

# Fw: JAAH - Past and Current Circumstances and Future Directions

On Fri, Oct 21, 2016 at 12:24 PM, jaah@jaah.org  
<jaah@jaah.org> wrote:

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

I first want to thank you for your continued support of *The Journal of African American History* (JAAH) and ASALH. Believe me, your support for what we are doing keeps me going. It has been over 15 years since I accepted ASALH President Gloria Dickenson's invitation to serve as Editor of *The Journal of Negro History* (JNH), which had fallen on hard times and was published only sporadically. Because of the strained financial situation for ASALH in 2001, brought on to some extent by the fact that the 911 attacks took place two weeks before the annual convention, I agreed to assume the expenses for the JAAH Editorial Office at Columbia University's Teachers College. Prof. Edmund D. Gordon gave me office space in the Institute for Minority Education and the university provided me with a "work-study" graduate student who served as the first Editorial Assistant. At the time, ASALH had no alternative but to contract with an independent publisher to copyedit, print, and disseminate the JAAH.

When I moved to Dillard University in August 2005, luckily the JAAH Editorial Office was saved from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. For the next two years, Dillard University provided the office space and ASALH paid the salary of a Tulane graduate student to serve as Editorial Assistant. I still paid for all the expenses for the Editorial Office (mailing, copying, etc).

When I realized that Dillard's enrollment was not recovering to the pre-storm levels, and that the university would likely downsize by eliminating various departments (including the Dept. of History), I accepted a position at the University of California, Riverside (UCR), which provided editorial office space for the JAAH and through my President's Chair, I paid the Editorial Assistants' salary (\$15.00/hr. 20 hrs./week, year round), and I still paid for the supplies, copying, mailing, and other expenses in the JAAH editorial office. The important point is that between 2001 and 2015, the years of "self-publishing," ASALH was not covering all of the expenses to produce the JAAH.

Over the years I, and the JAAH Managing Editor Sylvia Cyrus, received many inquiries from university and commercial presses interested in publishing the JAAH. In the beginning (because the shaky status of the JNH), ASALH had no choice but to "self-publish." However, once the JAAH was

So VP Franklin, advocate of self-determination, was never really for self-publishing. Hilarious. dms

being published regularly, there were alternatives to pursue that would be more financially advantageous to ASALH. Unfortunately, these alternatives publishing arrangements were not pursued and we continued to “self-publish.”

But at the same time as my retirement for UCR after 8 years, the JAAH publisher of 15 years, Tapestry Press, decided that for financial reasons they would no longer publish the JAAH. In my retirement, I would not be able to continue subsidizing the JAAH; I needed to be reimbursed for editorial office expenses. Given these circumstances, the ASALH Executive Council (EC) issued a “request for proposals” (RFP) from non-profit university presses, and formal proposals were submitted by Penn State University Press, the University of North Carolina Press, and the University of Chicago Press. All three made it clear that they have contracts with numerous learned societies to publish their journals, *but the copyrights and control of all content remains with the organization*. University presses publish the vast majority of scholarly journals “on behalf of” learned societies that retain complete control of the content in their publications.

In light of the proposals submitted to publish the JAAH, there was no need to continue to “self-publish” since the university press would cover publication expenses and guarantee an annual income to ASALH to cover *all* of the editorial expenses in producing the JAAH.

It is important that you understand that “self-publishing” all these years did not cover the actual costs of producing the JAAH. It was the only alternative we had in 2001. However, in 2015 when Tapestry Press informed us they would soon no longer be the publisher, we had to seek out alternatives and the EC voted to move ahead with University of Chicago Press.

There has been much misinformation circulated on Facebook and other places about how and why ASALH council moved in this direction, but the more important question is: Why was this alternative not pursued earlier? If we had sought out a university press before, I would not have had to use the small stipend (and my own funds) for editorial office expenses. I plan to retire from the JAAH editorship at the end of 2018 and I wanted the next Editor *not* to have to pay the expenses I have paid over the last 15 years. I believe entering into a contract with the university press would allow the ASALH officers to identify the best person for the position, not just someone who would be willing to pay part of the expenses for producing the JAAH.

Thank you for your continued support of ASALH and the JAAH.

Sincerely,

V. P. Franklin, Editor  
JAAH