

# Reviews of Independent Press Books in *Counterpoise* and Other Publications

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Although *Counterpoise* claims that it reviews books that are reviewed by other publications either infrequently or not at all, almost three-quarters of the books (74.7%) reviewed by *Counterpoise* are reviewed by a wide variety of other publications, including popular magazines and newspapers. Four core library review tools (*Booklist*, *Choice*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*) review 48.2 percent of all book titles reviewed by *Counterpoise*, and their reviews are favorable 74.4 percent of the time. Of the books not reviewed anywhere else except *Counterpoise*, more than half fall into six Library of Congress classification categories, including E (History: America), HQ (The family. Marriage. Women), HV (Social pathology. Social and public welfare. Criminology), and HD (Industries. Land use. Labor). In addition, there is a subset of titles that are frequently and positively reviewed by popular and academic publications, but not by reviewing journals commonly used by librarians.



Within the field of librarianship, *Counterpoise* claims to serve a unique purpose. Founded in 1997 by Charles Willett, it prides itself on being “the only review journal that makes alternative points of view widely accessible to librarians, scholars and activists.”<sup>1</sup> An outgrowth of the Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT) of the ALA, then briefly a part of CRISES Press (owned by Willett), and currently a venture of the Civic Media Center, a nonprofit alternative library in Gainesville, Florida, *Counterpoise* publishes, among other items, “original essays; comparative review articles; and many careful reviews of books, periodicals and non-print materials overlooked by other review journals.”<sup>2,3</sup> As such, it

sees its mission as providing a counterbalance to mainstream and corporate media outlets. As Willett comments in the Editor’s Notes of the inaugural issue of *Counterpoise*, one of the journal’s founding premises is, “If we castigate the *New York Times* for its news bias, why trust its book reviews? And what about mainstream library journals—aren’t they wedded to profit, fame and privilege.... Review journals, aping commerce and government, have chosen money as their first variable.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, mainstream journals and newspapers have a tendency to review materials that are produced by large, corporate-controlled publishers who have significant marketing and advertising budgets. Such mainstream venues may not necessarily present “alterna-

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tive points of view encouraging social responsibility, liberty and dissent, as affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution, the Library Bill of Rights, the Talloires Declaration (academic environmental stewardship), the Valdez Principles (corporate environmental responsibility), and related documents.<sup>55</sup> In fact, because “six media conglomerates and the public relations industry—operating in close association with corporations, governments and universities—control the production and dissemination of most mainstream information and entertainment, concerned librarians, educators and activists around the world look to *Counterpoise* for access to materials and ideas that liberate the mind and defend democracy, peace, social justice, and the environment.”<sup>56</sup> This is especially true because “[w]hat distinguishes *Counterpoise* from review journals that just mirror the global, profit-oriented, capitalist culture is its concern for positive social change; what distinguishes it from other alternative journals is the breadth, depth and reliability of its coverage.”<sup>57</sup>

Invoking the names of Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*, and Edward Herman, author of an essay entitled “Toward a Democratic Media” and coauthor with Noam Chomsky of *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Willett suggests that for-profit media follow an agenda that perpetuates historical bias by telling stories from the point of view of victors, not victims. On the other hand, the ideas and publications of the alternative press are “often ignored, misrepresented or suppressed by corporate and government media,”<sup>58</sup> despite the fact that, taken collectively, the alternative press is “an enormous body of books, pamphlets, magazines, zines, and audiovisual and electronic materials presenting socially responsible knowledge, points of view and choices.”<sup>59</sup> In short, the alternative press is “a democratic media organized and controlled by ordinary citizens and

their grassroots organizations.”<sup>60</sup> Given this background, *Counterpoise* “describes, criticizes, defends and promotes these [alternative] publications and products against this bias,”<sup>61</sup> that is, the bias of being overlooked by mainstream reviewing publications. And, as Willett suggests at the conclusion of his editorial, fighting against the bias of “money-oriented, mainstream review journals” is a never-ending “struggle” that calls for a steady infusion of monetary resources.<sup>62</sup>

### Literature Review

The mere existence of a publication such as *Counterpoise* testifies to the lively debate within librarianship about the efficacy of reviewing tools, especially with regard to what Willett identifies as the alternative press. The explosive growth of small presses (or alternative presses) in the 1960s and 1970s caused the library community to ask itself hard questions about the degree to which publications of these small presses (or alternative presses) were being collected by libraries. The views of scholars such as Ross Atkinson, who noted that a novel reviewed on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review* would be purchased by libraries “regardless of who wrote the novel, where it was published, what it is about, or even what the review says about it”<sup>63</sup> and that academic titles reviewed in core journals will invariably be acquired, led others to ponder the responsibility of libraries in collecting small press titles that may not be reviewed at all, let alone in core journals.

In 1984, Judith Serebnick and John Cullars observed that 47.2 percent of small press titles published in 1980 received at least one review, with ten journals publishing 54.3 percent of those reviews.<sup>64</sup> In 1992, Serebnick reported that, of 450 small press titles published in 1986, only 38.9 percent received at least one review and only twelve titles received six or more reviews each.<sup>65</sup> As in her earlier study, a small number of journals (14) accounted for a majority of all reviews (53.4%).<sup>66</sup> Journals most frequently re-

viewing small press titles were *Booklist*, *Choice*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*, each with more than twenty reviews of such titles.<sup>17</sup> In 2000, Juris Dilevko and Alison Hayman demonstrated that both *Library Journal* and the *New York Times Book Review* consistently reviewed independently published fiction titles “at a rate of between 30% and 40% of all fiction titles” reviewed by each publication in 1994–1997 (*Library Journal*, 35.3%; *New York Times Book Review*, 37.2%).<sup>18</sup> These two publications therefore reviewed corporately published books at a rate of 64.7 percent and 62.8 percent, respectively, of all published books—a percentage that “quite closely parallels the market share of the seven corporate publishers (66.2% in 1997), according to figures supplied by *Book Publishing Report*.”<sup>19</sup> Given the fact that the presence or absence of reviews of small press titles is positively related to the number of libraries owning such titles,<sup>20</sup> much energy has been devoted to making publications of all types more cognizant of small presses and thus more amenable to reviewing the books produced by them. Nevertheless, believing that these efforts were insufficient, Willett founded *Counterpoise* in 1997.

