

Soliciting Donations from Publishers

Contacting publishers and authors directly is a good way to get book donations. In the past WPBP has gotten donations from authors like Barbara Kingsolver, Adrienne Rich, Sara Paretsky, Eric Jerome Dickey, and Anne Rule. We've gotten donations from publishers like Firebrand Press, South End Press, Random House, and EEG Press (the famous "Dummies" series of books). The books are new and in great condition, we can often get large quantities of certain titles, and it is an effective way to collect specific kinds of books that are always in demand. It can also be time consuming and frustrating as you have may have to deal with rejection, lack of a response at all, and getting referred from person to person.

Soliciting from publishers and authors can be overwhelming. What works best is to decide what kinds of books you want to get donated to WPBP. Then you can focus your time on identifying authors and publishers specializing in that area. The more specific you can be the better.

Once you decide what kind of books you want to pursue, research the names, addresses, etc. of prominent authors/publishers in that field. You can locate publisher addresses from book jackets, or use the World Wide Web to find publisher or author homepages. When contacting publishers, it's a good idea to first inquire about whom you should refer donation requests to, and if the company has guidelines about donations in general. In general it is good to specify the quantities you are looking for. In the past most publishers have agreed to send a "box" of titles. That is anywhere between 10 and 50 books, depending on the type of book. The author Sara Paretsky sent us 10 copies of each of her novels. Eric Jerome Dickey sent us 50 copies of each of his novels! Firebrand Press sent us their book catalog and told us to just pick from the titles they offered. Feel free to ask for "5 to 10 copies" of each title you are looking for. Each situation is so unique that we can't give you an absolute number of books to ask for, use your best judgment in consultation with us.

After you have figured out whom to contact, you'll need to write a letter/send an email introducing yourself, and asking for books for WPBP. We can provide you with sample letters that we have used in the past. We also have brochures, fact sheets and other materials you can send along with your letters. Email us to receive copies of this information. A big issue that may come up is about non-profit status. WPBP does have 501-[C] (3) non-profit status. We can send receipts to publishers for their donations. To make the receipt process smoother ask for an invoice to be enclosed with the donation, or at least the name and address of where WPBP should send the receipt.

Send WPBP copies of all your correspondence before you mail/email it off, that way we can be sure that it accurately reflects on our group. We can then also suggest ways to strengthen your arguments. Keep in close contact with us (especially if someone is asking you or WPBP to pay any kind of money), as we need to help make decisions about offers that will be made to you.

Once you get an author or publisher to agree to donate books to WPBP, there are

a couple of ways to get those books to us. The most direct route would be for them to send the books directly to us. If they balk at that and want to send the books to you, then you can turn around and ship the package to us. Our mailing address is:

Women's Prison Book Project
c/o Arise Bookstore
2441 Lyndale Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55405

Occasionally a publisher will offer to ship us a huge number of books (sometimes even a whole pallet full!) usually this is because the books are about to be destroyed. We do not have the storage capacity to deal with that huge a number of books. Refer any such offers to WPBP directly.