



Home > > 04/09/2007

George Mason University (Libraries) is seeking a HEAD, IV GROUP (FA730Z).

# Animal House? No, Apprentice House

## POD and student staff build a list.

by Judith Rosen | Apr 06, 2007

As director and editor-in-chief of the campus-based Apprentice House in Baltimore, Gregg Wilhelm faces some unique challenges—such as what to do when your entire staff goes home for summer vacation. "You're at the mercies and vagaries of student life," said Wilhelm of his undergraduate staff at Loyola College in Maryland, "but it's fabulous to have students as staff."

### RELATED STORIES:

- PW issue Contents
- More in articles by Judith Rosen

### FREE E-NEWSLETTERS

☒ PW Daily ☒ Tip Sheet

**SUBSCRIBE**

[More Newsletters](#)

Founded in 2004 by communication/journalism professor Andrew Ciofalo, Apprentice House has evolved from a mock company where students learned to publish mock books into a university press/micropublishing hybrid. During a year-long transition, the press operated as an imprint of a publishing house begun by faculty member and press publisher Kevin Atticks. Then with the hiring of publishing veteran and alum Gregg Wilhelm to guide the press, it severed those connections and came into its own.

Apprentice House's 10-book backlist includes a collection of unpublished plays by Zora Neale Hurston, culled from the Library of Congress and edited by two Loyola professors, and Loyola students' translation of the prison diaries of a second-century Christian martyr,

What Would You Die For? Perpetua's Passion. With 800 copies in print, Perpetua, which was used as a text for Loyola's spring 2006 Humanities Symposium, is the press's bestselling book. To date most book sales have come through the campus bookstore, even though Lightning Source, which prints Apprentice's books, makes its titles available through Ingram and online at Amazon.com.

These are extremely modest achievements by most standards, but by taking advantage of print-on-demand technology and a volunteer staff (other than Wilhelm), the aptly named Apprentice House can make a go of it. POD, by eliminating the need for warehousing and returns, removes many of the financial hurdles that bedevil most publishing efforts.

Despite limited distribution, Apprentice House is starting to get its name out to the surrounding community. Last fall, at the Baltimore Book Festival, local photographer Adrianna Amari tracked down Apprentice House and submitted the manuscript for Prayer for the Morning Headlines: On the Sanctity of Life and Death, a

selection of poems by Daniel Berrigan illustrated with her photographs. In addition to getting Berrigan's blessing for the project, Amari had already lined up an introduction by Howard Zinn and blurbs, like this one from Kurt Vonnegut: "For me, Father Berrigan is Jesus as a poet. If this be heresy, make the most of it."

"I thought this was a match," said Amari, after being turned down by Berrigan's previous publishers largely because of the cost of reproducing the photographs. Over the past few months, she said, "I have been really impressed by the students. It was learning on both sides. They didn't know anything about the Catonsville Nine [the Vietnam War protest by Father Berrigan, his brother Philip and seven others, who stole draft records and burned them with homemade napalm]. To me that seemed like part of what this book is about, the legacy of the peace movement."

Communication major Margo Weiner, who will graduate next January, designed the Berrigan book this semester and regarded it as "an amazing opportunity" to take a book from an idea to the final stages of the cover design. Now that the design is complete, she is turning her attention to getting media for a pre-pub Baltimore book launch slated for May 24. The date was chosen to take advantage of antiwar rallies set for Memorial Day weekend and to enable students to attend before they disperse for the summer.

Dealing with the continuity problem—not just for vacation but also semester breaks and graduation—is in part what prompted Loyola to hire Wilhelm. And it prompted the communication department to start a "publishing club," through which Wilhelm helps students refine publishing projects outside the classroom. Students on junior-year-abroad programs check in from as far away as Paris and Melbourne.

Apprentice House will double its list this year, adding 10 more books, including veteran Baltimore Examiner journalist Michael Olesker's *Tonight at Six: A Daily Show Masquerading as Local TV News*. Now that the press has completed its first year, Wilhelm is looking three-to-five years ahead; he plans eventually to hire paid staff that won't usurp the student role. "We've also been talking about an Apprentice House Publishing Institute for the summer," said Wilhelm. "For now, though, we'll continue on. Kevin and I will find time to make progress on the projects that need it."