### Purpose

Before outlining the purpose of this article, a word needs to be said about the use of the terms “small press” or “alternative press.” First, the very concept of small press is problematic because it has undergone a major transformation from the BC era (“before personal computers” or “prior to 1980”) to the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the evolution has been such that Tom Person suggests replacing “small press” with the more pragmatic term “independent publishing” or “independent press,” which he defines as “a company that does not belong to another company or corporation.”<sup>22</sup> From this point of view, then, the terms “small press,” “independent press,” and “alternative press” are synonymous because these presses produce titles that present an alternative to main-

stream or corporate publishers. Michael Albert agrees with this formulation, noting that “an alternative media institution (to the extent possible given its circumstances) doesn’t try to maximize profits, doesn’t primarily sell audience to advertisers for revenues (and so seeks broad and non-elite audience), is structured to subvert society’s defining hierarchical social relationships, and is structurally profoundly different from and as independent of other major social institutions, particularly corporations, as it can be.”<sup>23</sup> Of course, “society’s defining hierarchical social relationships” can be subverted from both the left wing and the right wing and thus, from a political, social, or cultural perspective, the independent or alternative press can be either leftist (sometimes called progressive) or rightist.

Notwithstanding discussions about the intricacies of terminology, *Counterpoise* has effectively positioned itself as one of the few champions of oppressed and neglected voices paying concerted attention to publications produced, in general, by the “progressive or leftist” alternative (or independent) press.<sup>24</sup> Collection development librarians in many universities and colleges in the United States and Canada, convinced that *Counterpoise* reviews materials that are rarely reviewed elsewhere, subscribe to *Counterpoise* so that they can keep up with these kinds of alternative publications.<sup>25</sup> However, is it really the case that other publications do not review the titles reviewed by *Counterpoise* and that titles published by leftist or progressive alternative presses are overlooked, ignored, misrepresented, or suppressed by such “money-oriented” media as *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, the *New York Times*, and others? The purpose of the present article is to examine these issues in detail through the following six research questions:

1. How many of the titles reviewed in *Counterpoise* were reviewed at least once in another publication?
2. Which types of publications (i.e., library review journals, academic jour-

nals, newspapers, magazines, etc.) reviewed *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles, and how often did they do so?

3. What was the general tone (i.e., favorable, mixed, unfavorable, etc.) of the reviews of *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles that appeared in publications other than *Counterpoise*?

4. Can any patterns be detected with regard to the subject matter of titles that are reviewed in *Counterpoise*, but not reviewed in other publications?

5. Can any patterns be detected with regard to the *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles that also are frequently reviewed in popular and academic publications but are not reviewed in review publications commonly used by library professionals?

6. Can any patterns be detected with regard to the book titles that are reviewed in *Counterpoise* and also received frequent reviews in other publications?

If the claims made by *Counterpoise* are valid, namely, that other publications typically do not review the types of titles that it reviews, a case can be made for the utility, even the vital necessity, of public and academic librarians using *Counterpoise* on a regular basis. Conversely, if other reviewing tools commonly used by librarians are reviewing the same material that *Counterpoise* claims as its exclusive purview, the claims made by *Counterpoise* about its singular mission should be revisited and the willingness of other media to review books published by (progressive) independent (or alternative, or small) presses should be acknowledged.

### Procedures

All titles reviewed in the Book Reviews section of *Counterpoise* for the four-year period 1997–2000 formed the basis of this study. That is, the researchers worked from the list of books that *Counterpoise* editors had chosen to include in their Book Reviews section; the assumption here is that, by their very presence in *Counterpoise*, those titles present the kind of alternative viewpoints that mark them as the types of titles published by alternative presses. *Counterpoise* also has sepa-

rate sections that review reference titles, magazines, pamphlets, zines, comics, and audiovisual materials, but the present study did not include these titles.<sup>26</sup> Between 1997 and 2000, the Book Reviews section of *Counterpoise* consisted of 434 unique titles (453 total titles minus 19 duplicates). Identifying information (title, author/editor, publisher, place of publication, year of publication, etc.) about each of those 434 titles was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. A unique identifying code was assigned to each title (e.g., A46, B78, C159, D231). To track the subject matter of titles, the researchers also recorded subject headings and the broad Library of Congress (LC) classification number assigned to the titles listed in tables 7 through 10 below, as found in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) WorldCat database.

Then, using the ProQuest database, the researchers searched for the presence of book reviews for each of the 434 titles in the thousands of publications indexed by ProQuest. From the “Search Methods” menu, the researchers chose “Guided Search”; article type was set as “book review.” Both current and back file databases were searched. Retrieved hits were scanned for relevancy (i.e., the researchers ensured that the retrieved review did, in fact, review the title in question) and marked, if relevant. “Marked list & durable links” from “Results & Marked List” was displayed. Using the “Export Citations” feature of ProQuest, complete bibliographical information about each relevant review was exported to the bibliographic software package EndNote and subsequently transferred to an Excel spreadsheet.

In addition to the necessary identifying information, the following fields were created for each review: source title; publication type; and review type. The publication type of each review was categorized as follows:

A. core library reviewing journals (*Booklist*, *Choice*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*);

B. other reviewing publications com-

monly used by librarians (e.g., *New York Times Book Review*, *Women's Review of Books*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *World Literature Today*, etc.);

C. newspapers and large-circulation popular magazines (e.g., *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, *Village Voice*, *Washington Post*, etc.);

D. consumer magazines and trade publications as identified by the 2002 online version of *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory*;

E. academic/scholarly publications as identified by the 2002 online version of *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory*.

In reporting data below, category A was occasionally split into two subcategories. *Publishers Weekly* (category A-1) was placed in one subcategory, and *Booklist*, *Choice*, and *Library Journal* (category A-2) were placed in the other subcategory. In addition, categories A and B were sometimes combined to form a supercategory that could be thought of as professional reviewing tools and categories C and D were sometimes combined into a supercategory that could be thought of as popular publications. Finally, categories A and B sometimes were juxtaposed with categories C, D, and E to make the distinction between, on the one hand, professional reviewing tools and, on the other, publications (both popular and academic) that were not primarily review oriented. Review type was derived from

the classification of reviews provided by ProQuest: favorable, unfavorable, mixed, comparative, and rating not present.<sup>27</sup> The categories of "comparative" and "not present" were combined to form a category of "not rated." All spreadsheets and databases were linked and queried by means of the unique identification code assigned each *Counterpoise*-reviewed title. All procedures were carried out in January–February 2003.

This study method thus differs slightly from the work of Serebnick mentioned above. She and her colleagues chose random book titles from the *Small Press Record of Books in Print* and then determined the extent to which those titles were reviewed in book review indexes, whereas the researchers of this study began with book titles that already had been reviewed by *Counterpoise* in order to generate a list of independent press titles for which the researchers subsequently determined the presence or absence of reviews in a variety of other publications.

