OS AWP / BOOKFAIR POLICY / PROCEDURE COLLECTIVE PROPOSAL
As of 1/4/2019

Some basic background orientation around the situation:

You can see some basic notes from our conversation around AWP in our team meeting on 1/4/19 here, but here is the basic layout of the current situation and what we plan to address and produce as an organization to share with collaborators both present and prospective.

Just to give some **context**, AWP is the conference of the Association of Writers and Writers Programs, which happens every spring. The biggest conference of its kind, it boasts a giant bookfair (about 900-1000 tables), panels, events, and about 10-15K attendees. There is a lot of **pressure** on presses and on authors to be part of AWP, which is problematic for a whole host of reasons including representation, disability, massive negative ecological impact, and especially access, both for participants and attendees (physically and economically).

Costs to participate in AWP go up every year, with a table alone this year costing, I think, around $700. Unless you, individually, can rely on support from an institution for any or all of this, there is also registration for volunteers (any more than 2), flights, lodging, food, and potentially needing to take off from work. And then begins the complicated financing of producing adequate stock of both old and new titles to sell to the masses, as well as shipping these books, if the fair is any distance away. To produce even 10 of all twenty titles just from 2018, before shipping, would be well over $1000. To produce and/or bring copies of all our 60+ titles far more than that. **Including all these costs, we're looking at a sum cost of upwards of $4000**, maybe more, mostly to bring extra stock that we can't be sure we'll sell.

FYI: costs are not tailored at all to presses or organizations of different sizes or budgets, and there are no best practices to help ensure equity -- large presses, institutional programs, and other well funded organizations give books and other swag away or at extremely marked down cost, pressuring others who can less afford to do so to do the same.

Presses even with a much much larger budget than the OS, like Ugly Duckling, have talked about how for small organizations / presses, giving the books away for free actually becomes a better model. We've been thinking through solutions to this for years, which is what the Small Press Union came out of, which has been a great answer to similar issues with the Brooklyn Book Festival.

However, now that we are producing so many books, and our goals are so different from other presses, it is more important than ever to not just strain ourselves to participate in AWP in a way that is unsustainable, ecologically bereft, and against our ideological principles as an organization, but rather to create, share, and make transparent a house policy / procedure for this and other bookfairs/festivals/conferences moving forward.

Current Proposal:

As of our 1/4/19 meeting, the following (or similar) has been proposed by the collective:

- For AWP or similar the OS reserves a table for collective use at the event.

- The cost is covered collectively / cooperatively as an organization as an opt-in small fee, but no one is forced to pay or unable to participate or use the table if they are unable to contribute / attend. (ie: ask for $30/person or similar)

- The OS will bring 2-5 copies of as many titles as feasible, any/all of which can be *ordered* onsite at a discounted rate, as opposed to focusing on on site sales.

- Depending on location, the OS will either send core volunteer staff to work the bookfair table and/or will coordinate with other volunteers to stock / schedule shifts at the event itself, and will coordinate sales of house copies / orders. We would love to see local OS community members facilitating / hosting at events in their region, with stock, organizational and financial help from the OS if needed. (We already did this for Litquake in SF in fall of 2018 to great success!)

- Collaborators who are attending the event can, in addition to OS onsite copies, opt to purchase copies at author rate, to sell or coordinate with other volunteers to sell on their behalf, then receiving the money from sales themselves. (We are, however, concerned with ways this threatens to reinforce inequity in favor of those who can afford this, for those who plan to be onsite and cannot afford any copies, and we will address this on a case by case basis - we welcome your feedback on this emergent policy!)

- Certain collaborative volumes (anthologies, etc) might be produced in volume for the event specifically when possible / esp. if representatives are not present.

- In future, OS house media more focused on education / skill sharing / etc in more portable form (zines, small pubs, etc) will also be available.

- The OS will provide stands, square/digital payment tech/capability, signage, postcards, and other presentation materials, as well as organizational assistance.