narrowly defined sector of the market. Finally, some series simply outlived their usefulness when certain theoretical approaches or subjects fell from

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<sup>32</sup> Ruark, “Have Book Series,” para. 3.

fashion in the academy or when general editors lost enthusiasm for the project. A number of editors reported that the indifferent series editor was one of the most frequent problems they encountered.<sup>33</sup>

In his response to Ruark's article and the concerns it raised, Waters looks at the issue of series through a wider lens that encompasses the intertwined histories of university presses and book series. In response to the question why *do* publishers develop series, Waters notes that trade houses are motivated to develop series primarily for profit: Harper & Row launched its Companion Guides and Penguin developed its Lives series to generate new titles and establish a publishing profile to sell books. University presses, he argues, are supposed to have a different guiding mission, but that mission – and the hard-won independence of university presses – has been eroded each time a university press launches a series to capture a segment of the trade market or relies upon a general editor to review and acquire manuscripts. On the one hand some large university presses, notably Cambridge University Press, began to publish purely commercial series in the late 1970s and 1980s as way to build lists without adding staff members. The publisher paid a scholar a minimal fee per year to solicit and review manuscripts, and the resulting series made no claim to develop an intellectual or scholarly program. Because in-house review by editors was kept to a minimum – and sometimes the faculty review board was bypassed altogether – the quality of the monographs did not meet university press standards. On the other hand, a number of university presses, most notably University of Minnesota Press and University of California Press, began to launch series that sought to stimulate research and encourage interdisciplinary dialogue. University of Minnesota Press's Theory and History of Literature series, which was started by Waters in 1981 and edited by Wład Godzich and Jochen Schulte-Sasse, published cutting-edge literary scholarship and included books by renowned scholars, such

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 15–31.



as Paul de Man, Terry Eagleton, and Jean-François Lyotard. Similarly, University of California Press's *New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics*, which was started in 1987 by Stephen Greenblatt, a distinguished Renaissance scholar, helped to cement the position of the New Historicists as a leading camp in literary criticism.<sup>34</sup> When the *Theory and History of Literature* series came to an end in 1997, Stanley Fish of Duke University commented, "Theory and History of Literature is the only series for which I ever had a standing order. I knew that whatever volume appeared under its imprint would be one that I would need to read."<sup>35</sup>

Waters believes that the majority of presses are trying to emulate the success that he and his colleagues achieved at University of Minnesota Press. Waters acknowledges that part of the motivation for the *Theory and History of Literature* series, which was released only in paperback, stemmed from the Press's desire to break into the trade paperback market through the publication of a series comparable to those published by leading intellectual paperback publishers like Anchor Books and Vintage Books. At the time, most university presses did not have paperback lines, so the idea was revolutionary. In this sense, the series was envisaged as a marketing tool to expand the Press's sales beyond its primary academic library market. Waters and the general editors were also influenced by European series that sparked critical inquiry without imposing rigid disciplinary and professional boundaries, particularly Giulio Einaudi editore's *La Collana Viola* series and Editions du Seuil and Editions Suhrkamp's *Poétique* series. Water suspects, however, that scholars now propose new series to establish "ever more clearly delineated niches that will be impregnable to criticism from outside those chosen few who identify themselves as participants [as series editors, authors, and referees] in a narrowly defined field of inquiry."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ruark, "Have Book Series," para. 9; University of California Press Web site, "The New Historicism," <http://www.ucpress.edu/books/NH.ser.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in the University of Minnesota Press Web site, "Theory and History of Literature," <http://www.upress.umn.edu/byseries/thl.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Waters, "Are University Presses," para. 30.

These types of series run the risk of becoming “safe scholarly havens” that threaten the integrity of scholarship: “Too many publishers may be allowing the foxes to take care of the proverbial chicken coop.”<sup>37</sup> The result, Waters fears, will be a return to the faculty control, cronyism, and amateurism that characterized university press operations prior to the 1950s.

Waters’s polemical stance on the state of scholarly publishing in the humanities informed his negative response to the proliferation of series in scholarly book publishing. Like Teute, he has vocally derided certain branches of the academy for being overtaken by a corporatist spirit that causes them to pressure tenure candidates to churn out books that are not only unreadable and uninspiring but also a burden to their authors, publishers, and audiences.<sup>38</sup> Teute concurs: escalating tenure requirements, combined with university presses acting like trade publishers, has resulted in expansive lists and books that are inadequately reviewed and edited in the rush to get them to market. Book series have helped acquisitions editors to build lists, but Teute believes they are a corrupting influence because they undermine rather than strengthen critical evaluation: “Scholars bring their fame but sometimes not their attention to these series. And when they do give their attention, conflicts of interest are built into this system. Do these scholars opt for creative manuscripts that challenge wisdom in the field, or do they opt for manuscripts, often by their own acolytes, that support their own scholarly perspective?”<sup>39</sup> According to Teute, some general editors acquire books for their own series and serve as referees for other presses – a practice she refers to as insider trader. Academic librarians have offered the most cynical perspective. Janet L. Flowers commented in 2001, “Many publishers became savvy to the fact that librarians – at least in the past – liked orderliness and would, therefore, be ‘hooked’ into

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., para. 33.

<sup>38</sup> Lindsay Waters, *Enemies of Promise: Publishing, Perishing, and the Eclipse of Scholarship* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press: 2004).

<sup>39</sup> Teute, “Publish and Perish,” para. 19.

purchasing all the titles in a series or a set to ‘complete’ the run. This is not to say that all series are bad; merely that some may have an underlying strategy related to marketing.”<sup>40</sup>

### **Holding Publishers to an Outdated Ideal?**

Have the critics of book series painted an unfair or unrealistic portrait of the state of scholarly book publishing? Ken Wissoker points out that perhaps there was a time – it was well before the early 1980s – when fewer scholars were publishing, when they were concentrated at a few top universities, and when it was possible for an acquisitions editor to know every potential author across the humanities and social sciences. Those times are long gone, and the reality is that university presses are now niche publishers that have, over the past few decades, carved out dominant positions in increasingly specialized disciplines. Acquisitions editors are now just as likely as general editors to acquire books in a few disciplines and make choices among the subfields and approaches in each area. Drawing upon the expertise of a prominent scholar or an active member of a faculty advisory board can help presses to build lists quickly in certain fields, and publishing trade or regional titles often helps them to offset the costs of publishing scholarly monographs.<sup>41</sup>

To a certain degree, the expanding number of books and series published by university presses over the past three decades simply reflects the adjustments that university presses have been forced to make as they weathered the ongoing crisis in scholarly publishing. The mandates of many university presses have evolved, expanded, and become more diverse in this context, and so too have the book series they offer. In 2003 James Jordan, the director of Columbia University Press, remarked that just as reference publishing and publishing great works of scholarship is part of the mission of a university press, so too is trade publishing, in the sense that university presses

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<sup>40</sup> Flowers, “Standing Orders,” 326.

<sup>41</sup> Wissoker, “Scholarly Monographs are Flourishing,” para. 15, 19.

seek to make available to the broader public the full range and value of research generated by university faculty.<sup>42</sup> Series have changed accordingly: some, like McGill-Queen's University Press's War and European Society series, seek to synthesize and bring new approaches to the attention of the general public and to university students through course adoptions; some, like the University of Toronto Press's *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, are prodigious, multi-authored reference works; and some, like Minnesota's Theory and History of Literature series, seek to showcase innovative scholarship and engage scholars in interdisciplinary dialogue and debate by publishing traditional scholarly monographs. As a few of their critics have noted, not all of the series that have been launched in the last two decades have been successful, and university presses have already phased out a few of them. Yet to suggest, as do Waters and Teute, that university presses should only publish the latter two types of series, and that marketing considerations should play no role in publishing decisions, is unreasonable and unwarranted given the economic pressures and constraints under which most presses now operate. UBC Press has not been immune to these challenges. Unlike many presses, it did not actively pursue opportunities in trade publishing; instead, the Press concentrated on developing books and series with high editorial and production values to carve out a leading position in specific niches within the academic market and, to a lesser extent, the course adoption market. Its experiences with series development since the early 1990s reveal the risks and benefits that accompany this strategy.

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<sup>42</sup> "Changing Course," para. 5; Douglas Armato, Susan Schott, and Steven Cohn, "The Value of University Presses," Association of American University Presses Web site, <http://aaupnet.org/news/value.html>.

