ADDED ENTRIES

Small Press Center

In a time when major publishing houses focus on negotiating million dollar book contracts, with a handful of commercially viable authors, the small press movement continues to flourish year after year. Historically, small presses have played a critical role in developing awareness of progressive issues and concerns. They offer an alternative view, new ideas and sources of information, as well as a voice for minorities, traditionally not represented in mainstream media. Small presses such as the Feminist Press, Singlejack Books, New Star Books, Four Walls Eight Windows, and Kitchen Table Press offer important works on labor movement issues, books by and about women of color, experimental poetry and literature, and Central American, feminist and socialist titles. The importance of the small press, or independent publisher, has become evident, both as a reflection of important literary, social and political movements and as a forum for new writers.

The Small Press Center was established five years ago, as a non-profit, educational program which promotes interest in small presses. Housed in the General Society of Mechanics Library, in New York City, the center has become a meeting place which offers something for everyone, from writer to publisher to the general public.

There are a variety of services and programs offered at the center. For small press publishers, becoming a member offers them the opportunity to have their books on permanent exhibition in the library alcove, making them easily accessible. The small library also includes books on self-publishing, small press catalogs and directories, as well as periodicals. The center is hoping to develop a more extensive and structured reference collection in the coming year. Open to the general public, the Small Press Center also sponsors lectures and readings by small press authors.

The Small Press Book Fair, held annually, has become an important gathering for all interested in independent publishing. The 1990 fair was a tremendous success, with nearly 3000 visitors and 110 presses represented. It is an excellent opportunity for publishers to gain exposure and sell books, as well as being an effective means
of introducing the small press world to the public. The fair is open to the public free of charge. Another event sponsored by the Small Press Center is an annual thematic exhibit. Recently, an exhibit entitled "The Environment" was on view. Opening on Earth Day, the exhibit highlighted an enormous variety of titles which focused on some aspect of the environment, published by 200 different small presses. A bibliography also accompanied the exhibit and is available through the center.

Depending primarily on grants from several foundations, the Small Press Center operates on a small budget, with a limited staff. An executive committee, consisting of publishers, librarians, booksellers and editors, contributes active support for center projects, as well as implementing new policies and developing long term goals.

The Small Press Center has established itself as an important resource for all those interested in contemporary writing and publishing. Due to the nature of small press publishing, these materials are frequently absent from library collections. Limited circulation and distribution, sparse budgets, lack of exposure in mainstream library and publishing journals all contribute to their low profile in libraries. For librarians, the Small Press Center can serve as a clearinghouse, offering access to an abundance of information which is otherwise difficult to find. The Small Press Center is located at 20 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036.

by Karen Gisonny