**Results**

*Number and Frequency of Reviews in Other Publications*

Of the 434 unique book titles reviewed in *Counterpoise* between 1997 and 2000, 324 (74.7%) generated at least one other book review in a publication indexed by ProQuest (first research question). More specifically, 249 *Counterpoise*-reviewed

**TABLE 1**  
**Book Titles Reviewed and Not Reviewed by Professional Reviewing Tools (Category A and B Publications) That Were Reviewed by Academic and Popular Publications (Category C, D, and E Publications)**

	Number of Reviews in Category C, D, and E Publications			
	One (%)	Two (%)	Three or more (%)	Total
Not reviewed in category				
A and B publications	39 (40.6)*	19 (38.8)	17 (18.3)	75 (31.5)
Reviewed in category				
A and B publications	57 (59.3)*	30 (61.2)	76 (81.7)	163 (68.5)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>96 (100)</b>	<b>49 (100)</b>	<b>93 (100)</b>	<b>238 (100)</b>

\* Percentages in this column do not add to 100 because of rounding.

**TABLE 2**  
**Number of Reviews in Other**  
**Publications of Book Titles**  
**Reviewed in *Counterpoise***

Number of Book Reviews	Number of Titles (%)
One	87 (26.9)
Two	68 (21.0)
Three to five reviews	106 (32.7)
Six to ten reviews	48 (14.8)
More than 10 reviews	15 (4.6)
<b>Total</b>	<b>324 (100)</b>

titles (57.4%) generated at least one review in either the four core library reviewing publications (category A) or other reviewing publications commonly used by librarians (category B). Of these 249 titles reviewed by category A and category B publications, 163 (65.5%) also were reviewed by category C, D, or E publications. More specifically still, only 209 (out of 434) *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles (48.2%) generated at least one review in category A publications (*Booklist*, *Choice*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*). Conversely, 238 (out of 434) *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles (54.8%) generated at least one review in category C, D, or E publications. Of these 238 titles, 72 also were reviewed in *Publishers Weekly*; 132 also were reviewed in either *Booklist*, *Choice*, or *Library Journal*; and 68 also were reviewed in category B publications. Moreover, of these 238 titles generating at least one review in a category C, D, or E publication, 96 generated a single review, 49 generated two reviews, and 93 generated three or more reviews. Table 1 shows the extent to which category A and B publications (professional reviewing tools) reviewed book titles that were reviewed by category C, D, and E publications. Professional reviewing tools used by librarians did *not* review 75 book titles (31.5%) that were reviewed by popular and academic publications (categories C, D, and E). Of these 75 titles, 19 had received two reviews and another 17 had received three or more reviews. The four core library

reviewing tools (category A publications alone) did not review 115 publications that were reviewed by category B, C, D, and E publications. Generally speaking, however, the more reviews that a *Counterpoise*-reviewed title received in category C, D, and E publications, the greater the chance that it also was reviewed in category A and B publications (table 1). For instance, of the 93 *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles that were reviewed three or more times in category C, D, and E publications, 76 (81.7%) were reviewed in a category A and B publication, whereas of the 96 *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles that were reviewed once in a category C, D, and E publication, only 57 (59.3%) were reviewed in a category A and B publication. In total, the 324 titles generated 1,225 reviews across all types of publications in ProQuest.

Table 2 shows the frequency of reviews per book title. Of the 324 titles reviewed by other publications, a plurality (32.7%) was reviewed between three and five times, with a further 14.8 percent of titles being reviewed between six and ten times. Overall, 52.2 percent of the titles (169) were reviewed three or more times in publications other than *Counterpoise*, and 73.1 percent (237) were reviewed two or more times in publications other than *Counterpoise*.

What types of publications reviewed *Counterpoise*-reviewed book titles (second research question)? As indicated in table 3, the four core library reviewing journals produced 30 percent (8.1% + 21.9%) of the total number of reviews (in other publications) of *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles (367). Newspapers and large-circulation popular magazines produced 15.5 percent (190) of total reviews, and academic/scholarly journals produced 28 percent (343) of total reviews. Table 4 provides additional details about the publications (within each publication-type category) that reviewed *Counterpoise*-reviewed publications. For instance, within category B, *Lambda Book Report* (39) and *Women's Review of Books* (26) reviewed *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles most frequently, followed by the *New York Times Book Review* (23) and

*World Literature Today* (14). Within category C, *The Nation* reviewed *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles most frequently (19), followed by the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* (15 each). Within category D, *The Advocate*, *The Progressive*, and *Off Our Backs* most frequently included reviews of *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles.

Table 5 approaches research question 2 from a slightly different angle. The researchers wanted to know how often *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles were reviewed by a specific type of publication, notwithstanding the number of total reviews of that title within each separate publication-type category. For example, if title XYZ was reviewed by three academic/scholarly journals, once by *Choice*, and once by *Library Journal*, for the purposes of table 5, this would be counted as follows: "Title XYZ" was reviewed once by a category E journal and once by the category of core library journals that includes *Booklist*, *Choice*, and *Library Journal* (category A-2). As shown in table 5, then, the 324 titles that were reviewed in publications other than *Counterpoise* garnered 721 "category reviews." Of these 721 "category reviews," 280 (38.8%) were in the category of core library reviewing journals (categories A-1 and A-2) and another 181 (25.1%) were in the combined

category of newspapers and large-circulation popular magazines, and consumer and trade publications (categories C and D).

**Types of Reviews**

Of the 1,225 total reviews generated by the 324 *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles that were reviewed in another publication, 748 (61.1%) were favorable, 187 (15.3%) were mixed, 42 (3.4%) were unfavorable, and 248 (20.2%) were "not rated" (third research question). As shown in table 6, the rate of favorable reviews was highest in category A-2 publications (78.4%) and second highest in category A-1 publications (63.6%). When categories A-1 and A-2 are combined, the rate of favorable reviews in the four core library journals of *Booklist*, *Choice*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly* is 74.4 percent. The rate of favorable reviews was lowest in combined category C and D publications (53.3%). When the rate of favorable reviews of all category A and B publications is compared with the rate of favorable reviews of all category C, D, and E publications, it is clear that, taken collectively, the rate at which all professional reviewing tools used by librarians (categories A and B) give favorable reviews (69.4%) is greater than the rate at which popular and

**TABLE 3**  
**Total Number Of Reviews Of *Counterpoise*-reviewed Book Titles in Other Publications**

Category	Description of Publications Belonging to This Category	Number of Total Book Reviews in All Publications within Each Category (%)
A-1	Core library reviewing journal: <i>Publishers Weekly</i>	99 (8.1)
A-2	Core library reviewing journals: <i>Booklist</i> , <i>Choice</i> , and <i>Library Journal</i>	268 (21.9)
B	Other reviewing journals commonly used by librarians	149 (12.2)
C	Newspapers and large-circulation popular magazines	190 (15.5)
D	Consumer and trade publications	176 (14.4)
E	Academic/scholarly journals	343 (28)
	Total reviews in all publication types	1,225 (100)*

\* Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

**TABLE 4**  
**Publications Containing Five or More Reviews for Examined Titles**

Type of Publication	Title	Number of Reviews
Core library reviewing journals (Category A)	<i>Library Journal</i>	110
	<i>Publishers Weekly</i>	99
	<i>Booklist</i>	90
	<i>Choice</i>	68
Other reviewing journals commonly used by librarians (Category B)	<i>Lambda Book Report</i>	39
	<i>Women's Review of Books</i>	26
	<i>New York Times Book Review</i>	23
	<i>World Literature Today</i>	14
	<i>School Library Journal</i>	9
	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>	8
Newspapers and large-circulation popular magazines (Category C)	<i>College &amp; Research Libraries</i>	5
	<i>The Nation</i>	19
	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	15
	<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	15
	<i>Village Voice</i>	14
	<i>National Catholic Reporter</i>	13
	<i>Boston Globe</i>	11
	<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	11
	<i>Washington Post</i>	10
	<i>Ms</i>	9
Consumer and trade publications (Category D)	<i>Oregonian</i>	9
	<i>Utne Reader</i>	7
	<i>The Advocate</i>	11
	<i>The Progressive</i>	10
	<i>Off Our Backs</i>	9
	<i>Ecologist</i>	8
	<i>Hispanic</i>	7
	<i>Whole Earth</i>	6
	<i>Communities</i>	5
<i>Multinational Monitor</i>	5	
Academic/scholarly journals (Category E)	<i>New Statesman</i>	5
	<i>Journal of American History</i>	12
	<i>Monthly Review</i>	9
	<i>New Scientist</i>	8
	<i>American Historical Review</i>	7
	<i>Environmental Politics</i>	7
	<i>Journal of Women's History</i>	6
	<i>Labor History</i>	6
<i>Alternatives Journal</i>	5	
<i>NWSA Journal</i>	5	



**TABLE 5**  
**Number of Reviews of *Counterpoise*-reviewed Book Titles**  
**in Each Category of Publication**

Category	Description of Publications Belonging to this Category	Number of Reviews of Different Books in Each Category of Publication* (%)	
A-1	Core library reviewing journal: <i>Publishers Weekly</i>	97*	(13.5)
A-2	Core library reviewing journals: <i>Booklist</i> , <i>Choice</i> , and <i>Library Journal</i>	183*	(25.4)
B	Other reviewing journals commonly used by librarians	115*	(16)
C and D	Newspapers and large-circulation popular magazines; consumer and trade publications	181*	(25.1)
E	Academic/scholarly journals	145*	(20.1)
<b>Total</b>		<b>721</b>	<b>(100)**</b>

\* Multiple reviews of the same book within a publication type category count as one review for the purposes of this table.

\*\* Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

academic publications (categories C, D, and E) give favorable reviews (55%).

In total, 185 *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles were reviewed favorably at least once in a category C, D, or E publication (popular and academic publications that are not primarily reviewing tools). Of the 185 titles that were reviewed favorably at least once, 50 were *not* reviewed by category A or category B publications taken as a whole. More specifically, of the 185

titles that were reviewed favorably at least once, 123 were not reviewed by *Publishers Weekly* (category A-1), 73 were not reviewed by *Booklist*, *Choice*, and *Library Journal* (category A-2), and 125 were not reviewed by any category B publications. Of the 185 titles that were reviewed at least once favorably in a category C, D, or E publication, 119 were reviewed favorably at least once in a category A or B publication, 40 had at least one mixed re-

**TABLE 6**  
**Types of Reviews According to Publication Type**

Publication Type	Favorable	Type of Review		
		Mixed	Unfavorable	Not Rated
Category A-1 (99)	63 (63.6)	27 (27.3)	8 (8.1)	1 (1)
Category A-2 (268)	210 (78.4)	35 (13.1)	6 (2.2)	17 (6.3)
Category B (149)	85 (57)*	20 (13.4)*	4 (2.7)*	40 (26.8)*
<b>Total of categories A and B (516)</b>	<b>358 (69.4)</b>	<b>82 (15.9)</b>	<b>18 (3.5)</b>	<b>58 (11.2)</b>
Category C and D (366)	195 (53.3)	42 (11.5)	11 (3)	118 (32.2)
Category E (343)	195 (56.9)*	63 (18.4)*	13 (3.8)*	72 (21)*
<b>Total of categories of C, D, and E (709)</b>	<b>390 (55)</b>	<b>105 (14.8)</b>	<b>24 (3.4)</b>	<b>190 (26.8)</b>
<b>Grand total (1,225)</b>	<b>748 (61.1)</b>	<b>187 (15.3)</b>	<b>42 (3.4)</b>	<b>248 (20.2)</b>

\*Percentages in these rows do not add to 100 because of rounding.

**TABLE 7**  
**Library Of Congress (LC) Classifications of Books Reviewed by**  
***Counterpoise* But Not Reviewed by any Other Publication**

LC Main Class/ Subclass Letters	LC Main Class/Subclass Titles	Number of Items
B	Philosophy	1
BL	Religions. Mythology. Rationalism	4
DK	Russia. Soviet Union. Former Soviet Republics - Poland	1
DT	Africa	3
E	History: America	9
F	History: America	3
GE	Environmental sciences	1
GF	Human ecology. Anthropogeography	1
GV	Recreation. Leisure	1
HC	Economic history and conditions	1
HD	Industries. Land use. Labor	6
HE	Transportation and communications	1
HF	Commerce	1
HM	Sociology (General)	2
HN	Social history and conditions. Social problems. Social reform	2
HQ	The family. Marriage. Women	14
HV	Social pathology. Social and public welfare. Criminology	8
HX	Socialism. Communism. Anarchism	1
JC	Political theory	3
K	Law	1
L/LA/LC	Education/History of education/Special aspects of education	4
ML	Literature on music	3
N/NC	Visual Arts/Fine Arts. Drawing. Design. Illustration	2
P	Language and literature	2
PH	Uralic languages. Basque language	1
PJ	Oriental languages and literatures	1
PN	Literature (General)	9
PR	English Literature	4
PS	American Literature	9
Q/QC	Science (General)/Physics	2
R/RA	Medicine (General). Public aspects of medicine	2
SB	Plant culture	1
TD	Environmental technology. Sanitary engineering	1
TX	Home economics	2
Z	Bibliography. Library science. Information resources (General)	3

L		s		L		Ti		road)		L		Ti		)		Number of Items		
HD	I																	6
																		s and es of ies; isputes, manpower
HQ	T																	14
																		ex es
HV	S																	8
	p																	y, prisons, schools; with

view in a category A or B publication, and only 10 had at least one unfavorable review in a category A or B publication. Of the ten titles that received at least one unfavorable review in a category A or B publication, four had received two or more favorable reviews in a category C, D, or E publication.

