



## D.C. Metro Spotlight: Books for Everyone

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The metro Washington, D.C., area is home to an unusual group of publishers. Many don't fall neatly into the broad categories used in publishing to describe trade, educational, and professional publishers. Rather, they release the works of think tanks, well-known institutions, and universities. This eclectic mix of presses produces a broad selection of books that appeal to readers with a wide range of interests.

### **American Diabetes Association**

People with diabetes have no small task in managing a chronic and potentially life-threatening illness. Unlike many illnesses managed by doctors and nurses, the American Diabetes Association's Abe Ogden points out, "the person living with diabetes manages their own condition 95% of the time." At the ADA's press, associate publisher Ogden and a team of eight work to arm those people with an inexpensive way to stay healthy, producing 15 books a year on self-care, cooking, and professional standards for treating diabetes.

Press titles emerge from the association's annual publication, *ADA Standards of Care*, and are produced by teams of writers and editors who work to translate those standards into monographs for the group's 15,000 members. The core of the publisher's outreach, however, lies with its general membership of people with diabetes, for whom the cookbook titles and self-care guides are produced. Those titles offer a window into the association's mission to create awareness and provide resources that reach people who have or are at risk of getting diabetes.

In March, ADA will release *Biggest Loser* star Devin Alexander's *You Can Have It!* cookbook, timed for publication with ADA's annual Diabetes Alert Day, which encourages people to check their own diabetes risk. In the fall, the publisher will produce a dual-language Spanish-English title tentatively called *Latin Comfort Foods* by Food Network star Ingrid Hoffman. "Spanish-language materials are very important," Ogden says. "In that community, diabetes is at almost epic proportions, and we're doing what we can to do outreach there." That includes working with the press distributor, PGW, to expand into Central and South America.

Ogden says the mission of the press "is to provide practical and actionable items for readers." ADA's dedication to straightforward advice is driven by direct engagement with its readers, who are more than happy to offer their thoughts on the association's publishing program. "People

really like to engage with us,” says Ogden of the 350,000 monthly magazine subscribers who make up approximately half of the press’s annual sales. A recent survey of 4,000 people received 400 responses with information that affects the publishing program, including that most respondents purchase three or more books annually from the press, many of which are cookbooks.

As a longstanding resource for its community, the press, Ogden notes, has strong backlist sellers, including two books from the 1990s—*The Complete Guide to Diabetes* and *Diabetes Meal Planning Made Easy*—as well as *What Do I Eat Now?* just released in a second edition. Ogden says that *What Do I Eat Now?* illustrates the kinds of titles that readers want most, ones that “address the questions they have when they are first diagnosed.”

### **APA/Magination**

The American Psychological Association’s 30-year-old Magination Press is the children’s imprint of APA Books and has built a backlist of 180 books. “We straddle the line between mission-based and trade-focused,” says Magination Press director Kristine Enderly, who oversees a stable of psychologist and educator authors looking to create titles that are “kid-centered, letting kids help themselves with some guidance.” It publishes picture books plus middle grade and teen titles.

From bibliotherapy 30 years ago to gender fluidity today, the press prides itself on leading conversations through title selection on issues that are sometimes controversial, but often become mainstream. According to Enderly, APA has sometimes taken a risk about controversial subjects ahead of other publishers.

In addition to its 20 children’s titles released annually, APA Books produces a host of videos and training materials, 50–60 scholarly titles, and two to five trade adult titles annually. These include the bestselling *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*, for which APA recently launched an interactive online learning platform that teaches users how to use the guide.

But the children’s books at Magination remain the organization’s focus. “APA has this real mission to connect with the community beyond psychologists,” Enderly says. Among the subjects the press deals with are teen books about anxiety and depression, nonfiction books that can be used in therapy, and growing-up guides on dating and gender. Among its forthcoming titles are *Marvelous Maravilloso* (May 2018), which tells the story of one girl’s life in a multicultural world; *Bye, Bye Pesky Fly* (May 2018), a fable about a pig that is bothered by a fly and has to handle it without yelling or swatting; and *A Box of Butterflies* (Apr. 2018), in which a girl named Ruby shares her emotions with a friend who is a robot, and the robot doesn’t understand.

### **Brookings Institution**

Founded in the middle of WWI, the Brookings Institution is 64 years older than the Federal Department of Education. So when assistant press director Yelba Quinn jokes, “We’ll be here

long after this administration is gone,” it’s undeniable. The powerhouse centrist Washington think tank produces more than 40 books each year, including 10 trade titles, while also distributing books for 21 other associations and think tanks across the capital.

“With us it’s about impact,” Quinn says. “There’s a self-awareness that some policy folks have who want to get ideas in the hands of the right people.” At Brookings, they do it through books. Among many examples, Quinn cites Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy’s *Mr. Putin*. Originally “intended to be policy, now it’s a seminal text [because Hill is] one of the few women who has been in meetings with Putin,” Quinn says.