## Series & List Building at UBC Press

UBC Press was founded in 1971 during an era when federal and provincial governments provided generous funding to universities and academic libraries, and universities, in turn, subsidized university presses. Prior to the 1960s there were only four university presses in Canada; by 1994 that number had increased to seventeen. To a certain degree, series offerings grew apace with university presses in Canada, as presses attempted to carve out areas of specialization, build lists, and establish intellectual profiles in an increasingly uncertain and competitive economic climate. As was the case in the United States, some presses dedicated a larger percentage of their lists to regional, trade, and crossover titles, while others delivered scholarly monographs that met the highest academic, editorial, and production standards. After its near-death experience in the late 1980s, UBC Press developed a mix of both strategies to weather the storm and fulfill its mandate to produce high-quality books that would enhance the university's reputation and bring important intellectual discoveries to regional, national, and international audiences. The Press published some regional titles that had intrinsic trade market potential, but it did not move into trade publishing in a concerted fashion.<sup>43</sup> Instead, its stated goal was "to be the dominant Canadian scholarly publisher in every field it enters."<sup>44</sup> The Press used a strategy of focused list building to accomplish this, and it now dominates niches devoted to BC studies, military history, Native studies, law and society, political science, and environmental studies. From the time that the Press published its first three books in 1971, book series have played an evolving

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Spendlove, "Pop Appeal: Most University Presses Want It – But at What Price?" *Quill & Quire Omni*, 1 November 2002: para. 4, [http://www.quillandquiere.com/features/article.cfm?article\\_id=2521](http://www.quillandquiere.com/features/article.cfm?article_id=2521).

<sup>44</sup> UBC Press, "UBC Press Review, Self-Study, March 2007," 11, unpublished document.

and increasingly important role in the Press's transformation from a small, regional press with an unfocused list to the leading publisher of social sciences in Canada (see Table 2.1).

*Table 2.1*

Series Development, UBC Press, 1975–2007

<i>Series Title</i>	<i>Launch</i>	<i>No. of Titles</i>	<i>Last Volume</i>
<i>Canadian Yearbook of International Law</i>	1961	40	2006
<i>The Pioneers of British Columbia</i>	1975	15	2001
<i>Canada and International Relations</i>	1989	16	2003
<i>Royal British Columbia Museum Handbooks</i>	1993	10	2004
<i>Sustainability and the Environment</i>	1995	12	2006
<i>Urbanization in Asia</i>	1996	3	1999
<i>Contemporary Chinese Studies</i>	1997	11	2007
<i>First Nations Languages</i>	1997	4	2007
<i>David and Brenda McLean Canadian Series</i>	1998	5	2005
<i>Pacific Rim Archaeology</i>	1998	4	2005
<i>Law and Society</i>	2001	41	2007
<i>Studies in Canadian Military History</i>	2002	13	2006
<i>Legal Dimensions</i>	2002	6	2007
<i>Asian Religions and Society</i>	2003	4	2006
<i>Canadian Democratic Audit</i>	2004	9	2006
<i>Nature/History/Society</i>	2004	6	2007
<i>Equality/Security/Community</i>	2005	3	2007
<i>Sexuality Studies</i>	2005	5	2007

Source: UBC Press, "Series," Press Web site.

## **History of UBC Press**

UBC Press's recent success derived from its steady growth – in title output, sales, number of staff, and international recognition – since 1989, when the Press underwent an external review and major restructuring. At that time a UBC President's Committee found that the Press was in a state of crisis because its management had failed to heed suggestions made by a managerial consultant in 1982. The consultant warned the university that the Press suffered from fundamental organizational problems and that its output did not justify the number of staff employed. The 1989 committee concluded that the Press still suffered from numerous problems, including lack of communication between the director and departments, an unfocused publishing program, and books of uneven quality and design. The committee conceded that the Press did have some

strengths, particularly in the fields of forestry, Native studies, and BC history (which included the *Pioneers of British Columbia* series), but its members believed that it had dismal prospects for growth in these areas because the Press had a poor reputation among scholars. The review committee gave the Press a reprieve and a new mandate to refashion itself into a press befitting an outstanding research university. The Press had to become financially self-sufficient by 1995, when the university would withdraw an annual operating grant that constituted 25 percent of the Press's revenue. Thereafter, the Press's viability would rest upon the precarious foundation of sales revenue, income from three modest endowments managed by the university, and federal and provincial grants from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences through its Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme; the Department of Canadian Heritage through its Book Publishing Industry Development Program; the Association for the Export of Canadian Books; the Canada Council for the Arts; and the BC Arts Council. The K.D. Srivastava Publications Fund, which was established in 1995 to aid the publication of books by authors who completed a substantial portion of the work at the University of British Columbia, is now the only direct funding that the Press receives from the university.<sup>45</sup>

In response to the review, an acting director, Jean Wilson, streamlined the staff and created interim positions until the Press's current director, Peter Milroy, was hired in 1990 to establish a new employee structure and a focused publishing program.<sup>46</sup> Prior to the review, the President's Standing Committee acted as an editorial board for the Press and worked in conjunction with the Publications Board, which is made up of senior scholars from the University of British Columbia who are charged with governing the university's imprint. Following the review,

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<sup>45</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 60; Megan Brand, "Outsourcing Academia: How Freelancers Facilitate the Scholarly Publishing Process" (master of publishing project report, Simon Fraser University, 2005), 9.

<sup>46</sup> "Review of UBC Press, October 1989," unpublished report. The report is discussed in Alison Cairns, "An Analysis of the Operation of the University of British Columbia Press with an Emphasis on Scholarly Editing" (master of publishing project report, Simon Fraser University, 2005), 4, 10; UBC Press, "Self-Study," 2.

the President's Standing Committee was abolished, and the Publications Board became the university advisory board with final authority for publication decisions.<sup>47</sup>

To rebuild the Press's reputation and finances, Milroy and a small, revitalized staff decided to focus the list in western Canadian history and Native studies, and they instituted measures to attract and regain the confidence of authors in the academic community. Rather than waiting for authors to approach the Press, acquisitions editors, who increased in number from one to three by 1997, actively pursued manuscripts and focused on building supportive editorial relationships with authors. In the mid-1990s the Press expanded its areas of focus to include political science and national history, and it opened an office in Toronto. By doing so, the Press sought to establish a reputation as a national rather than simply a regional publisher by acquiring more books by scholars across Canada. Working in concert with the acquisitions editors' mandate to develop author-focused editorial relationships, the production department streamlined its operations to deliver books of the highest editorial quality and design on a much shorter production schedule than other presses. To improve its finances, the Press became a marketing and distributing agent for other Canadian, American, and British academic presses, collaborated with museums and government departments to co-publish major reference works such as *Birds of British Columbia* and the Royal British Columbia Museum Handbook series, which was launched in 1993, and became one of the first university presses in North America to sell directly to the course adoption market. The Press has since produced over 800 titles, and its staff, which now comprises nineteen full- and part-time members in four departments (Editorial-Acquisitions, Editorial-Production, Marketing and Operations, and Finance-Distribution), publishes fifty to sixty titles a year.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cairns, "An Analysis of the Operation," 10.

<sup>48</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 3.



### **Series Development, 1971–96**

During the recent debate on the role of book series in scholarly publishing, Kate Wittenburg, the editor-in-chief of Columbia University Press, commented, “It is sometimes difficult to remember what it was like trying to convince scholars to publish their books with you without the strength of an established list or series behind you.”<sup>49</sup> Following the review, UBC Press had a new mandate to publish the work of Canadian scholars so that the Press and the university could play a role in Canada’s cultural heritage.<sup>50</sup> To fulfill the mandate and attract authors, the Press shifted its focus from Canadian literary history, Latin American studies, English literary criticism, and British history to those areas and disciplines where it had an established list: British Columbia, Canada and the North, and the Pacific Rim, with an emphasis on Native studies, forestry, and sustainable development. It also experimented with book series as a potential source of funding and as a vehicle for list building.<sup>51</sup>

Jean Wilson, who was the sole acquisitions editor from 1990 to 1993 and is now associate director of the Editorial-Acquisitions Department, recalls that the Press’s experiences with series in these years was mixed. Milroy and Wilson inherited three series from their predecessors: *Pioneers of British Columbia*, *Canada and International Relations*, and *The Canadian Yearbook of International Law*. The Press had launched the *Pioneers of British Columbia* series in 1975 to explore early BC history through settler memoirs, reminiscences, and diaries. The advisory board included established BC historians, and its general editor, Jean Barman, was a distinguished professor at UBC and the author of *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*. The series helped to establish the Press’s strength in regional history, but the Press decided to let it die a quiet death in the late 1990s: pioneer history had fallen

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<sup>49</sup> Wittenburg, “Managing an Acquisitions Program,” para. 8.

