

ASA News, Spring 2021

Pandemic Publishing Interview: University of Wisconsin Press' Dennis Lloyd

1. How has the pandemic and the broad suspension of in person events impacted publishing?

Where it has primarily impacted our operations is in the dampening sales effect caused the closed bookstores and libraries. Amazon's decision to deprioritize book shipping early in the pandemic hurt, but we've mostly recovered from that. Over the summer and fall it's been amazing to see the wide variety of approaches individuals are taking to overcome travel restrictions by setting up virtual bookstore events, recorded Zoom interviews shared with asynchronous classes, and the wide variety of conference presentations. At Wisconsin, we've managed to keep most projects more or less on schedule. In some instances we've struggled to find individuals willing to take on peer review, as in many cases they are themselves struggling with additional demands on their time caused by the pandemic and the closure of schools and daycares. Some research can't be done because of travel restrictions, and some find it difficult to concentrate on writing. So there may be a slight fall-off in quantity in the near future, but that will likely quickly corrected itself.

2. Since we still aren't able to get together, how have book pitches changed and what should our members know about the process?

In some ways, the process is largely the same. Personally, one thing that has changed (for the better) is the widespread availability and familiarity of video conferencing tools such as Zoom that allows more face-to-face interactions than solely at the annual conference. As a result, we've been considering setting up acquisitions editor office hours throughout the year, to facilitate initial meetings between potential authors and Press.

3. What new projects are you working on that the African Studies community should be on the lookout for?

This spring we'll be publishing a new book by David Schoenbrun that traces groupwork, ethnicity, and systems of belonging in East Africa for more than a millennium; a history of African nurses in rural apartheid South Africa by Leslie Anne Hadfield; and a new paperback edition of John M. Janzen's look at public health in the 1980s and 1990s in the Lower Congo. In the fall, we're looking forward to Phillip A. Cantrell II's book on the Anglican Church in Rwanda and David Uru Iyam's examination of women's roles in changing ceremonial rituals of the Agwagune of Southeastern Nigeria.