While policy is always at the fore, the press is just as eager to shape different issues through public conversation as it is in the halls of Congress. Richard Reeves garnered substantial attention for his book *Dream Hoarders* earlier this year, after writing a *New York Times* opinion column entitled “Stop Pretending You’re Not Rich.” The book has sold almost 10,000 copies since its release, according to NPD BookScan, and Reeves is traveling the country to meet with groups and discuss his message. In the coming year, the press will experiment with even more trade-oriented titles. In October, Brookings published Marvin Kalb’s *The Year I Was Peter the Great: 1956—Khrushchev, Stalin’s Ghost, and a Young American in Russia*. The press will also publish Moshe Arens’s memoir *In Defense of Israel* (Jan. 2018) and *The New Localism* by Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak (Jan. 2018). While policy titles are typically printed in runs of 1,000, the trade titles are distributed more widely in first printings of 3,000–5,000 copies.

The new books will roll out under a new director. In September editorial director Bill Finan was promoted and will oversee the staff of 10. The press’s full-time employees also receive support from the entire Brookings staff. “Books are a unique thing,” Quinn says, noting that because of its books, “the things our scholars talk about are still in play.” She adds: “There is a commitment to a book culture at Brookings. We have books that have changed the conversation.”

## **Cato**

“Books are central to what we do,” says David Boaz, executive v-p at Cato Institute, the 43 year-old libertarian think tank that has shaped a generation of conservative thought. As old as the institute itself, the press doesn’t rush its books to print. Around seven come out each year, joining a catalogue of 285 others that range from translations of some of conservative economist Milton Friedman’s works that were snuck into the Soviet Union to Charles Murray’s *Losing Ground*, which Boaz calls “a model of a serious public policy book that took years to write and played a role in welfare reform.” Many of the works are written by Cato’s own scholars, and the press is highly selective about what it prints. When a book might have a more appropriate home elsewhere, Boaz says the press sends it to other houses. In a city that is “best known for books by former politicians,” Boaz says, “we do public policy publishing.” He is quick to add that Cato’s mission is educational, so the books it publishes are light on jargon and also avoid overcomplicated terminology (“We want our work to be accessible to anyone who can read newspapers’ op-ed page”).

The press advertises its works in mainstream publications including *Reason*, *National Review*, and *New Republic*, along with direct advertising to the organization’s 15,000 members. In

addition to new publications, which are distributed by NBN, Cato's bestseller remains its pocket U.S. Constitution. Boaz estimates that "five million have been either sold or given away" since it was first published.

### **Diamond Book Distributors**

For a quick take on what the election of Donald Trump has meant for publishers in Washington, D.C., Diamond Book Distributors, based in nearby Maryland, might not seem like the place to get an answer. With about 300 employees, the 36-year-old company distributes around 70 of the nation's comic book and graphic novel publishers, along with distributing games and other sidelines. Yet in Diamond's sales numbers, executive v-p Josh Hayes sees oddities, outliers, and commonalities in reader patterns. Publishers turn to Diamond specifically to handle their print distribution and with 900–1,000 titles rolling through their warehouses yearly, Hayes and his team are there to look for trends.

What he saw looked like a deadly slow fourth quarter last year. "Things weren't selling," Hayes says. "Then the last two weeks were off the charts." The increased sales held until the end of the second quarter this year.

Hayes says the sales pattern is indicative of a shift after the shock of the election for many readers. "It felt like a consumer hangover," he says, followed by a period where readers have "opted for escapism or opted for authors who are viewing things [through] a different lens." To meet consumer demand, Diamond continues to broaden its offerings and has added a handful of new publishers including Wicked Cow, which does, Hayes says, "a visual presentation of science," and Rabbit Publishers, which has a series of children's titles called Harry Moon, which focus on life lessons. "One of the most unique voices we're dealing with is the Image Comics list," Hayes adds. "They have books like [Walking Dead] that were in comic form before the election, are 100% about the current state of America, [and] that makes you wonder, 'What did they know?'"

Hayes says many new readers appear to be people who didn't previously read graphic novels, but also aren't against trying out a new form of visual presentation. Sales through Diamond hover around 80% backlist, which, he says, points to the number of new readers trying out existing series.

### **Gallaudet University Press**

Gallaudet University Press began as something of a boutique publishing house for faculty in the education department at the private university for the deaf and hard of hearing. In 1980, its first year, the press published three titles. Today, it is a leader in publishing on subjects related to deafness and sign language, releasing 13–15 titles annually.