#### Patterns in Unreviewed Titles

As mentioned previously, 74.7 percent of book titles (324) reviewed in *Counterpoise* also were reviewed elsewhere. Accordingly, 110 books (25.3%) reviewed by *Counterpoise* were not reviewed elsewhere. Are there any patterns to be detected among these 110 unreviewed titles? Table 7 groups these titles according to their LC broad classification (research question 4). Six categories of books dominate this list: HQ (The family, Marriage, Women) (14); PN (Literature, General) (9); E (History: America) (9); PS (American literature) (9); HV (Social pathology: Social and public welfare, Criminology) (8); and HD (Industries, Land use, Labor) (6). These fifty-five titles comprise 50 percent of all unreviewed book titles. Books in the HQ class include such titles as: *First Person Sexual: Women & Men Write about Self-pleasuring;*

*Anal Pleasure & Health: A Guide for Men and Women*; *Like There's No Tomorrow: Meditations for Women Leaving Patriarchy*; *American Sex Machines: The Hidden History of Sex at the U.S. Patent Office*; and *Much More Than Sexuality: Listening to 70 Gay People Talk about Their Lives*. Books in the PN class include: *Barbie Unbound: A Parody of the Barbie Obsession*; *The Solo Sex Joke Book: Jokes, Cartoons, and Limericks about the World's Most Popular Sex Act*; and *Hot & Bothered: Short Short Fiction on Lesbian Desire*. Books in the E class include five titles about various aspects of North American Indian life, as well as *Roots of Justice: Stories of Organizing in Communities of Color* and *Talking about a Revolution*. Books in the PS class include two titles with subject headings of "erotic literature" or "erotic stories," as well as fiction and poetry collections from marginalized groups such as Appalachian mountain families, punk rockers, North American Indians, and recent immigrants. Six of the eight books in the HV class deal specifically with the injustices of prisons and/or the politics of the criminal justice system both in the United States and overseas. Finally, in the HD class, three of the six titles deal with exploited laborers and another title discusses rent strikes and land struggles. (As an example of the types of subclass titles assigned to unreviewed titles in certain LC classes, see table 8.)

If 110 *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles were not reviewed at all by any other publications, were some titles reviewed by popular and academic publications (categories C, D, and E), but not by reviewing publications typically used by library professionals (categories A and B) (research question 5)? To get as specific a set as possible of such titles, the researchers generated a list of titles that were reviewed at least three times by category C, D, and E publications with at least one favorable review, but not reviewed by category A and B publications. As shown in table 9, there were sixteen such titles. Nine of the titles are published by small and relatively obscure publishers (Common Courage

Press [3]; New Society Publishers [3]; Aperture [1]; ILR Press [1]; and Orbis Books [1]) that, for the most part, are based in small towns away from the nexus of publishing power (i.e., New York and Boston). Another three publishers could be characterized as small- to medium-sized publishers (New Press, Cleis Press, and South End Press). Two are university presses and the final two are presses connected with political think tanks (Brookings Institute) or government entities (International Labour Organization). With regard to the subject matter of these sixteen books, many, if not all, challenge the fundamental bases of American social and military power (e.g., *School of Assassins*, *Atomic Audit*, *An Enemy of the State*), capitalist economic foundations (e.g., *Top Heavy*, *Juarez*, *We Are All Leaders*), corporate arrogance (e.g., *Against the Grain*, *Our Ecological Footprint*), and patriarchal social hierarchies and systems (e.g., *Body Alchemy*, *Natural Eloquence*) from what could be described as radical perspectives.

Finally, were there any patterns with regard to the types of books reviewed by *Counterpoise* and frequently reviewed by other publications (research question 6)? To address this question, the researchers generated a viable list of *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles that were reviewed ten or more times in all other publications and at least once in category A publications. This allowed the researchers to see whether there were any differences between the kinds of titles not reviewed by library reviewing tools and the kinds of titles that generated numerous reviews across all publication types. As shown in table 10, there were fifteen such books. In comparison with the list of publishers in table 9, the publishers in table 10 are larger and better known. For example, there are four university press titles, four books from the Free Press in New York, Seal Press in Seattle, and Beacon Press in Boston, and one book from internationally known Blackwell Publishing. Many of these publishers are based in the New York–Boston–Washington corridor. With

TABLE 9

**Book Titles Not Reviewed by Professional Reviewing Tools (Category A or B) but Reviewed at Least Three Times in Popular or Academic Publications (with at least one favorable review)**

<b>LC Main Class/Subclass Letters</b>	<b>Book Title</b>	<b>LC Subject Headings</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Times Reviewed in Other Publications</b>
BR	Eternal hostility: The struggle between theocracy and democracy	Conservatism—Religious aspects—Christianity. Conservatism—United States—History—20th century. Theocracy. Christian Coalition. United States—Church history—20th century. United States—Politics and government—1993-2001.	Common Courage Press (Monroe, Maine)	3
E	Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice	Racism—United States. Race awareness—United States. Whites—Race identity—United States. United States—Race relations.	New Society Publishers (Gabriola Island, British Columbia; Philadelphia)	3
F	Landscapes of the interior: Re-explorations of nature and the human spirit	Landscape—Canada, Western. Landscape—West (U.S.). Philosophy of nature. Nature (Aesthetics). Canada, Western—Description and travel. West (U.S.)—Description and travel.	New Society Publishers (Gabriola Island, British Columbia; Philadelphia)	3
HC	Our ecological footprint: Reducing human impact on the earth	Sustainable development. Nature—Effect of human beings on. Human ecology. Economic development—Environmental aspects.	New Society Publishers (Gabriola Island, British Columbia; Philadelphia)	8
HD	We are all leaders: The alternative unionism of the early 1930s	Labor unions—United States—History—20th century. Labor movement—United States—History—20th century.	University of Illinois Press	6
HD	Gender inequality in the labour market: Occupational concentration and segregation, a manual of methodology	Sex discrimination in employment—Data processing—Methodology.	International Labour Organization (Geneva, Switzerland)	3

TABLE 9 (CONT.)