<sup>50</sup> UBC Press, “Case Statement, 1991–92,” unpublished document, 3.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

from fashion, the editorial board never actively pursued manuscripts, and the acquisitions department felt that books that might fit the series would do fine as part of the Press's general publishing in BC studies.<sup>52</sup> The Press had developed the Canada and International Relations series in the mid-1980s to showcase Canadian scholarship on contemporary world politics and international affairs; because political science was not then one of the Press's strengths, staff drew upon the expertise of two general editors and an advisory board. Finally, from an editorial standpoint, *The Canadian Yearbook of International Law* was unique. The series, which is published in English and French, is issued annually in association with the Canadian Society of International Law and the Canadian Council on International Law. Don McRae, professor of law at the University of Ottawa, now edits the series, and a freelance project editor oversees all aspects of its production.<sup>53</sup> Publishing the annual conferred some prestige upon the Press and guaranteed it library and professional sales, but it was not a platform from which to build a list in law or legal studies.

In a bid to attract authors and external sponsors to the Press and strengthen its ties with the university, Milroy and Wilson developed proposals, sometimes in collaboration with faculty, for series in the early 1990s. These early experiments with series as a vehicle for list building and fund raising yielded mixed results. Two of the series – Northwest Native Studies, and Photography and British Columbia – did not progress beyond the proposal stage. Wilson recalls that the Press decided not to proceed with the Native studies series because they already had a well-established Native studies list: the Press did not require the expertise of a general editor to

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<sup>52</sup> Jean Wilson (Associate Director, Editorial-Acquisitions), in discussion with the author, August and October 2007; UBC Press, "Case Statement," 3–4.

<sup>53</sup> Brand, "Outsourcing Academia," 54.

build its list further in this area, and, given the interdisciplinary and fragmented nature of Native studies as a discipline, it would be difficult to find a general editor who would please everyone.<sup>54</sup>

Three of the proposed series did come to fruition by mid-decade, however. The Sustainable Action (Eco Action) series, which was instigated by John Robinson of UBC's Sustainable Development Research Institute, sought to showcase the university and the Press's strength in sustainability studies. Individual volumes would build upon a number of innovative federal government reports on the environment, and the series would provide a comprehensive, independent, and critical evaluation of the actions Canadians would need to take to meet the challenges of sustainable development. Robinson, who became the series editor, modeled the series on the Worldwatch Institute's *State of the World Report*, and he believed that it too would become a major reference for nongovernmental organizations, governments, academics, and the media. The Press published the first volume in 1995 under a new series title, *Sustainability and the Environment*. The first volume of the proposed *Urbanization and Development on the Pacific Rim* series, which was retitled *Urbanization in Asia*, appeared one year later. The series, as it was envisaged, would enhance the Press's focus on the Pacific Rim by publishing scholarship that explored and documented the remarkable economic growth of East Asian and Southeast Asian countries. The series was to progress under the direction of Terry McGee, director of the Institute of Asian Research at UBC, and an editorial board composed of scholars from Hong Kong, British Columbia, California, and Australia.<sup>55</sup>

The Press published the first volume of the *First Nations Languages* series in 1997. According to George Maddison, the current associate director of marketing and operations, *First Nations Languages* is the type of series that the Press would publish gladly – if it had unlimited

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<sup>54</sup> UBC Press, "Case Statement," 3–14; Wilson, in discussion with author, August 2007.

<sup>55</sup> UBC Press, "Case Statement," 6–7, 12–13; Wilson, in discussion with the author, October 2007.

resources.<sup>56</sup> Ken Carty, a professor of political science at UBC and a member of the Publications Board, proposed the series, and the Press took on the project because it complemented its Native studies list and the university set aside money to support its publication. The series publishes serious scholarship that documents, analyzes, and preserves Aboriginal languages; sales are limited to academic libraries and Aboriginal communities. Because of the specialized nature of the series, the Press relied upon the expertise of a general editor, Patricia Shaw, who is director of the First Nations Languages Program at UBC, to suggest and evaluate potential manuscripts. Though the Press planned originally to publish two volumes a year over five years, the complexity of the research projects slowed the process, and the unusual phonetic symbols used in Aboriginal languages were difficult and expensive to typeset and produce. To date, the Press has published only four volumes in the series, but they have contributed immeasurably to the Press's profile as a publisher of serious scholarship on Aboriginal peoples, they have helped the Press to establish a reputation for producing books with the highest editorial and production values, and the volumes are cherished by Aboriginal communities. The most recent volume, *Witsuwit'en Grammar*, appeared in 2007, but the future of the series is now uncertain because the project's university funding has been exhausted.<sup>57</sup>

### **Series Development, 1997–2007**

The Press began a second wave of series development in the mid-1990s, when the Press hired more acquisitions editors in its campaign to become a truly national publisher on the Canadian scene. Laura Macleod joined the Press in 1993, and Emily Andrew took up her position five years later. Both women had been assistant editors at the University of Toronto Press. In 1997 Randy

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<sup>56</sup> George Maddison (Associate Director-Marketing and Operations), in discussion with the author, August 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, in discussion with author, August 2007.

Schmidt moved from the Press's production department to acquisitions, where he took over the environmental and resource studies list. Over the next decade, Wilson built upon the Press's strengths in BC history and Native studies and added sexuality studies to the list, while Andrew developed the strongest political science list in the country and began to actively seek manuscripts in Asian studies and in Canadian military and national history. Schmidt has since developed an exceptionally successful list in law and society studies, and Melissa Pitts, who was hired as a part-time acquisitions editor in 2005, has started to acquire titles in national history, urban planning, and sociology.<sup>58</sup>

In the late 1990s the Press announced three new series that built upon its traditional strengths and signalled the new focus and direction of its Editorial-Acquisitions Department. The Brenda and David McLean Canadian Studies Series strengthened the Press's list in national history and Canadian studies, and it enhanced its relationship with faculty in UBC's Canadian Studies program.<sup>59</sup> A distinguished scholar occupies the McLean Chair in Canadian Studies for two years and delivers the prestigious lectures in the term's second year. UBC Press publishes the lectures if the manuscript successfully passes peer review and receives approval by the Publications Board. To date, the arrangement has produced five unique, high-profile, and award-winning titles for the Press. Cole Harris's *Making Native Space* (2002), for instance, won the Canadian Historical Association's Sir John A. Macdonald prize for the best book in Canadian history and the association's Clio Award for British Columbia, and, most recently, Julie Cruikshank's *Do Glaciers Listen?* (2006) won the American Anthropological Society's Julian Steward Award and the Society for Humanistic Anthropology's Victor Turner Prize, among others.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 3.

<sup>59</sup> Wilson, in discussion with the author, August 2007.

<sup>60</sup> UBC Press, series brochure, available on the UBC Press Web site.

Pacific Rim Archaeology, which was launched in 1998, was likewise a joint initiative, this time with the UBC Laboratory of Archaeology. As proposed, each volume would present a scholarly report on significant new archaeological research on the Pacific Rim, spanning Southeast Asia to western North America to Pacific Latin America. Like the First Nations Languages series, Pacific Rim Archaeology showcases scholarship that is highly specialized, expensive to produce, and, as a consequence, it is not likely to be published in monograph form outside of a special series.<sup>61</sup> At this time the Press also announced a new Asian studies series called Contemporary Chinese Studies. The Urbanization in Asia series had faltered under the direction of its general editor (the third and final volume appeared in 1999), and the new series was developed to take its place and signal the Press's new direction. Like Pacific Rim Archaeology, the series was a joint initiative, this time between the Press and Institute of Asian Research's Centre for Chinese Research at UBC. It had a new mandate to include the best scholarly work on contemporary China, Taiwan, and the overseas Chinese world. Diana Lary of the Centre for Chinese Research was general editor.

The impact of having three acquisitions editors dedicated to using series in service to a larger strategy of focused list building became readily apparent in the period between 2001 and 2007. As was the case in the mid-1990s, the Press developed new series to either solidify its position in a particular discipline or signal its move into a new area.<sup>62</sup> To enhance its Asian studies list, for instance, the Press acquired a bundle of books that became the foundation for a new series, Asian Religions and Society. And the Nature/History/Society series, which was launched in 2004 under the general editorship of Graeme Wynn, who teaches in the UBC Geography Department, has solidified the Press's leading position as a publisher of sustainability

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<sup>61</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," Appendix 4.5 (Series at UBC Press); Wilson, in discussion with the author, August 2007.