The press's catalogue has expanded to include a range of titles, from memoirs and historical works to children's books and practical manuals. The *Gallaudet Dictionary of American Sign Language* is a press bestseller, but director Ivey Pittle Wallace is just as invested in new titles that reflect deep scholarly work. One example, out this year, is *Fighting in the Shadows* by Harry

G. Lang, which tells the stories of deaf people in the civil war. Wallace says, “It took the author eight years to write, including a year and a half [in development] at the press.”

Wallace also keeps on top of cutting-edge research and debates in deaf studies in order to inform the editorial program of the press. “Things have changed a lot because the field has changed,” she says. “As the original idea of deaf education as a field of disability studies grew, so did deaf history, sign language, linguistics, sociolinguistics, interpretive research, interpretation history, and memoir.” Not only does she follow it all with a small and dedicated staff of six but Wallace is also using what she discovers to develop technology that supports the curricular aspects of the press’s mission.

For example, Gallaudet is developing video sign language texts for Spanish speakers. “We know that a growing percentage of deaf children in the U.S. are Spanish speaking,” Wallace says. Yet, “there’s such a small *number* of deaf children, it’s not economically feasible to publish for this market.” Undeterred, Wallace has found grant support for the work and continues to develop the titles.

### **Georgetown University Press**

With 177 embassies, Washington residents and government agencies place a premium on multilingualism. Georgetown University Press—which was founded in the language and literature departments of the university—knows just what they need. The 53-year-old press specializes in textbooks, dictionaries, primers on dialects, and technology for teaching Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, and French.

As head of the languages division of the press, Hope LeGro developed the Al-Kitaab Arabic language series into a widely used instructional program, adding multimedia resources to support the books. LeGro, who was recently appointed interim director of GUP following the departure of longtime director Richard Brown to another university press, says the press devotes substantial energy to reaching diverse audiences and has expanded its international affairs list and its distribution to the academic market in recent years.

“Our books have crossover trade audiences and are both professional and practical,” LeGro says, adding that editors are often thinking about different readerships by sticking to simple questions like “what kinds of things do scholars know, but teachers also need to [know]?”

The staff of 14 produces 40–45 scholarly and trade texts each year, working with a network of academics to provide peer-review, plus seven paid Georgetown undergraduate interns annually. In recent years, the press has had a role in deepening the university’s ties to the Washington community as well, with locally focused trade titles. “It’s a city that has a rich history outside of the federal government,” says marketing and sales director Virginia Bryant, “and its history has been an underappreciated area.” The press received a Furthermore grant from the JM Kaplan Foundation to put out *DC Jazz: Stories of Jazz Music in Washington, DC*, edited by Maurice Jackson and Blair A. Ruble (June 2018) and also published a 25th anniversary edition of *Black Georgetown Remembered* by Kathleen Menzie Lesko, Valerie Babb, and Carroll R. Gibbs.

“We tend to often ask ourselves what we should be doing,” LeGro says. “Then, what we are able to do as a small press is pivot.”

## **Island Press**

David Miller, publisher of Island Press, is satisfied with the performance of his frontlist and equally pleased with the backlist, both of which, he says, “have been up 5%–8% [annually] on a continuous basis.” That doesn’t mean Miller is sitting still. The nonprofit environmental press is on track to ramp up the number of titles published each year as well as “what we do around the titles,” he says.

Originally founded to educate readers about nature and its preservation, Island is now growing its list on “the built environment,” Miller says, looking at cities and infrastructure, along with adding titles on food production and public health. Over the next three years, Island’s annual output will rise from the approximately 25–30 titles it releases now to more than 40.

The publisher’s fall list reflects these changes, which are intended to reach broader trade and professional audiences. Among its new releases are *Whitewash* by Carey Gillam, which tells the story of the pesticide RoundUp and its effect on the natural environment, and John Cary’s *Design for Good: A New Era of Architecture for Everyone*.

Perhaps most importantly, Miller and his staff have steadily built their own infrastructure for in-house author development over the past two years. The press has hired an editor whose sole responsibility is to help prospective authors generate short content for mass distribution, from opinion pieces to news articles and blog posts.

“There is a need for good science writing that happens in real time with real speed,” Miller says. He adds that the program, which resulted in 54 published articles last year, “has meshed nicely with our book publishing, raising the platform of authors who aren’t ready to write a book or don’t have the time or inclination, and that has now turned into their being ready to write a book.” One such example is Denise Fairchild, who is co-editor of *Energy Democracy* (out now).

## **Museum of the Bible/Worthy**

The museums of Washington, D.C., are among the city’s most celebrated attractions. The newest one to join their ranks is just a few weeks old, and its opening included a publishing imprint ready to fill the gift shop from day one. The Museum of the Bible opened on November 17 and partnered with Worthy Publishing Group, in Franklin, Tenn., to launch a line specifically tailored to the museum’s exhibits and mission.

