

A Brief History of the University Press of Florida

Founded in 1945 and located in Gainesville, near the campus of one of the state's major research universities, University Press of Florida is the oldest book publisher in the state and one of the largest university presses in the Southeast. It began with a slightly different name (University of Florida Press) and one part-time employee. It took nearly a year to release the inaugural title. Today, UPF has published 1,600 volumes and with a staff of 35, releases about 90 new titles each year.

Moving into the twenty-first century, UPF established itself as an important publisher of books with wide popular appeal to residents and visitors to the Sunshine State and to general interest readers beyond, as well as to the scholarly audience that has been its traditional market for fifty years.

UPF is a member of the American Association of University Presses, ranking in the top third of AAUP membership for sales and new title production, and is one of a group of publishers that makes a major contribution to the U.S. publishing industry.

UPF has a national and international reach, he said, with sales throughout the United States, Western Europe, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region. Its authors are affiliated with major universities around the United States, Great Britain, the Middle East, Latin America, Russia, Asia and Africa.

UPF's predecessor, the University of Florida Press, remained the only scholarly publisher in the state until the mid-1960s, when Florida State University in Tallahassee created its own institutional press. In the early 1970s one of the state's newer institutions, Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, asked the State Board of Regents to authorize the creation of an FAU Press. With this development, and to avoid unnecessary replication of efforts among the campuses, the Regents established a system-wide press in 1973 that became known as the University Presses of Florida.

By the early 1990s a need became apparent for one central authority that could refocus and unify the state's publishing process. Through combined efforts by George C. Bedell, the director of the consortium, working with the chancellor of the Board of Regents, the president of the University of Florida, and a committee of provosts from throughout the state, the press once again was reconfigured. On 19 August 1991 the chancellor of the Board of Regents issued a memorandum reorganizing the University Presses of Florida: There would be a single press for the Florida State University System, a single editorial board, and

a single budget for which the director was responsible. The name became University Press of Florida, its name today.

According to Bedell, the new organizational structure enabled the press to accomplish several notable advances for scholarly publishing in Florida. It allowed the press to sharpen its editorial focus, it freed up staff to spend more time on basic publishing functions, and it allowed staff to develop long-range plans with teeth.

Reflecting the quality and scope of UPF's list, books from the press have received prestigious awards from academic organizations such as the Society for Ethnomusicology, the Woodrow Wilson Center, the Southern Anthropological Society, Latin American Studies Association, the American Association for State and Local History, the Modern Language Association, and the Jewish Book Council, and within the state from the Florida Historical Society. In addition, UPF books regularly receive *Choice* Outstanding Book awards and AAUP design awards. Others have been named to the Amazon.com best-seller list, selected as "lost gems" by *Booklist*, and chosen for books clubs. Both academic and general interest books have received accolades from national and international media, from starred reviews in *Publishers Weekly* and a featured essay in the *New York Times Book Review* to major attention from the *New York Review of Books*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Village Voice*, *The Nation*, *Playboy*, *Oxford American*, and various wire services.

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