<sup>62</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 27.

and environmental studies by adding the innovative, multidisciplinary discipline of environmental history to the list.

The publication of the Canadian Democratic Audit (CDA) between 2004 and 2006 likewise buttressed the Press's position as a leading publisher of Canadian political science and enhanced the Press's attempt to deepen its presence in the course adoption market. Bill Cross of Mount Allison University's Centre for Canadian Studies initiated the research project, and he envisaged the series as a finite set of volumes that would be appropriate for undergraduate and graduate courses and programs. The series comprises nine volumes by noted political scientists who examine various aspects of Canadian democracy at the outset of the twenty-first century.<sup>63</sup> In 2005 and 2006 the Press also published the Equality/Security/Community series as a three-volume set. The series presented the findings of a collaborative, multidisciplinary research project initiated by UBC's Centre for Research on Economic and Social Policy to explain and improve the distribution of well-being in Canada. Like the CDA, Equality/Security/Community has cemented the Press's position as a leading publisher of Canadian studies and political science, and both series have encouraged scholars in these areas to submit manuscripts to the Press. By 2003 the Press's political science list was so well established that the Editorial-Acquisitions Department allowed the Canada and International Relations series, which had never had strong direction from its series editor or board, to wither on the vine. The sixteenth and final volume was published in that year, when it was decided that manuscripts in that area would be better served – from a marketing, design, and production standpoint – if they were published as stand-alone volumes.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Milroy (Director), in discussion with author, August 2007; Camilla Blakeley (Project Editor, Editorial-Production), in discussion with author, October 2007.

In the decade between 1997 and 2007 the Press also announced four new series that helped to develop its intellectual profile in new subject areas. In 2000 the Press published Wesley Pue's *Pepper in Our Eyes: The APEC Affair*. Pue teaches in UBC's Faculty of Law and is an active, engaged member of the Canadian Law and Society Association. The Press approached him to serve as the general editor of a new law series. Before then, the Press had published *The Canadian Yearbook of International Law* and other titles in law and socio-legal studies, but it was not a major focus. Recognizing that no other Canadian university publisher had a significant presence in the area, Randy Schmidt worked with Pue to develop the Law and Society series, which was an instant success: the Press published forty-one titles between 2001 and 2007.<sup>65</sup> The Legal Dimension series also augmented the Press's reputation for producing law and socio-legal studies of the highest quality. The series emerged out of an annual legal and socio-legal research initiative to examine various issues of law reform from a multidisciplinary perspective that was sponsored by the Canadian Association of Law Teachers, the Canadian Law and Society Association, the Canadian Council of Law Deans, and the Law Commission of Canada. UBC Press published the findings in six volumes between 2002 and 2007.

Jean Wilson and Emily Andrew similarly developed two new series that have signalled the Press's move into Canadian military history and sexuality studies. Andrew had acquired a few titles in military history that did remarkably well. Recognizing that no Canadian university press had a significant presence in the area, she approached Jack Granatstein and Dean Oliver at the Canadian War Museum to see if they would be interested in a series. *Studies in Canadian Military History* is published in association with the Canadian War Museum, and Oliver, who is the museum's director of research and exhibitions, serves as general editor.<sup>66</sup> The Press has published thirteen titles in the series since 2002. Wilson likewise recognized that the innovative,

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<sup>65</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 27; Milroy, in discussion.

<sup>66</sup> Milroy, in discussion; Wilson, in discussion, August 2007.



interdisciplinary field of sexuality studies was not being well served by Canadian university presses and developed the Sexuality Studies series in response. Given that this was a new area of focus, the Press invited Becki Ross, who teaches in UBC's Women's and Gender Studies program, to serve as general editor, and it set up an interdisciplinary editorial board composed of scholars from across Canada to lend its expertise.

### **Focused List Building**

Between 1990 and 2007 UBC Press transformed itself from a small university press with a unfocussed list to the third largest university press in the country: its yearly output increased from sixteen to nearly sixty titles, and, by 2006, its list fell into the following key subject areas: law (19%), political science (18%), social history (13%), Native studies (11%), environmental studies (9%), military history (8%), and Asian studies (7%).<sup>67</sup> The role that series played in this evolution is evident in the Press's frontlist titles: in the three-year period between 2005 and 2007 series accounted for 53 percent, 31 percent, and 45 percent of the Press's total yearly output (see Table 2.2). Three of the Press's key subject areas – law and society, military history, and Asian studies – are composed almost entirely of titles in series. In contrast, series played only a small role in the Press's impressive political science and Native studies lists.

The composition of UBC Press's frontlist titles in recent years highlights the benefits that can accrue when book series are developed to complement a larger strategy of focused list building. As Jennifer Ruark noted in her exploration of the "series spree," book series can offer acquisitions editors a fast and efficient vehicle to acquire books and develop a list in new subject areas, particularly in cases where a publisher with limited financial and human resources is pressured to produce more books and acquisitions editors are confronted with the challenge of

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<sup>67</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 3, 23–24, 26.

acquiring books in disciplines or subject areas where they have not yet established a presence by attending conferences, holding workshops, or engaging authors in the peer review process. Unlike many university presses that faced similar challenges and constraints, UBC Press did not develop series purely for the trade market; it instead harnessed its resources judiciously to foster series that would promote research at UBC and enhance the Press's profile as a national publisher of scholarly books. Some series have been more successful than others, and the history of series like *Urbanization in Asia*, *Canada and International Relations*, *First Nations Languages*, and *Pioneers of British Columbia* suggests that their success depends on a variety of factors, including the level of engagement and enthusiasm that the general editor brings to the project, funding considerations, and the degree of fit between the design and content and the intended audience.

*Table 2.2*

Series Titles, Number and Percentage of Total, UBC Press, 2005–07

<i>Title of Series</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>
Asian Religions and Society	1	2	
Brenda & David McLean	1		
Canadian Democratic Audit	2	1	
Equality/Security/Community	1	2	
Nature/History/Society		1	6
Sustainability and the Environment	2	1	2
First Nations Languages	1		1
Law and Society	15	3	11
Legal Dimensions	1	1	1
Pacific Rim Archaeology	1		
Contemporary Chinese Studies			3
Studies in Canadian Military History	3	4	1
Sexuality Studies	1	1	1
Total Number of Titles	55	51	58
Total Number of Volume in Series	29 (53%)	16 (31%)	26 (45%)

*Source:* UBC Press Catalogues, 2005–07.

### 3

## Beyond List Building: Benefits and Concerns

In *Getting it Published: The Acquisition Process at University Presses* (1989) Paul Parsons anticipated recent debates on the role of series in scholarly book publishing when he noted, “Many editors dislike series, complaining that they take an inordinate amount of time to organize and that they place responsibility more on an academic supervisor than on an editor. But other editors say there is no better way to establish a reputation in a field.”<sup>68</sup> To a certain degree the history of series development at UBC Press supports the truth of both positions. Series proved to be an invaluable tool in the Press’s strategy to carve out through focused list building a leading position in law, military history, and environmental studies. Interviews with staff members in the Editorial–Acquisitions, Editorial-Production, and Marketing departments also revealed that few feared losing control of the publishing process to a general editor or editorial board; they did, however, recount a number of instances where series floundered or got off to slow starts under the direction of general editors who did not bring as much energy to the projects as had been anticipated. Staff members agreed that the development, production, and marketing of series could be complicated and time-consuming, particularly in the early development stage, but they believe that this initial outlay of labour and funds is well worth the effort to produce and promote a well-organized, successful series.

### General Editors

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<sup>68</sup> Paul Parsons, *Getting it Published: The Acquisition Process at University Presses* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 163.

University presses initiate a series as an acquisitions tool or a prominent scholar proposes a new series to which he or she is willing to serve as a general editor.<sup>69</sup> In the former case, the publisher will typically extend an invitation to a distinguished scholar, particularly if the press does not have an established profile in the given discipline. In either case, general editors lend their names to help a press brand a series and attract authors, and they bring research projects and potential manuscripts to the attention of acquisitions or commissioning editors. All manuscripts considered for publication by UBC Press, regardless of whether they are in a series, are sent out for independent review and must receive final approval from the Publications Board; series editors do not receive a special honorarium or fee for their efforts. In some cases the Press creates an editorial board to assist the general editor and widen its access to a larger network of authors and reviewers.

