PM Press: 20 Years In

An anarchist publisher with an 18,000 sq ft warehouse!

Nick Mamatas

2026



Twenty years is a long time in the publishing game, especially these past twenty years. The mainstream industry experienced the collapse of the Borders bookstore chain, the rise of eBooks and the dominance of Amazon when it came to pricing and control, the steady decline in review pages in newspapers and magazines (and newspapers and magazines themselves vanishing!), algorithmic trend-setting, and now the rise of Large Language Models infecting the supply of books with AI slop.

PM Press has survived this onslaught since 2007 by staying true to its anarchist vision of autonomy. The Binghamton, New York-based publisher is not doctrinaire or sectarian. They don't just publish contemporary and historic anarchist material, or books of interest to anarchists, but books of interest to people interested in anarchism.

Thus, their catalog features a wide array of fiction, including science fiction and noir from the likes of *New Yorker*-fave Jonathan Lethem and South Central community organizer Gary Phillips, a vegan cookbook from UK Subs punk rocker Nicky Garratt, and an entire library of books by Scottish novelist James Kelman.

PM sells direct. In addition to the usual anarchist book fairs and infoshops, PM will famously table almost anywhere—from any political demonstration of size, to the nerdy World Science Fiction Convention (different city every year!) and the rarified and academic Associated Writing Programs annual conference (also a different city every year!).

The publishing imprint has over seven hundred Friends of PM subscribers, who, for a monthly fee, receive every book PM publishes. Between subscribers and direct sales in parking lots and parks, as many as half the books PM sells passes directly from the hands of a PM worker to a PM reader, the network of distributors and mega-bookstore chains be damned, or at least bypassed. For larger art books with full-color interiors, PM will use crowdfunding campaigns to pre-sell copies and pay for expensive printing and paper.

As a PM Press writer, this has all been great. Surprisingly, PM Press even pays advances, though unsurprisingly, they are tiny. Thanks to the subscriptions and the direct hustle, hundreds of people end up with books in their hands without having to give Jeff Bezos a penny.

Unlike large publishers, who employ accountants to count to ninety—one number per business day—before cutting a check, PM has never been late with royalty payments, though we're usually talking double digits. It's a bag of groceries, at least. Nothing but the best for the working class!

Not everything always goes well for itinerant road warriors. PM worker Joey Paxman and science fiction writer Terry Bisson were promoting PM titles in Bellingham, Washington once, and Bisson, who at the time was in his early 70s and didn't weigh more than 140 pounds, took Paxman to a sketchy bar after an event.

"The cute bartender kept buying us drinks and her boyfriend got jealous," Paxman recalls. "The dude took a swing at me and was so drunk that he missed and nearly fell down. I easily dropped him with a left hook and his buddies immediately came to the rescue. I'm not exaggerating. Terry got between me and those boys and they fucking backed down!" This is what it takes to sell a few books, sometimes.

Bisson, who in the 1980s, spent months in prison for refusing to rat on POC comrades he worked with as a member of John Brown Anti-Klan Committee, sadly passed in early 2024 at the age of 81, after spending much of the prior fifteen years editing the Outspoken Author line of chapbooks for PM.

In 2019, I worked as the event coordinator for Books Inc., Berkeley, a now defunct bookstore of a regional chain, that was recently bought out and integrated into the Barnes & Noble hegemon. However, back when it was independent, I did have some freedom to book my own authors.

I attempted to bring in Thomas Schmidinger, author of the PM title *The Battle for the Mountain of the Kurds: Self-Determination and Ethnic Cleansing in the Afrin Region of Rojava*. At the last minute, Schmidinger's visa was denied and he was barred entry to the US and I had to cancel his reading event. Ironically, the news came in during the corporate-sponsored Banned Books Week promotional event. Most so-called banned books are perennial best-sellers such as *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and some are even state-mandated reading in public school curricula. The Schmidinger banning was a rare (at the time) case of the store having to deal with actual government suppression of ideas. We wrapped up copies of *Battle* in caution tape and managed to sell a few.

In 2022, PM moved its headquarters and warehouse from radical Oakland, California to Binghamton, a college town and degraded de-industrialized city in western New York state. The weather is cold, but the real estate is relatively cheap and empty warehouses plentiful. As part of its move into the next twenty

years, PM is raising funds to purchase its 18,000 square foot warehouse that is the bedrock of what they do.

The time has come to bypass landlords as effectively as PM has bypassed the publishing industry, to bring radical ideas and entertainments to the people. That is what it takes

Nick Mamatas is the author of several novels, the most recent of which is *Kalivas! Or, Another Tempest*. He co-edits the PM Press Outspoken Author series. He lives in Berkeley, California.

Sidebar

Book by book, brick by brick, PM Press is celebrating 20 years of radical publishing and distribution by buying their 18,000 sq ft warehouse to ensure the project's future. Full details on how you can offer mutual aid by donating and/or ordering PM merch along with their full catalog of books is at **pmpress.org**.

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