

DIGITAL IS THE NEW NORMAL

A drive to stay current and competitive keeps coursework at graduate publishing programs evolving

BY GIBSON FAY-LEBLANC

Changes in the publishing industry are fast and furious, as digital innovations continue to reshape traditional publishing and small-scale and self-publishing continue to grow. We checked in with universities offering master's programs in publishing to see how curricula are adapting, where the new crop of students are coming from, and where graduates are landing in the publishing world.

Focus on Digital

It's no surprise to hear that all of the university programs mentioned digital. At Rosemont College, students work on both digital publishing and content development. Pace University has added courses in digital publishing that cover e-books and e-magazines, including one on transmedia that is taught by the former head of DC Comics.

A unique part of the publishing master's program at Portland State University is the in-house publishing outfit Ooligan Press, which is staffed by graduate students. An ongoing effort to keep the press competitive has driven the graduate program to fully integrate digital trends into coursework. For example, Per Henningsgaard, the director of publishing, says that the faculty is considering moving XML coding into "our copy editing class, rather than ghettoizing it in a digital publishing class."

DIGITALLY SAVVY



A DIGITAL PUBLISHING TRANSFORMATION IS UNDERWAY. ARE YOU READY TO MEET THE CHALLENGE?

Over the last five years, the publishing industry has been radically changed by digital and social media. To succeed in this business requires a unique blend of skill sets including the ability to: create and edit content across multiple platforms, market and distribute digitally, and bring new products and media to market. The NYU School of Professional Studies Center for Publishing offers the MS in Publishing: Digital and Print Media, which provides a solid foundation in magazine media and book publishing with a focus on digital applications. E-books, apps, mobile platforms, and video—learn about them all from industry experts who guide your studies and connect you to invaluable professional networking opportunities. Gain a global perspective by traveling to book fairs and conferences around the world, and by participating in internships that advance your career.

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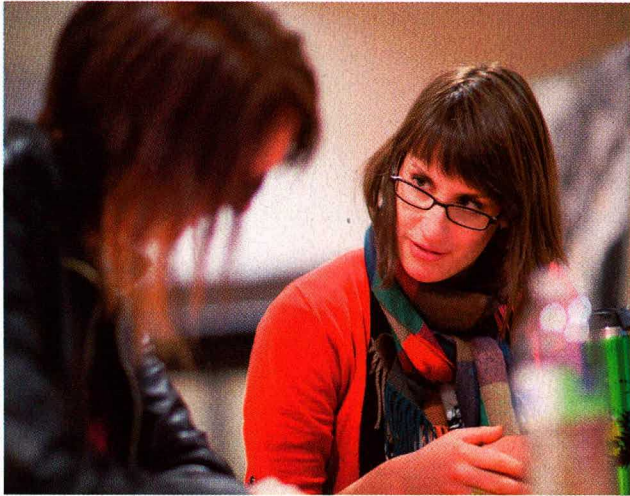
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PSU student Sarah Soards discusses editorial suggestions with Kavelia Stetz-Waters, author of *Forgive Me If I've Told You This Before*, a young adult novel published by Ooligan Press in 2014.

John Rodzvilla, the senior electronic publisher-in-residence at Emerson College in Boston, says that the “shine has come off digital” as it becomes part of standard publishing procedures, and that many publishers are looking for people with a combination of print and digital skills rather than one or the other.

Andrea Chambers, director of the Center for Publishing at NYU, notes that the program there is focusing on all of the places where publishing and technology intersect, including direct-to-consumer efforts, niche markets, data analysis, and emerging business models.

More Diverse, More Global

As the publishing industry becomes more global, cultivating a diverse student body has become a priority for many publishing programs. Most programs continue to have overwhelmingly more female students than male ones, but all programs are looking for ways to become more diverse and to support their students.

Over the last five years, Rosemont College, which is just outside Philadelphia, has moved from serving mostly local students to having students from across the U.S. and from other countries. The students are mostly young women, and between 25% and 30% identify as students of color.

Emerson students tend to be recent college graduates from the Americas and Asia. Rodzvilla says Emerson is “in the middle of reassessing our outreach and retooling how we can expand the diversity of our graduate students.”

The publishing program at Portland State University, which is becoming more selective year by year, enrolls about 60

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Publishing Education



PSU student Drew Lazzara participates in a team meeting at the Ooligan Press office.

“[These] books generate publicity and give us an opportunity to speak... about issues that are presumably important to that diverse student body we’re attempting to attract,” Henningsgaard says.

The University of Houston–Victoria is the home of *Huizache*, a magazine of Latino literature, and the CentroVictoria Center for Mexican American Literature and Culture. In its publishing program, 80% of stu-

students, 80% of whom are female and 90% of whom are white. Henningsgaard says that the best strategy the university has for recruitment involves books published by Ooligan, such as *Untangling the Knot: Queer Voices on Marriage, Relationships & Identity*, and *Dreams of the West: The History of the Chinese in Oregon, 1850–1950*.

dents are female, 50% African-American, 25% Hispanic, and 25% Caucasian or other ethnicities. The average age is in the mid-30s, so students tend to have significant personal and professional experience to bring to their studies. UHV also offers some online courses so that students with professional obliga-

tions can study while working full time.