The majority of series at UBC Press have a general editor, and the strategy has produced mixed results. Two of the more successful monograph series – Law and Society and Nature/History/Society – were either proposed by or developed in close collaboration with the general editor. Wes Pue, who Jean Wilson describes as an ideal editor, served on the Press’s Publications Board, understood the Press’s mandate, and was well regarded and connected.<sup>70</sup> His involvement in the Canadian Law and Society Association brought him into contact with scholars from diverse disciplines, and his vision for the series was broad: books in the series would seek to bridge scholarship that was emerging from law’s interdisciplinary engagement with disciplines such as politics, social theory, history, political economy, and gender studies.<sup>71</sup> Graeme Wynn likewise envisaged the Nature/History/Society series as a vehicle to showcase and inspire Canadian scholarship in environmental history and allied fields. Wynn, like Pue, was a member

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>70</sup> Wesley Pue (General Editor, Law and Society series), in discussion with author, October 2007.

<sup>71</sup> Pue, in discussion; Milroy, in discussion; UBC Press, Law and Society series Web site.

of the Press's Publications Board, and he was well regarded and connected in the fields of historical geography and environmental history. When Wynn proposed the series, he noted that environmental history was especially strong in the United States and had attracted attention internationally, but it was poorly developed and represented in Canada. Three university presses, two American and one British, had already developed monograph series in the field, but there was no comparable series for Canadian scholars.<sup>72</sup> To allay fears that there may already be too many series in the area, Wynn noted in the proposal that the Ohio University Press series had a mandate to publish international topics with the potential for course adoption, that the Cambridge series was prestigious and explicitly international, and that the University of Washington Press series was "resolutely American."

Although Pue and Wynn fulfill their role as general editors in slightly different ways, they both bring a high level of enthusiasm and expertise to the projects. They collaborate with Randy Schmidt to pursue manuscripts and evaluate their appropriateness for the series, they promote the series at conferences and, if necessary, they help the author prepare the manuscript for review, recommend appropriate referees, and lend their expertise to authors if the reviewers think the manuscripts require further revision.<sup>73</sup> Wynn works more closely with authors than Pue, and he writes an introduction to each volume that emphasizes its contribution to scholarship.<sup>74</sup> Both series have cemented the Press's position as a leading publisher of law and society and environmental and sustainability studies, and they have enhanced the Press's conscious aim to be open to the growing trend toward interdisciplinary studies, despite the problems that this presents in defining a title's subject area.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Graeme Wynn and Randy Schmidt, "Series Proposal: Nature/History/Society," unpublished document, UBC Press, 1–2.

<sup>73</sup> Pue, in discussion; Wilson, in discussion with the author, August 2007.

<sup>74</sup> UBC Press, Wynn and Schmidt, "Series Proposal," 2.

<sup>75</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 11.

While having a general editor for the Law and Society and Nature/History/Society series translated into real benefits for the Press, other series did not fare as well. The demise of the Urbanization in Asia series after only three volumes was the first indication for the Press that general editors could do as much harm as good. The pattern would be repeated with three other series: Sustainability and the Environment, Contemporary Chinese Studies, and Sexuality Studies. In all three cases, the general editors, for a variety of reasons, did not give the series the attention they deserved. In her survey of university press staff, Jennifer Ruark found that when editors at other university presses faced similar situations they either let the series wither on the vine or announced its cancellation.<sup>76</sup> The decision is not an easy one to make. When the ad hoc committee to explore the future of scholarly book publishing observed a rash of series cancellations in the late 1990s, it cautioned university presses that the symbolic value of closing a series should not be underestimated.<sup>77</sup> Just as a new series can signal a new direction, an aborted series can signal that a press no longer wants to, or has failed to, publish in a subject area. Rather than discontinuing the three series in question, UBC Press decided to continue them under the de facto general editorship of its acquisitions editors.<sup>78</sup> The series, consequently, got off to slow starts. Unlike an established scholar who can tap into a network of contacts built over the span of a career to acquire manuscripts, it can take a number of years for an acquisitions editor to make themselves known to scholars in a discipline and convince them to entrust their manuscripts to a new series at a Press without an established list in the subject area. UBC Press, for instance, announced the Sexuality Studies series in 2003 with the publication of *Masculinities without Men?* but only two books appeared in the next three years. In 2007, however, the series produced three books that were acquired through active solicitation by the Press's acquisitions editors. In

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<sup>76</sup> Ruark, "Have Book Series," para. 37–41.

<sup>77</sup> Ad Hoc Committee, "The Future of Scholarly Publishing," 175.

<sup>78</sup> Wilson, in discussion with author, August and October 2007.

the case of the Law and Society series, Schmidt is now so well connected in the fields of Canadian law and socio-legal studies that Pue plays a less active role.<sup>79</sup>

## **Funding**

While series under the guidance of a distinguished, engaged general editor have helped UBC Press to develop publishing programs in new areas, series that have helped to cement the Press's position in an established field have served as a vehicle for outside funding.<sup>80</sup> UBC Press, like all university presses, has been forced by rising operational costs and decreased subsidies to make profit-based decisions. The Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme (ASPP) currently provides, on average, \$8,000 for titles that make an original contribution to knowledge and are not likely to be self-supporting. Because the ASPP grant covers only a third to a half of a press's expenditures for each monograph, and given that the market for scholarly monographs is shrinking, university press directors and acquisitions editors have been forced to adopt a more creative approach to fund each project: they now actively seek subventions or sponsorships – up-front financial infusions from public or private institutions – for individual titles or projects.<sup>81</sup>

UBC Press's early fundraising endeavours for series bore little fruit beyond the establishment of a fund for the First Nations Languages series, but the Press has had more success since it has revitalized its publishing program and rebuilt its reputation. For the Brenda and David McLean Canadian Studies Series, the Press negotiated an agreement whereby the Canadian Studies program at UBC would match ASPP funding for each volume in the series. The Press entered into a similar arrangement with the Canadian War Museum for Studies in Canadian

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<sup>79</sup> Pue, in discussion.

<sup>80</sup> Holly Keller (Assistant Director-Production and Editorial Services), in discussion with the author, August 2007.

<sup>81</sup> John Lorinc, "Show Me the Money," *Quill & Quire Omni*, 1 November 2006, para. 5, [http://www.quillandquiere.com/news/article.cfm?article\\_id=7517](http://www.quillandquiere.com/news/article.cfm?article_id=7517); UBC Press, "Self-Study," 61.

Military History. The museum provides top-up funding of \$5,000 for each title, the Press features the museum's logo prominently on all titles and marketing materials, and Dean Oliver has the final say as to whether an acquired title will be included in the series.<sup>82</sup>

All of the limited sets published or in development by the Press have likewise received subventions from government agencies or sponsorships from the research project's host university or private donors that obviate the need to depend upon, or apply for, funding from the ASPP. The Law Commission of Canada, for instance, supported the publication of the Legal Dimensions series until the federal government withdrew funding for the commission in the fall of 2006. The Canadian Democratic Audit was not funded by the ASPP because the original goal of the project and publishing venture was to commission and produce a series for the course adoption market and the general public. Both the research project and the book series received generous support from the Centre for Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University, the Harold Crabtree Foundation, and the Edgar Davidson Fund.<sup>83</sup> The Press likewise researched and competed against other major Canadian university presses to ensure that the three largest SSHRCC interdisciplinary research projects – Globalization and Autonomy, The Metropolis Project, and Equality/Security/Community – would each independently choose UBC Press as their publisher. Like the CDA, the series were or will be supported by a combination of funds from the ASSP, SSHRCC, host universities, and outside benefactors.<sup>84</sup> These are complex research projects that draw upon the expertise, findings, and contributions of scholars and experts from across Canada and the international academic community. The funding that accompanies the series is advantageous to the Press, but publishing the findings can demand an extraordinary

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<sup>82</sup> Milroy, in discussion; Wilson, in discussion, August 2007.

<sup>83</sup> Canadian Democratic Audit Web site, [www.canadiandemocraticaudit.ca](http://www.canadiandemocraticaudit.ca)

<sup>84</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 70.



amount of planning and effort on the part of the researcher director, acquisitions editor, and project editor.