**Book Titles Not Reviewed by Professional Reviewing Tools (Category A or B) but Reviewed at Least Three Times in Popular or Academic Publications (with at least one favorable review)**

LC Main Class/Subclass Letters	Book Title	LC Subject Headings	Publisher	Times Reviewed in Other Publications
HJ	Top heavy: The increasing inequality of wealth in America and what can be done about it	Wealth tax—United States. Income distribution—United States.	New Press (New York)	5
HN	Juarez: The laboratory of our future	Ciudad Juarez (Mexico)—Social conditions. Ciudad Juarez (Mexico)—Economic conditions.	Aperture (New York)	4
HQ	Body alchemy: Transsexual portraits	Transsexualism—United States. Transsexuals—United States—Portraits. Transsexuals—United States—Interviews.	Cleis Press (Pittsburgh)	3
P	Powers and prospects: Reflections on human nature and the social order	Language and languages—Philosophy. World politics—1989. Philosophical anthropology.	South End Press (Boston)	4
PN	An enemy of the state: The life of Erwin Knoll	Journalists—United States—Biography. War—Press coverage—United States.	Common Courage Press (Monroe, Maine)	3
PN	Working stiffs, union maids, reds, and riffraff: An organized guide to films about labor	Working class in motion pictures.	ILR Press (Ithaca, NY)	6
Q	Natural eloquence: Women reinscribe science	Women in science. Science news.	University of Wisconsin Press	4
S	Against the grain: Biotechnology and the corporate takeover of your food	Agricultural biotechnology. Food—Biotechnology. Food. Nutrition.	Common Courage Press (Monroe, Maine)	3

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regard to subject matter, there are, to be sure, titles that deal with thorny and difficult issues but, on the whole, the general tone of these books is less provocative (e.g., *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*; *The Old Neighborhood: What We Lost in the Great Suburban Migration, 1966–1999*); the topics dealt with seem safer, more conventional, or more historically oriented (e.g., *Power Loss: The Origins of Deregulation and Restructuring in the American Electric Utility System*), as if it was acceptable to talk about past injustices (e.g., *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk about Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation*; *Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700–1835*), but not to discuss current ones.

**Discussion**

Contrary to the claims of *Counterpoise* editors, other publications, including mainstream journals and newspapers, are reviewing book titles that present alternative viewpoints on a wide variety of cultural, political, and social issues. Indeed, 74.7 percent of the alternative titles (324 out of 434) reviewed by *Counterpoise* were reviewed 1,225 times in other publications. (See table 3.) Of these titles, 52.2 percent received three or more reviews. (See table 2.) To be sure, many of these reviews appear in journals such as *The Nation*, *The Progressive*, and *Multinational Monitor*, but many others are printed in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Boston Globe*, and *Washington Post*. (See table 4.) As indicated in table 5, each publication-type category reviews a large number of different alternative titles that have been reviewed by *Counterpoise*. Popular publications (categories C and D) review nearly the same number (181) of *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles as category A-2 publications (183). An individual who reads academic and popular publications (category C, D, and E publications) without glancing at professional reviewing tools (categories A and B) would find that these publications (categories C, D, and E) covered 238 out of 434 *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles. (See table 1.) There also was significant over-

**TABLE 10**  
**Table 10. *Counterpoise*-reviewed Titles That Were Reviewed Ten or More Times in Other Publications**

LC Main Class/Subclass Letters	Book Title	LC Subject Headings	Publisher	Times Reviewed in Four Core Library Reviewing Journals
DT	Woman between two worlds: Portrait of an Ethiopian rural leader	Women, Gamo—Biography. Gamo (African people)—Politics and government.	University of Illinois Press	2
E	The opening of the American mind	Education, Higher—United States. United States—Intellectual life.	Beacon Press (Boston)	4
E	Cherokee women: Gender and culture change, 1700–1835	Cherokee women—History. Cherokee women—Social conditions. Cherokee Indians—Social life and customs. Sex role—United States. Sexual division of labor—United States.	University of Nebraska Press	1
E	Remembering slavery: African Americans talk about their personal experiences of slavery and emancipation	Slavery—United States—History. African Americans—Biography. African Americans—History.	New Press (New York)	3
E	Promoting polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. intervention, and hegemony	Democracy—History—20th century. Democracy—United States—History—20th century. World politics—1985–1995. United States—Foreign relations—1981–1989. United States—Foreign relations—1989–	Cambridge University Press	1
GE	Betrayal of science and reason: How anti-environmental rhetoric threatens our future	Anti-environmentalism. Environmental degradation.	Island Press (Washington, DC)	3
HD	Power loss: The origins of deregulation and restructuring in the American electric utility system	Electric utilities—Deregulation—United States. Electric utilities—Government policy—United States—History. Electric utilities—Law and legislation—United States—History. Competition—United States—History—20th century. Pressure groups—United States.	MIT Press	1



TABLE 10 (CONT.)

Table 10. *Counterpoise*-reviewed Titles That Were Reviewed Ten or More Times in Other Publications

LC Main Class/Subclass	Book Title	LC Subject Headings	Publisher	Times Reviewed in Four Core Library Reviewing Journals
HM	Justice, nature and the geography of difference	Social justice. Social change. Social values. Global environmental change. Cultural relativism. Space and time.	Blackwell Publishing	1
HQ	Listen up: Voices from the next feminist generation	Feminism—United States. Feminists—United States—Biography.	Seal Press (Seattle)	3
HQ	The sex side of life: Mary Ware Dennett's pioneering battle for birth control and sex education	Birth control—United States. Sex educators—United States—Biography. Women social reformers—United States—Biography. Sex instruction—United States. Women—biography. Sex Education—United States. Family Planning—United States. Social Change—United States.	New Press (New York)	2
HT	Exterminate all the brutes	Racism. Racism in literature.	New Press (New York)	3
HT	The old neighborhood: What we lost in the great suburban migration, 1966-1999	Cities and towns—United States. Neighborhood—United States. City and town life—United States.	Free Press (New York)	3
HV	Drawing life: Surviving the Unabomber	Social pathology. Social and public welfare. Criminology Crimes and offenses. Victims of terrorism—United States—Biography. Bombings—United States.	Free Press (New York)	3
PS	Gore Vidal: Sexually speaking: Collected sex writings	Sex. Sex in literature. Homosexuality in literature. Homosexuality and literature. English literature—20th century—History and criticism. American literature—20th century—History and criticism.	Cleis (San Francisco)	1
RC	Victims of memory: Sex abuse accusations and shattered lives	Repression. Crime Victims—psychology. Incest. Child Abuse, Sexual. Psychotherapy. False memory syndrome. Recovered memory. Adult child sexual abuse victims. Memory. Repression (Psychology).	Upper Access (Hinesburg, Vermont)	4

lap, that is, the more often a *Counterpoise*-title was reviewed in a category C, D, or E publication, the greater the chance that it would be reviewed by professional reviewing tools (categories A and B).