Among the publications, Worthy is rolling out a variety of bibles, inspirational gift books, coffee-table books, and historical titles, all to be sold at the museum, as well as in major retail stores.

According to Nicole Pavlas, director of publicity at Worthy, the partnership is the brainchild of Worthy president and CEO Byron Williamson. The first list of 21 titles was produced by editors

at Worthy's existing imprints. Pavlas says "there were lots of trips up to Oklahoma City," where the museum collections were developed and the headquarters for the Hobby Lobby chain, whose CEO, Stephen Green, founded the museum. Editors looked over the artifacts and developed a line that will ultimately include 75 books each year. "All of the books are about furthering the mission of the museum," she adds, in order to "carry on the museum experience for those who visit."

## **Naval Institute Press**

The Naval Institute Press is known for many types of academic and trade titles, the most prominent of which is likely *The Hunt for Red October*—Tom Clancy's first book, and the first novel from the press—followed in short order by the *Bluejacket's Manual*. Now in its 25th printing, the manual is distributed to 50,000 U.S. Navy personnel annually. In recent years, however, the press has radically expanded its publishing program, and is set to launch a graphic novel imprint in fall 2018.

Founded in 1899, the press shared space for generations with the Naval College Hospital at the U.S. Naval Institute in Annapolis, Md. After facing difficulties stemming from the 2008 financial crisis, the press brought in a new CEO, retired Vice Admiral Peter H. Daly, in 2011 to set a new course. "He brought a level of energy, expertise, and connections we had not seen," says press director Rick Russell.

The staff of 20 now puts out 90 titles a year, including 50 in simultaneous e-book format. Daly has sought donor support for initiatives ranging from e-book development to oral histories on strategic leadership, hiring historians to jump-start the leadership series. "We function now as a sophisticated defense media company," Russell says.

The press is now set to leap fully into the world of graphic novel publishing with the as-yet-unnamed imprint. Gary Thompson will serve as lead editor, bringing out full-length fiction and nonfiction titles on history, memoir, biography, and high-seas stories. Five titles will come out in time for Comic-Con in October 2018, followed by 10–12 additional titles in 2019.

## **RB Media**

When Recorded Books, the predecessor company to RB Media, was founded in 1978, its only business was audiotapes, and its audience consisted of people on long commutes. Now nearing its fourth decade, publisher Troy Juliar describes an "overwhelmingly digital business, where people listen to audiobooks more at home than in their cars." After a flurry of acquisitions in recent years, the newly rebranded RB Media is a leading force in providing that digital content, with eight imprints that span international markets and a wide array of content areas.

It is an unexpected turnaround for a company that struggled to survive the 2008 financial crisis, but new management and a rapid rise in audiobook sales has led to a resurgent company, which largely regained its footing through acquisitions. Among those were HighBridge Audio in 2014, Tantor Media in 2015, and Audiobooks.com and Gildan Media in 2017. The acquisitions have

resulted in a 32,000-book backlist library that crosses multiple genres from business to science fiction, and romance.

With each new imprint, Juliar says the company gains greater insights into its audience, allowing greater precision in knowing where to expand. For instance, 70% of RB's sales are fiction, and interest in YA fiction has spurred the company to increase production of titles for that market. To support growth, RB recently moved to a 25,000-sq.-ft. facility in Landover, Md. The location supports the company's growing IT needs and decreased emphasis on warehousing for shipping physical media. A staff of 35 currently work in software and development, and Juliar says they are working to "revamp the tech capabilities of the company," including developing new apps for libraries. For all of the insights the company gains from analytics, and all the effort it takes to support each title, he notes that some rules about what makes for a successful audiobook have never changed, not least the voice that lifts the words off the page. "The narrator—so much of it is still the narrator..." he says. "That's what's really important."

### **The Washington Institute for Near East Policy**

"We're interested in scholars who labor in the vineyards," says Jeffrey Rubin, director of communications at the Washington Institute, "not Thomas Friedman." Not that Rubin takes issue with Friedman, but since the institute's inception in 1985, its focus has been on deeply researched works that can guide policy in the Middle East. Books with a larger purpose or mission are referred to university presses, while the institute devotes its resources to works like a forthcoming geopolitical survey of Syria by a major cartographer. "We publish what we publish as a service to the foreign policy community," Rubin says.

In addition to its publishing program, the institute administers the Washington Institute Book Prize, an annual award given to authors who have produced works that educate citizens about otherwise overlooked aspects of Middle East policy and history. Three recipients are selected to receive \$25,000, \$10,000, and \$5,000 respectively. Rubin says the institute is looking to "find niche authors who could use the accolades to promote useful scholarship [so that] these ideas don't just sit on the page." Last year's winner was *The Rise of the Israeli Right: From Odessa to Hebron* by Colin Shindler.