## **Design & Production**

Series, regardless of whether they are unnumbered and ongoing or limited sets, require special consideration by the Editorial–Production department. The Press’s past experiences with series development, design, and production have enhanced its awareness that each new series can either complicate or streamline the publication process. If a series is poorly planned or designed, the results can be as detrimental to its future as a general editor who brings little enthusiasm to the project. Camilla Blakeley, who worked as a project editor at the Press from 1997 until the fall of 2007, recalls that one of the reasons the Press allowed the Canada and International Relations series to end was that it had not been designed to brand it as a series or as a UBC Press “product.”<sup>85</sup> Darcy Cullen, who is an editor in the Editorial-Production Department, also noted that the design of the Pioneers of British Columbia series was problematic. The books had a distinctive, uniform look that derived from a commissioned template, but the covers contained a visual element – historical paintings or illustrations of BC in four colours – that were expensive to print and for which it was often difficult to identify the copyright holder. In addition, because the illustration for each book had to fit within a box of a defined height and width, the author and editor often had to spend an inordinate amount of time locating appropriate images to suite the template’s vertical orientation.<sup>86</sup> Holly Keller, who joined UBC Press in 1990 and is now manager of production and editorial services, feels that the commissioned cover template for the Legal Dimensions series was also too rigid.<sup>87</sup> Both Keller and Blakeley stress that series should

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<sup>85</sup> Milroy in discussion; Blakeley, in discussion.

<sup>86</sup> Darcy Cullen (Editor, Editorial-Production), in discussion with the author, September 2007.

<sup>87</sup> Keller, in discussion.

be well planned and designed from the start, but the typography and cover design must be flexible enough to allow the Press to update the look or give a high-profile author or monograph special treatment. A flexible production strategy for books in series preempts the problem of good manuscripts with star potential being buried in a series – a criticism that has been levelled at series by both editors and authors.<sup>88</sup>

The Editorial-Production Department has played an important role in the Press's revitalization. In a recent review of scholarly publishing at the University of Toronto Press committee members noted that the press had been surpassed in some of its traditional areas of strength by McGill-Queen's University Press and UBC Press and that speed to market was a major consideration for authors.<sup>89</sup> UBC Press has achieved an average production schedule of nine months from submission of the reviewed and revised manuscript to publication, and the Press now consistently produces books with award-winning designs and few editorial errors.<sup>90</sup> Following the 1989 review, the department developed a Press style for book design that was both cost-effective and appealing, and it has since laid out a set of guidelines that factor in cost and the degree of customized effort to help project editors select a freelance team best suited to the needs of a monograph or series. The options fall into a five-tiered hierarchy: (1) full cover and interior design, (2) cover design and full interior template, (3) cover design and modified interior, (4) cover design and series interior, and (5) cover design and standard interior.<sup>91</sup> The project editor – in consultation with the acquisitions editor, the director, the marketing manager, and the production manager – determines the best treatment for a book based upon the stature of the author, the nature of the subject, the complexity of the project, the intended audience, or the series

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<sup>88</sup> Ruark, "Have Book Series," para. 26–28.

<sup>89</sup> Office of the Vice-President and Provost, University of Toronto, "Report of the Committee to Review Scholarly Publishing of the U of T Press, 2007," <http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/committees/reviews/utpress.htm>.

<sup>90</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 2.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 31, 36.

in which it will appear. These details are reviewed and confirmed at the transmittal meeting, when the book passes from the Editorial-Acquisitions to the Editorial-Production Department.

The majority of series now published by UBC Press do not have a special cover or interior design template. Books in the Law and Society, Studies in Canadian Military History, and Sustainability and the Environment series are distinguished as volumes in a series by a logo and a page that lists the series' other volumes. This strategy allows the production editor to give the wide variety of titles that can appear under the umbrella of one series individual treatment. The majority of books within these series are typical scholarly monographs that can be produced using one of the Press's standard interior templates and a two-colour cover. But if the Press acquires a manuscript that is written by a high-profile author or deals with a subject that is extremely topical, such as Desmond Morton's *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War* (2004), the Press can consider budgeting for a special interior design treatment or a cover with an image and four colours.<sup>92</sup>

There are exceptions to the general rule. Books in the First Nations Languages series have a simple yet visually arresting cover design that features a logo and a First Nations painting in black against a brightly coloured background that changes with each volume. Keller feels that the cost and effort of commissioning and approving a logo and cover design template is worthwhile because it introduces efficiencies down the line, which is essential for series with high production costs and miniscule sales potential.<sup>93</sup> If a series is likely to have considerable staying power, the department will commission an interior design to give it a distinctive identity.<sup>94</sup> For the CDA, Blakelely commissioned an experienced book designer to produce the whole package – nine covers and an interior template. The CDA covers are tied together visually

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<sup>92</sup> UBC Press, Priority Rubric, unpublished document.

<sup>93</sup> Keller, in discussion.

<sup>94</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 36.

through the use of minimalist black-and-white photography, a logo, and a distinctive font. The background for each volume is a different colour in the same palette, and the logo and typography tie the cover design to the interior layout. In contrast, the Nature/History/Society series does not have a commissioned cover template; volumes are grouped loosely through the use of a logo and interior template. The Press has only published six volumes to date, but the department has already modified the interior design template to suit the needs of a manuscript with an unusual structure.

At UBC Press the project editor gets involved in the publication process for series at the earliest possible moment, often before the Publications Board approves a manuscript. For a newly proposed series, she will work closely with the acquisitions editor, the general editor, and the authors to anticipate and deal with problems that may occur down the line. Blakeley worked closely with Andrew, Bill Cross (the general editor of the CDA), and Will Coleman (the general editor of the Globalization and Autonomy series) to create the projects' editorial and design guidelines. To create a design template, designers need a full description – front matter, tables and illustrations, number of chapters, volume length, number of heading levels, volume title, and so on – of the first volume's contents. Because the CDA was intended for the course adoption market, the Press included the volume length in the contract, and Blakeley and Andrew discussed the series design with members of the Press's Marketing Department to ensure that it would appeal to the target audience.<sup>95</sup> The Globalization and Autonomy Web site likewise includes volume guidelines developed by Will Coleman and an independent project editor in collaboration with the Press. The page provides authors and volume editors with easy access to guidelines for the length of the proposed volumes and minimum and maximum word lengths for individual

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<sup>95</sup> Blakeley, in discussion.

chapters, information on how to code the manuscript to streamline the typesetting process, and a style sheet that includes information on how to cite electronic and archival sources.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, the production editor must apply to ISSN Canada, a division of Library and Archives Canada, for an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN), an eight-digit identification code for serial publications. An ISSN provides an efficient, economical mode of communication between publishers and their partners in the information chain: libraries, subscription agents, vendors, distributors, and researchers. Although ISSN Canada defines a series as “a publication, in any medium, issued in successive parts and intended to be continued indefinitely” and excludes “multivolume sets made up of a finite number of parts, even if all parts are not issued simultaneously,” all of the Press’s limited sets, even the three-volume *Equality/Security/Community*, were approved for ISSNs. An ISSN streamlines the distribution and marketing process: they help to identify a title, regardless of its language or country of origin; they can be used in content management systems to update and link files and retrieve and transmit data; they simplify interlibrary loan systems and union catalogue reporting and listings; and they are used by libraries and vendors to identify titles, order and check in serials, and claim missing issues.<sup>97</sup>

## **Marketing**

Critics of book series believe that many university presses develop them for purely financial reasons, to ensure standing orders from academic libraries. UBC Press developed series to fulfill its mandate to become a leading publisher of serious scholarship in a few key areas. However, the Marketing Department also has a mandate to enrich the disciplines, enhance its authors’

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<sup>96</sup> Globalization and Autonomy Web site, “Author Guidelines,” <http://globalization.mcmaster.ca/ga/guidelines.htm>

<sup>97</sup> Library and Archives Canada, “About ISSNs,” <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/isn/041011-2010-e.html>

reputations, and increase the University of British Columbia's profile by ensuring that the Press's books are made known and readily available to the academic community.<sup>98</sup> Over the past two decades changes to purchasing practices at academic libraries and within sales and distribution channels have nearly rendered the standing order obsolete, but a well-organized series with an ISSN can help a marketing team promote front and backlist titles to academic libraries, academics within a well-defined discipline or subject area, and the course adoption market.