On the other hand, from the perspective of a collection development librarian who works outward from a core set of library reviewing tools to an ever-broader universe of journals, the picture is different. The four core library review tools (*Booklist*, *Choice*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly* [category A]) cover only 48.2 percent of all 434 *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles (209). If this theoretical library professional then expanded her or his range of reading to include what the researchers have called category B publications, she or he would find reviews covering forty additional *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles. Finally, if a library professional expanded her or his reading range to encompass popular and academic publications (categories C, D, and E), she or he would discover reviews discussing seventy-five additional *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles, bringing the grand total up to 324 book titles. In other words, the collection development librarian would have to read a very large number of publications (table 4) to receive 74.7 percent (324 books out of 434 books reviewed in *Counterpoise*) of the same information about alternative book titles that is contained in *Counterpoise*. With regard to book reviews, the role of *Counterpoise* is therefore not so much one of uniqueness but, rather, one of concentrating information in one place so that a librarian can save time, money, and effort.

However, although *Counterpoise* reviews almost always tend to be positive in their evaluation of an alternative title, this is not the case with other publication types. For instance, publications in categories C, D, and E collectively evaluate *Counterpoise*-reviewed books favorably only 55 percent of the time. (See table 6.) This is approximately the same as category B publications (57% favorable reviews), but far below category A-2 publications, which evaluate *Counterpoise*-reviewed book titles favorably at a rate of 78.4 percent. Collec-

tion development librarians who rely solely on *Counterpoise* reviews may not receive as objective an evaluation of a particular book title as they may receive from another type of publication.

In addition, collection development specialists who are specifically interested in books that fall under such broad LC classifications as HQ (The family. Marriage. Women), HV (Social pathology. Social and public welfare. Criminology), and E (History: America), as well as fiction titles by members of marginalized groups or those that deal extensively and boldly with sexual topics (such as those in PN and PS classes), should make *Counterpoise* book reviews required reading, especially if they have been accustomed to exclusively using professional reviewing tools (category A and B publications). (See tables 7 and 8.) Why? As shown in tables 9 and 10, there are often stark differences in both the nature and the publishers of the titles that are not reviewed by category A and B publications and the titles that are frequently reviewed by category A and B publications.

The difference can perhaps best be seen by comparing "*Exterminate All the Brutes*": *One Man's Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and the Origins of European Genocide* (published by New Press in New York) (table 10) with *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice* (published by New Society Publishers in Gabriola Island, British Columbia) (table 9). The former title concentrates on historical aspects of colonialism and racism in Africa; the latter dissects and offers advice to counteract numerous instances of racism in contemporary life. In other words, *Uprooting Racism* does not present racism simply as a historical construct but, rather, as an ongoing phenomenon that assumes untold manifestations in even the most seemingly innocuous settings. Similarly, in table 9, the question of sex and sexual orientation is touched on through either historical work, as in *The Sex Side of Life: Mary Ware Dennett's Pioneering Battle for Birth Control and Sex Education*, or the writings of a renowned and

prolific intellectual, such as Gore Vidal. Conversely, in table 10, the question of sexual orientation assumes a more radical form, as seen in *Body Alchemy: Transsexual Portraits*, which is described as an "intensely personal photo documentary of female-to-male transsexuals (FTMs) ... [that] document[s] the transformation of a number of FTMs in [the] transsexual community."<sup>28</sup>

### Conclusion

To read some of the editorial statements published in *Counterpoise* after its break with the ALA is to become aware of the often visceral animosity that exists between *Counterpoise* editors and what they refer to as the "overarching command structure" of the ALA, a command structure described as "hierarchical, corporate, bureaucratic, self-important and domineering," one that has a proclivity for "elevat[ing] the few and subordinat[ing] the many" and has not supported the efforts of *Counterpoise* to the degree that *Counterpoise* believes it should be supported.<sup>29,30</sup> In many ways, *Counterpoise* has become a vehicle for a personal crusade against institutional librarianship, what Willett ironically refers to as a constant series of meetings of "big bottoms."<sup>31</sup> There is nothing wrong with this: Anger and frustration often fuel much-needed change. And change seems to be called for because, despite increasing attention to alternative presses, publications of these presses are not being collected to any great extent by OCLC libraries. For instance, 61 of the 114 books (53.5%) reviewed in *Counterpoise* in 2001 were held by fewer than 200 OCLC libraries, and 84 of those 114 books (73.7%) were held by fewer than 300 OCLC libraries.<sup>32</sup> Of course, such figures may represent success to some alternative publishers,<sup>33</sup> but in relation to mass-market best-sellers and well-promoted mainstream titles, these numbers are nevertheless miniscule.

Such statistics are all the more troubling in light of the propensity of chain stores such as Wal-Mart to "typically carry an assortment of fewer than 2,000 books,

videos, and albums," "carefully screen content to avoid selling material likely to offend their conservative customers," and be ruthless about returning goods "if they fail to meet a minimum threshold of weekly sales."<sup>34</sup> Not only has Wal-Mart banned books by Kurt Cobain, it has been instrumental in helping to "produce a string of best sellers by conservative authors like Bernard Goldberg, Ann Coulter, Michael Savage and Bill O'Reilly" and contributed to the decision of AOL Time-Warner to start a religious imprint "because a book buyer for Wal-Mart [said] that more than half its sales were Christian books."<sup>35</sup> Because mass merchandisers such as Wal-Mart accounted for 12.6 percent of all books sold in the United States in 2002 (up from 9.1% in 1992) and for "more than 40 percent for a best-selling book," their growing influence "has bent American popular culture towards the tastes of their relatively traditional customers."<sup>36</sup> If the tactics of stores such as Wal-Mart lead to an increasing level of homogenization in the number and types of books available for public consumption, the role of the library, whether academic or public, as a provider of alternative voices becomes all the more crucial, especially because Wal-Mart supported books typically become best-sellers, which increases the likelihood that these titles will make their way to library shelves.

And if the example of the Minneapolis Community and Technology College (MCTC), which now spends 10 percent of its materials budget on alternative press resources, is taken into consideration, *Counterpoise* has had a significant positive effect on the ability of colleges and universities to collect alternative press publications.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, as the present study has demonstrated, numerous other publications, including mainstream magazines and newspapers, review alternative press book titles, and a significant majority of those reviews are favorable. For the most part, those reviews appear before reviews appear in *Counterpoise*. The four core library reviewing publications review

48.2 percent of *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles, with 74.4 percent of the reviews being favorable. When a collection development librarian supplements the four core library reviewing publications with other publications, even more reviews of alternative press titles become available. In summation, information about such titles is readily available to those librarians who read widely and extensively in a variety of library reviewing tools, popular magazines, and academic journals. When all is said and done, it is not libraries who purchase books, but individual librarians who purchase books on behalf of their institutions. If libraries do not own a large number of alternative press titles, and if there are nevertheless numerous reviews about such titles in a wide variety of publications that are ostensibly read by collection development librarians, the reason for a lack of alternative press titles in libraries lies more with uninterested and unaware individual librarians who do not read widely (or who rely on approval plans) than with the libraries for which these individuals work and the organizational structures that bring these libraries together.

