

Report from the Ad Hoc Publisher Search Committee

Prepared for the Board of Directors by Elroi Windsor

June 29, 2023

The Ad Hoc Publisher Search Committee is Chaired by the Executive Officer, who is a non-voting member. The voting members of the committee include Yvonne Braun (Chair, Editorial and Publications Committee), Anna Linders (*Social Problems* Editor), Becky Pettit (Chair, Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee), Heather M. Dillaway (SSSP Treasurer), and Alexis Bender (at-large member of the Editorial and Publications Committee). Michele Koontz, Administrative Officer and Meeting Manager, also participated in this Committee. This Committee is having an active year, where work has included reviewing the renewal offer from Oxford University Press (OUP) and working on the solicitation of bids from other publishers to publish the Society's journal, *Social Problems*. Given the importance of this Committee's work, a detailed summary of our year is provided below.

Currently, the Society's contract to publish *Social Problems* with OUP is slated to end on December 31, 2024, which is the end of the second 5-year contract the Society has had with this publisher. OUP sent SSSP a Renewal Offer for a third 5-year term on February 21, 2023.

The Ad Hoc Publisher Search Committee's year began with some role clarification, which was necessary due to a recent change that made the consideration of contracts fall within the Editorial and Publications Committee (E&P), yet had not been updated in the Operations Manual. But due to time constraints within E&P, largely due to their existing work searching for the next editorial team for *Social Problems*, I reached out to the E&P Chair to offer that the Ad Hoc Committee take the lead. This offer was for the Ad Hoc Committee to instead be the group to make the recommendation to the Board to renew the contract or seek bids from alternative publishers before the contract expires. The E&P Chair accepted this offer, and the Board approved this change on March 27.

In addition, and in consultation with the Chair of E&P, I requested and received an extension from Sarah Levine (OUP Publisher contact) of the deadline to notify OUP of a decision to terminate the contract (deadline moved from June 30 to September 30, 2023).

Following the Board-approved change, the Ad Hoc Committee convened on April 17 and invited Sarah from OUP to discuss the Renewal Offer. The Committee posed a variety of questions stemming from our general surprise and disappointment with the terms within the Renewal Offer, which amount to a reduction in revenue to SSSP of approximately 23%, among other issues. Notes from this meeting were shared with the Board of Directors, the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee (BFA), and E&P.

During the 5/23 meeting of the BFA, members suggested strategies for clarifying the Renewal Offer, due to questions about the accuracy of projections. I emailed Sarah on

5/25 to clarify terms, and she sent a revised renewal offer on 5/30 with a few calculation corrections, but with unchanged terms of renewal. Via email, the Ad Hoc Committee discussed her response, and I prepared a draft email to send to Sarah with requests for different terms that would be more favorable to the editorial team of *Social Problems* and for the SSSP. Committee members shared feedback, and I also consulted with Susan Carlson due to her prior expertise on SSSP contract negotiations. I sent the final email to Sarah on 6/14, and she confirmed receipt and indicated she would respond soon. As of this date (6/29), I have not yet received a response from OUP.

On 6/21, the BFA met again and Sarah attended the meeting to present the Publisher's Report OUP shared with SSSP. The BFA expressed concerns with the report and renewal terms. They agreed that OUP was unlikely to change their renewal terms significantly based on Sarah's presentation. Consequently, BFA passed a motion stating their belief that it would be fiscally responsible for SSSP to solicit bids from other publishers. The BFA asked the Ad Hoc Committee to make this recommendation to the Board, with haste. In response, I emailed the Ad Hoc Committee on 6/21 with this recommendation, and received their support to make this request to the Board. On 6/22, I emailed the Board our recommendation to solicit bids from other publishers for *Social Problems*.

As the Board's votes came in and it seemed likely that the recommendation would pass, I started reviewing materials from the last solicitation of bids that SSSP pursued (provided by Susan Carlson) and requested support from our Administration Office to update some of the factual content therein. I also emailed the Ad Hoc Committee to share the list of publishers contacted during the last request for bids, inviting them to provide feedback.

Currently, I am revising materials to solicit bids and will share drafts with the Ad Hoc Committee before contacting other publishers with the formal, final Request for Bids.

I believe SSSP is at a critical decision-making point. OUP is responding to changes they are experiencing within the publishing industry, and these changes will negatively impact the SSSP's operating abilities under current renewal terms. Notably, the current editorial team has had a positive working relationship with OUP, but their financial projections and proposed renewal offer will result in a decrease in revenue for the Society that we cannot ignore. It would be prudent for the SSSP to consider bids from other publishers that may result in more favorable financial conditions.

I would like to express gratitude to the following individuals for their important insights in consultations I sought with them on aforementioned matters: Michele Koontz, Becky Pettit, and Susan Carlson. Their expertise was especially helpful in moving the work of this Committee forward. I would also like to thank all the additional members of the Ad Hoc Committee for their careful attention and work: Yvonne Braun, Heather Dillaway, Anna Linders, and Alexis Bender.