Approximately 35 percent of sales revenue for UBC titles (which accounts for three-quarters of the total) comes from US-based library wholesalers or vendors, such as Yankee Book Peddler Library Services (YPP), Coutts, and Blackwell, that purchase relatively high-priced hardcover books at low discounts for resale to academic libraries. This market sector is essential to the Press's survival, but it is continuously threatened by the falling US dollar and slashed state budgets for library purchases.<sup>99</sup> George Maddison worries that a book's inclusion in a series no longer has a positive impact on sales because collections librarians now rely on vendors, rather than standing orders or direct communication with the Press, to make their purchasing decisions.<sup>100</sup> Among librarians, the term "standing order" or "continuations" refers to all non-periodical serials: annuals, yearbooks, almanacs, multivolume sets, non-monographic serials with volume numbers, and numbered and unnumbered monograph series. Collections librarians find them difficult to handle because they require the simultaneous application of book and serials processing routines.<sup>101</sup> "Standing order" used to refer to those series that a librarian protected for purchase because they were essential to the library's collection. The librarian allocated funds for them as an expected expense – before the remainder of the library materials funding was

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<sup>98</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 43.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>100</sup> Maddison, in discussion.

<sup>101</sup> Michele Crump and Steven Carrico, "It's Academic: Shelf-Ready Standing Orders at the University of Florida's Smathers Library," *Library Resources and Technical Services* 45 (April 2001): 104–5.

budgeted.<sup>102</sup> Libraries can purchase standing orders directly from the publisher or through a book vendor. However, Anne-Marie Brioux, who works for YBP Library Services, believes that book vendors have become the preferred option because they streamline the purchasing process, allow librarians to extend their purchasing power through higher discounts, and offer librarians the most up-to-date information on existing and new series. Monograph vendors examine books in the warehouse and deal with problems; they detect and keep track of title changes, cessations, and series mergers; they offer status information and promise fewer shipping problems; they supply continuations from publishers that do not accept standing orders; and they aggregate volumes into weekly invoices and shipments. By 1988, 40 percent of the titles treated by vendors were monographs in series.<sup>103</sup>

Brioux believes that librarians are less likely to entrust series purchases to a true standing order because the sporadic publication schedules of most series make it difficult to budget and plan for expenditures. In addition, the quality of individual volumes in series can be uneven; if the library is locked into a standing order, it will spend money on volumes that selectors would rather not acquire. In contrast, the library can choose to purchase all series offered by a vendor on approval. Approval plans are agreements between libraries and vendors that call for vendors to supply one copy of each book distributed by the vendor. The agreement, however, is subject to certain restrictions imposed by the library, and books can be returned for credit if the library does not want them. The library establishes a profile that describes what it wishes to acquire automatically within the following categories: publisher, subject, audience level, format, and

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<sup>102</sup> Flowers, "Standing Orders," 323.

<sup>103</sup> Ann-Marie Brioux, "Purchasing Continuations from a Monograph Vendor: Some Considerations," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services* 25 (2001): 332; Jeanne M. Lagendorfer and Michele L. Hurst, "Comparison Shopping: Purchasing Continuations as Standing Orders or on Approval," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services* 27 (2003): 170.

price.<sup>104</sup> A series on approval arrangement is typically set up with one of four options: (1) exclude, the library already has a standing order for the series or does not want it; (2) neutral, the series falls under the normal subject, publisher, and non-subject specifications of the approval plan and will be shipped if it meets the library's specifications; (3) send, the series falls within the library's profile, but volumes outside its scope can be reviewed and returned; or (4) notify, the vendor notifies the library of new series and volumes, and the library purchases them on a title-by-title basis.<sup>105</sup> Series, consequently, are no longer a sure-fire way to guarantee sales for UBC Press titles. In combination with more traditional marketing methods, however, they may help the Press brand itself as a leading publisher in focused subject areas that draw the attention of collections librarians. YPB posts a monthly listing of new series in its online publication *Academia: An Online Magazine and Resource for Academic Librarians*, and Coutts and Blackwell feature series prominently on their Web sites.<sup>106</sup>

In the Press's day-to-day and seasonal promotional activities, series have proven to be an effective branding tool and promotional vehicle for its military history, environmental and sustainability studies, Asian studies, and law and society lists. The department features series logos prominently in catalogues, and the seasonal catalogue includes on its back-inside cover a series index that draws further attention to their role in the Press's publishing program. Wes Pue, who has closely monitored the academic community's response to the Law and Society series, points out that established and emerging scholars now look to the Press's Web site, catalogues, and promotional materials to track new developments in law and socio-legal studies.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Janet L. Flowers, "Specific Tips for Negotiations with Library Materials Vendors depending upon Acquisitions Method," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services* 28 (2004): 439.

<sup>105</sup> Brieux, "Purchasing Continuations," 334.

<sup>106</sup> YPB Library Services Web site, *Academia*, "New Series," <http://www.ybp.com/acad/NewSeriesCover.htm>

<sup>107</sup> Pue, in discussion.



Kerry Kilmartin, who joined UBC Press in 1994 and is currently its conference, reviews, awards, and special events manager, believes that series work well as a marketing tool because the covers can be easily packaged into pamphlets, conference displays, and ad campaigns to promote front- and backlist titles.<sup>108</sup> When Kilmartin solicits book reviewers for recent titles, for instance, she often tells review editors that the book is part of a series and mentions its other titles. Jason Congdon, manager of advertising and promotions, recently created series brochures that were sent to all individuals associated with the series: authors, editorial board members, and scholars mentioned in the Author Information Form (as peer reviewers, recipients of complimentary copies, or instructors of relevant courses). Given that many of the books published in series are edited collections with eight to twelve contributors, the number of scholars associated with a series can be extensive. The strategy may also be an effective acquisitions tool, as the pamphlets promote new and established series to authors whose experience as contributors may encourage them to publish a book-length study with the Press.<sup>109</sup> A series that signals a new direction for the Press may be problematic in the sense that the Marketing Department may not have in place well-established measures to reach that target audience; however, once it has made those connections, it is much easier to reach scholars in specialized disciplines through targeted mail campaigns.

Book series can also ease the process by which the Marketing Department promotes books to the course adoption market. The department has built and maintains contact lists (including e-mails) for each subject area; at present, the lists include 32,000 voluntary academic contacts and roughly 8,500 non-profit, professional, and governmental organizations.<sup>110</sup> The academic contacts receive e-mail campaigns for titles that have course adoption potential, and the

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<sup>108</sup> Kerry Kilmartin (Exhibits, Reviews, and Awards Manager), in discussion with the author, August 2007.

<sup>109</sup> Jason Congdon (Advertising and Promotions Manager), in discussion with the author, August 2007.

<sup>110</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 46.

lists are used to classify subject catalogue mail-outs. Elizabeth Whitton, who was hired on a part-time freelance basis to sell directly to instructors and became a full-time staff member in 1997, notes that some series lend themselves to course adoption campaigns better than others. Highly specialized series, such as Law and Society or Nature/History/Society, tend to have the least course adoption potential and, consequently, sales. In contrast, limited sets like the CDA, which have outside funding and are designed specifically as textbooks, are easier to promote (see Table 3.1).<sup>111</sup> The Press could afford to host a launch for the CDA at the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, and the look and design of the series lends itself well to ad campaigns in venues like the Association of American University Presses (AAUP) Course Adoption Catalogues. Instructors at the undergraduate and graduate level have used the volumes as texts in political science and Canadian studies programs, and a number of departments have created new courses structured around the series.<sup>112</sup>

### **An Integrated Approach**

UBC Press has experienced many of the pitfalls that have plagued book series in recent decades – indifferent series editors, series that outrun their usefulness, the homogenization effect that can accompany efforts to streamline the design and production process, and a shrinking library market. Over the past seventeen years, however, it has adopted, by design and through trial and error, an integrated approach to series development: the Editorial-Production and Marketing departments become involved in the process at the earliest possible moment to identify potential problems that could slow or derail the Press’s ability to bring the book to market and to the attention of appropriate audiences quickly and efficiently. And the system is flexible enough that

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<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth Whitton (Academic Marketing Manager), in discussion with the author, August 2007.

<sup>112</sup> William Cross, “The Canadian Democratic Audit” (paper presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> IPSA World Conference, Fukuoka, Japan, July 2006) 5–6.

it allows the Press to give special attention to high-profile authors and manuscripts with star potential.

*Table 3.1*

Number of Units Sold, Canadian Democratic Audit Series, 2004–07

<i>Volume Title</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>Total</i>
Legislatures	–	262	243	272	777
Advocacy Groups	30	341	387	157	915
Federalism	63	533	562	318	1476
Citizens	269	547	240	134	1190
Political Parties	436	484	669	327	1916
Elections	308	461	315	74	1158
Cabinets and First Ministers	–	84	204	208	496
Communication Technology	–	106	124	49	279
Courts	–	–	605	348	953

*Source:* Georgetown Terminal Warehouses Limited, Database.