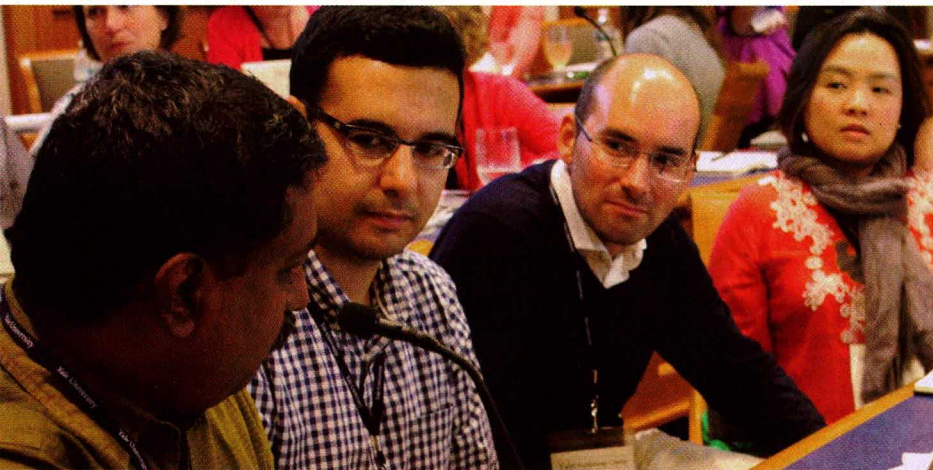
Pace’s publishing program, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, has a growing international student population. This fall it enrolled 96 students, and three-quarters of students are women, 50% are students of color and 12% come from foreign countries including Brazil, China, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and the U.K. Of these international students, “many return to their countries and work in the business,” says Sherman Raskin, director of the publishing program. Pace has expanded its online curriculum to help extend its reach, and endowments for scholarships have also increased.

Chambers says that a few years ago, incoming students to NYU’s publishing program tended to be English majors on their way to being editors; “Now,” she says, “their backgrounds are more diverse, and they are interested in a wider range of publishing positions.” About 26% of students in NYU’s publishing program come from abroad. NYU is also expanding its efforts to drive diversity by having current students serve as volunteer ambassadors at book fairs in Frankfurt, London, Sharjah, and the China Shanghai International Children’s Book Fair.

Landing in the Business

Editorial jobs are still a strong interest for many students entering graduate publishing programs. And while positions at major publishing houses are coveted by many students and lauded by many programs, there are more and more students pursuing jobs at smaller publishers or focusing on specific book categories to make themselves more marketable.

Anne Willkomm, director of the publishing program at Rosemont College, says that Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers recently hired a student “before she finished her degree, because she chose to concentrate on children’s and YA.” Willkomm says that several recent grads landed at Simon & Schuster and HarperCollins, and others have



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Andrea Natrass (Class of 2015), Publisher, Pan Macmillan South Africa

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found jobs at publishers including Running Press, PearsonVue, and Taylor & Francis.

The publishing program at University of Houston–Victoria attracts students interested in the literary arts, and many students pursue a dual M.F.A. in creative writing and M.S. in publishing. Kyle Schlesinger, associate professor of publishing, says, “Our students are so diverse

that I can't really characterize their success in a single sentence, but I am happy to say that the overwhelming majority are gainfully employed and satisfied with their profession.”

Students at Portland State University take foundational courses that provide a comprehensive view of the industry, and then mix and match courses to fit their interests. According to Henningsgaard, a recent survey of graduates showed that “93% of alumni currently work in publishing, have established their own



Above: Students from the NYU M.S. in publishing program at the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair in 2015, before the show opened. Below: Outside the convention hall.

publishing businesses, or apply their publishing skills to paid employment outside the publishing industry.”

NYU's publishing program requires students to take courses in all aspects of publishing, including content creation, sales, marketing, finance, and publicity. Chambers says that while interest in editorial is still “solid, more students are pursuing other areas, and the jobs they have found after graduating touch all corners of the industry, including editing, analytics, and Web production.

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New Connections

University publishing programs also continue to expand their connections with presses and entrepreneurial ventures, looking for ways to give their students more direct experience in the shifting publishing world.

NYU has cemented a partnership

with NYU Press and will offer a seminar taught by the director of the press, giving students a chance to learn how university presses work. It has expanded its internship program, placing about 30 students a year at traditional publishers, startups, and literary agencies. And NYU has expanded its Media

Talks panel series—early next year it will feature a panel with David Baldacci, Erik Larson, Jeff Kinney, and Alice Hoffman, moderated by Pamela Paul, editor of the *New York Times Book Review*.

In response to growing student interest in self-publishing and in the expanding list of authors who have used digital books to break into print, Emerson has launched an online program focused on popular fiction writing and publishing. The program is a mix of writing workshops and business education, teaching students the basics of book publishing as they refine their writing skills. Emerson also recently hired former *Boston Globe* editor-in-chief Susanne Althoff to focus on developing business courses and entrepreneurship in publishing.

Rosemont has added courses in editing book-length fiction that let students work with actual drafts of a full-length novel in progress, analyzing its elements and learning to give feedback, and courses in operating and maintaining a small press, in which students work with PS Books to publish an anthology. According to Willkomm, the second book to come out of this partnership, *50 over 50: Celebrating Emerging and Experienced Women Writers*, will be launched at AWP 2016 in Los Angeles.

In May, Dalkey Archive Press, an independent publisher specializing in works in translation, moved its operations to UHV. Graduate students will now have the opportunity to earn a certificate in Applied Literary Translation while they intern with Dalkey in its offices on campus. Schlesinger has high hopes that this partnership will offer valuable real-world experience for students and support Dalkey's mission of raising the profile of international writers and publishing important fiction from across the globe. ■

Gibson Fay-LeBlanc is the author of Death of a Ventriloquist (Univ. of North Texas) and a freelance writer and teacher living in Maine.



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