To be sure, adequate financial resources are necessary to buy alternative titles. But adequate financial resources also are necessary to buy *any* type of titles. Ultimately, it is the decision of individual collection development librarians that makes the difference. The example of MCTC is instructive in this respect. When the Minnesota state legislature granted academic libraries additional funds with the proviso that 20 percent of those funds be used "to build collections in unique subject areas,"<sup>38</sup> staff of MCTC could have spent their allotment on any type of materials. They did not do so, choosing, instead, "as a result of the

extra money, and other decisions made by the staff," to systematically devote 10 percent of their materials budget to alternative press materials.<sup>39,40</sup>

To judge by the 1,225 reviews of *Counterpoise*-reviewed titles in other publications, at the beginning of the twenty-first century interest in the publications of alternative and small presses has reached a critical mass in publications of all types, not just *Counterpoise*. Accordingly, the failure of libraries to own books published by alternative and small presses may be a reflection of the disinterest that individual librarians have for questions surrounding the issue of corporate control of cultural industries, a failed understanding of the true implications of balance and neutrality (vaunted principles underlying collection development work) in an era where organizations such as Wal-Mart shape cultural tastes through their book merchandising policies, and a disinclination to read widely in order to find out about as many books as possible on a given topic so as to be able to make informed and socially responsible decisions about book purchases. But the case of MCTC shows that local, small-scale efforts can have a large impact. Of course, it would have been easy for MCTC staff members (or others like them) to blame the dearth of alternative press titles in their library's collection on the inflexibility of (or gaps inherent in) approval plans, cutbacks forced by restrictions in the current budget, the ever-present need to develop core collections in teaching areas, or perceived administrative disapproval of purchases of titles that do not have the imprimatur of recognized and esteemed publishers or authors. But they did not elect to do so, instead taking it upon themselves as individuals to act.

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## Notes

1. Civic Media Center. Available online from <http://www.civicmediacenter.org/counterpoise/>. (Accessed 16 May 2002.)
2. Charles Willett, "Editor's Notes," *Counterpoise* 4 (July 2000): 4.
3. Civic Media Center. Available from <http://www.civicmediacenter.org/counterpoise/>. (Accessed 16 May 2002.)
4. Willett, "Editor's Notes."
5. "Counterpoise Business Plan: FY 2001, Part I: Mission Statement," *Counterpoise* 4 (Jan./Apr.

2000): 4.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Willett, "Editor's Notes."

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid. Willett quotes Herman.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ross Atkinson, "The Citation as Intertext: Toward a Theory of the Selection Process," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 28 (Apr. 1984): 113.

14. Judith Serebnick and John Cullars, "An Analysis of Reviews and Library Holdings of Small Publishers' Books," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 28 (Jan. 1984): 4-14.

15. Judith Serebnick, "Selection and Holding of Small Publishers' Books in OCLC Libraries: A Study of the Influence of Reviews, Publishers, and Vendors," *Library Quarterly* 62 (July 1992): 259-94.

16. Ibid., 275, 276.

17. Ibid., 277.

18. Juris Dilevko and Alison Hayman, "Collection Development Patterns of Fiction Titles in Public Libraries: The Place of Independent and Small Presses," *Library & Information Science Research* 22 (2000): 35-59.

19. Ibid., 43.

20. See Serebnick, "Selection and Holding," 264.

21. Tom Person, "The Surviving Small Press: What Is Small Press?" Available online from [http://www.laughingbear.com/articles/137\\_what\\_is\\_small\\_press.html](http://www.laughingbear.com/articles/137_what_is_small_press.html). (Accessed 12 September 2003.)

22. Ibid.

23. Michael Albert, "What Makes Alternative Media Alternative?" Available online from <http://whorlpool.905host.net/files/edarchive10.htm>. (Accessed 12 September 2003.)

24. Subsequent uses of the term "alternative" in this article should be interpreted in light of the editorial statements appearing in *Counterpoise*, which have been discussed in the opening paragraphs of this article.

25. As one of the reviewers of this article pointed out, we may be naïve in our assumption that collection development librarians rely on reviews (in any publication, including *Choice*) to any great extent for collection development purposes. We acknowledge, as this reviewer noted, that many librarians rely "almost exclusively" on approval plans and that approval plans "select books prior to the publication of reviews making them [the reviews] irrelevant regardless of where they are published." We would like to think, however, that reviews do serve an important purpose in decisions about what to purchase or what not to purchase and that librarians are not, as this reviewer observed, "lazy."

26. As pointed out by one of the reviewers of this article, it may not be appropriate to exclude zines and other nonbook formats in any analysis of the content of *Counterpoise* because zines and other nonbook formats are an integral part of the universe of alternative publications and of *Counterpoise*.

27. Although we recognize that there is a debate about whether ProQuest ratings are misleading, ProQuest is, to our knowledge, one of the only tools that provides a readily quantifiable rating of reviews.

28. Cleis Press. Available online from <http://www.cleispress.com/Pages/bodyalchemy.html>. (Accessed 19 May 2003.)

29. Willett, "National Structures Do Not Represent American Librarians," *Counterpoise* 5 (July/Oct. 2001): 4.

30. ———, "Editor's Notes."

31. ———, "National Structures Do Not Represent American Librarians," 4.

32. Earl Lee, "OCLC Holdings of Books Reviewed in *Counterpoise*," *Counterpoise* 6 (Jan./Apr. 2002): 18-20.

33. We thank both reviewers for bringing this point to our attention. And, as the reviewers also pointed out, print runs for alternative press publications are typically small and may result in low levels of holdings of these titles in OCLC libraries. In addition, numerous libraries have sizable original cataloging backlogs, and so they may not have been able to upload originally cataloged records of alternative publications to OCLC in a timely manner, which results in OCLC undercounts. Both these observations should be kept in mind when looking at these, or any other, OCLC statistics.

34. David D. Kirkpatrick, "Shaping Cultural Tastes at Big Retail Chains," *New York Times* (May 18, 2003): B1, B7.

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35. Ibid., B7.
36. Ibid., B1.
37. Tom Eland, "Letters & Messages," *Counterpoise* 4 (July 2000): 2.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. The question of why MCTC staff members only began to purchase alternative press publications *after* a funding increase is a very valid one, and we thank one of the reviewers of this article for bringing it to our attention.