## Conclusion

Between 1980 and 2000 university presses in the United States and Canada dedicated a larger proportion of their growing lists to books in series. This development coincided with and was a symptom of the measures and adjustments that scholarly book publishers made in response to the crisis in scholarly publishing. Faced with shrinking sales to academic libraries, rising operational costs, decreased subsidies from parent universities and governments, and more and more submissions of increasingly specialized scholarly monographs from new PhDs and professors seeking jobs or tenure, university presses responded imaginatively to the problem. Some actively pursued opportunities in the trade market by acquiring mid-list titles that commercial publishers were no longer interested in publishing. Others focused on regional trade markets and sub-disciplines with a regional focus. Still others reduced their lists to focused subject areas and placed more emphasis upon producing scholarly monographs or textbooks to the highest editorial and production standards. Regardless of their strategy, most university presses were forced to make profit-based decisions and introduce cost-saving measures to streamline the editorial and production processes. As a recent primer on university presses declares: “A university press operates on a nonprofit basis, but it is not ‘for loss.’”

In this context, book series, which had been relatively rare in postwar academia, began to play an increasingly important role in university press publishing strategies and programs, and they became more diverse. In an increasingly fragmented, specialized, and competitive market, book series developed under the guidance of a prominent scholar provided financially strapped university presses with a potentially quick and efficient way to build a list and establish a dominant position in a given subject area or discipline. For those presses developing series for the trade market, a general editor could likewise help a press get books to market on the fastest

possible schedule by serving as a commissioning agent and reviewer. As is the case with any experiment, university presses ran up against a variety of problems that were brought to light in the pages of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in 2000: cancellations of series that had outlived their usefulness or failed to attract manuscripts because they were poorly defined; indifferent or otherwise engaged series editors; unbalanced lists; a homogenization effect that dimmed the light of manuscripts with star potential; and the possibility that control of the acquisitions and editorial process was passing once again from university presses to faculty members. The discussion, however, focused on the potential disadvantages of book series and did not explore, in any depth, the benefits that a well-organized and conceptualized series can bring to a press.

In a recent self-study prepared for an external review, UBC Press stated with confidence that it had achieved a complete turnaround since its near-death experience in 1989: “We proudly carry The University of British Columbia’s imprint within our region, across our country, and throughout the English-speaking world.”<sup>113</sup> Part of that success stems from the fact that the Press maintained a strict commitment to scholarly publishing and it developed series to augment its strategy to rebuild itself and its reputation through focused list building, high editorial and production standards, and efficient, effective marketing. Between 1990 and the present, UBC Press launched sixteen new series; it encountered many of the same problems that have plagued other presses’ experiences with series, but interviews with its editorial, production, and sales staff revealed resolutions to problems and other advantages associated with series that were either downplayed or not discussed in recent discussions and debates.

The Press now occupies a leading position in niches dedicated to Canadian political science, Native studies, Canadian military history, law and society, and sustainability and the environment. Series helped the Press to carve out a place for itself in some of these areas and to

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<sup>113</sup> UBC Press, “Self-Study,” 69.

cement its already dominant position in others. In areas where the Press already had an established list, such as Native studies, it chose not to develop series because it already had the expertise required to acquire and market manuscripts in the area. Contrary to Frederika Teute and Lindsay Waters's warnings, the Press did not lose control of the acquisitions and editorial processes when it invited faculty members to serve as general editors: in some cases, as with the *Urbanization in Asia* and the *Sexuality Studies* series, the series got off to slow starts or completely derailed because the general editor did not bring much energy and enthusiasm to the project; in others, such as *Law and Society* and *Nature/History/Society*, acquisition editors collaborated with, rather than relied upon, committed general editors to acquire manuscripts, foster contacts, and develop expertise in areas that were a new focus for the Press. Acquisitions editors likewise worked closely with general editors to shepherd manuscripts through the rigours of peer review.

Through a process of trial and error and design, UBC Press has developed an integrated approach to series development that involves members of the production and marketing teams early in the process to identify the target audience and put in place measures to avoid potential problems that can slow down the production process and prevent the Press from marketing individual volumes effectively. Two of the Press's series, *Pioneers of British Columbia and Canada* and *International Relations*, for instance, had been developed prior to the 1989 review, when the Press suffered a reputation for publishing books with uneven production and design values. The former series had a commissioned cover design template that was inflexible and expensive to print, while the latter had no discernable design elements to brand its volumes as part of a series. The Editorial-Production Department has now developed a production strategy for series that is cost-effective but flexible enough that production editors can budget for a special

cover or interior design to showcase the work of a high-profile author or book with intrinsic crossover potential.

Some critics argue that university presses now develop series purely for commercial reasons, primarily to ensure sales to academic libraries on standing order. All of the series developed by UBC Press have showcased new, innovative scholarship at the University of British Columbia and, increasingly, from across Canada, and they have enhanced the Press's desire to promote interdisciplinary dialogue. But given that the Press has faced increased pressure to make profit-based decisions, and that it also has a mandate to disseminate its titles widely throughout the academic community, financial and marketing concerns always play a role in series development at the Press. Some series, such as First Nations Languages and the CDA, brought in much-needed funding in the form of subventions and sponsorships and, in the case of the CDA, they enhanced the Press's desire to develop more books for the course adoption market. Series likewise provide the Press's marketing team with an effective vehicle to promote its backlist to targeted audiences and, through ISSNs, make its books known to US-based book vendors that now act as gatekeepers to academic libraries.

UBC Press is now in the midst of a period of growth: its title output doubled between 2002 and 2007, and it plans to increase its annual output to seventy titles in the next two years. Given that volumes in series now comprise a significant proportion of the Press's list (ranging between 30 to 50 percent in the past three years), should the Press consider producing more rather than fewer series? In 2005 alone, the Law and Society series produced fifteen frontlist titles, but the Press recognizes that its ability to acquire more books in socio-legal studies and its other main areas of focus is declining.<sup>114</sup> Wes Pue recalls that it was exciting and encouraging to receive one, and sometimes two, manuscripts a month for the Law and Society series, but he does not believe

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

that the series will continue to generate submissions at that pace – although it is possible.<sup>115</sup>

Members of the Editorial-Acquisitions Department believe that they will have to pursue new areas of publication in order to maintain and increase the Press's title output; however, because there is not likely to be a large, untapped niche suitable to launch a series akin to Law and Society, they will have to compete directly with other Canadian university presses for the same books.<sup>116</sup> The Press proved that it could do so when it was chosen to publish the findings for the Canadian Democratic Audit, Globalization and Autonomy, and The Metropolis Project. Its positive experience with the CDA supports Jennifer Ruark's belief that finite, "handcrafted" series organized by a research director and editorial collectives in collaboration with university presses will become more common because they allow scholarly book publishers to avoid many of the problems that have plagued ongoing series in recent years. Depending upon the research project, the published volumes can also be suited to meet the needs of instructors in the course adoption market, and they may be more appealing to academic librarians and book vendors, who have instituted measures to avoid buying unlimited series on standing order. UBC Press's positive experience with recent ongoing series such as Law and Society and Nature/History/Society demonstrates that with careful planning this type of series can meet the contemporary needs of university presses, particularly in cases where there is an untapped niche or new approach to a subject or discipline and an enthusiastic scholar willing to bring his or her expertise to the project.

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<sup>115</sup> Pue, in discussion with the author, October 2007.

<sup>116</sup> UBC Press, "Self-Study," 28.



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McGill-Queen’s University Press: <http://mqup.mcgill.ca/>  
Princeton University Press: <http://press.princeton.edu/>  
New York University Press: <http://www.nyupress.org/>  
University of California Press: <http://www.ucpress.edu/>  
University of Minnesota Press: <http://www.upress.umn.edu/>  
University of Toronto Press: <http://www.utpress.utoronto.ca/>

### **Limited Sets/Interdisciplinary Research Project Web Sites**

Globalization and Autonomy: <http://globalization.mcmaster.ca/ga/membersga.htm>

Equality, Security, Community: <http://www2.arts.ubc.ca/cresp/>

Canadian Democratic Audit: <http://www.CanadianDemocraticAudit.ca>

The Metropolis Project: <http://canada.metropolis.net/>