

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Student Research Symposium

Student Research Symposium 2024

May 8th, 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Evaluating Equitable Success in Literary Spaces: A Portland Book Festival Case Study

Tia-Theo I. Thompson
Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium>



Part of the [Nonprofit Studies Commons](#), and the [Publishing Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Thompson, Tia-Theo I., "Evaluating Equitable Success in Literary Spaces: A Portland Book Festival Case Study" (2024). *Student Research Symposium*. 16.

<https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/studentsymposium/2024/posters/16>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

EVALUATING EQUITABLE SUCCESS IN LITERARY SPACES

A PORTLAND BOOK FESTIVAL (PBF) CASE STUDY

ADVOCACY FOR EQUITABLE LITERARY SPACES

A TIMELINE

2015

PUSH FOR DATA VISIBILITY

The book publishing industry becomes the center of a social movement after the publication of Lee & Low's Baseline Diversity Survey reveals that 79% of the book publishing industry is white.

#weneeddiversebooks hashtag goes viral

Publishers are pressured to create spaces of inclusion and belonging. Literary establishments strove to ensure that "populations [were] more representative of society" (PRH 2023).

2019-2022

INSTITUTING CHANGE

Slow transitions in Corporate Publishing result in idealistic missions/ incentives backed by minimal changes and minimal data transparency. As such, controversy proliferates; e.i. #publishingpaidme (2020).

Literary Arts institutes their Lit Arts Strategic Plan (2019) which prioritizes diversity within a framework of discovery. Writers and consumers (readers) are prioritized.

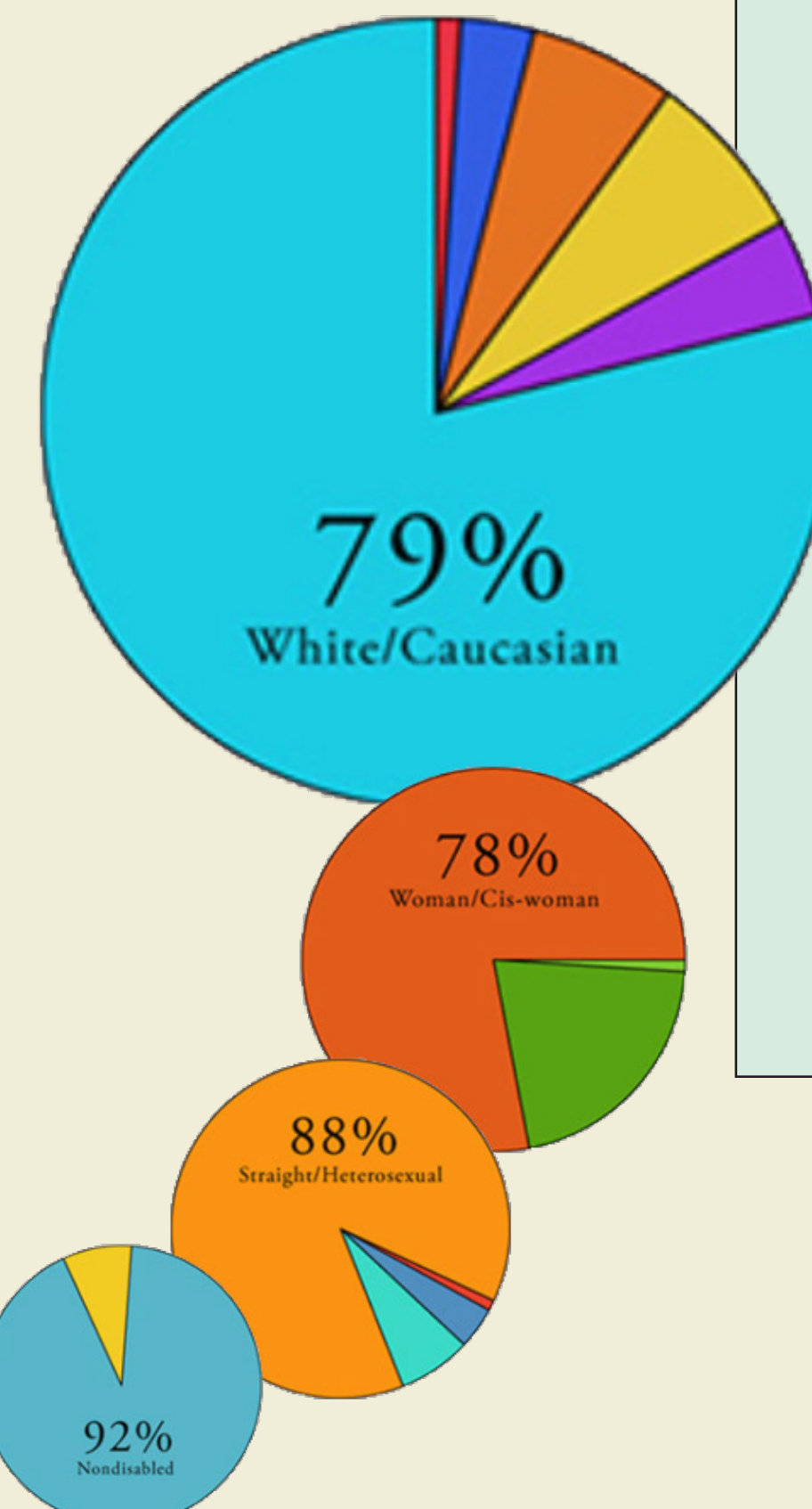
2023

CULMINATION OF A 3 YEAR PLAN

Corporate Publisher responsible for 25% of all Trade Publications - Penguin Random House - releases internal data on employee and author Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexual Orientation for the first time (2023)

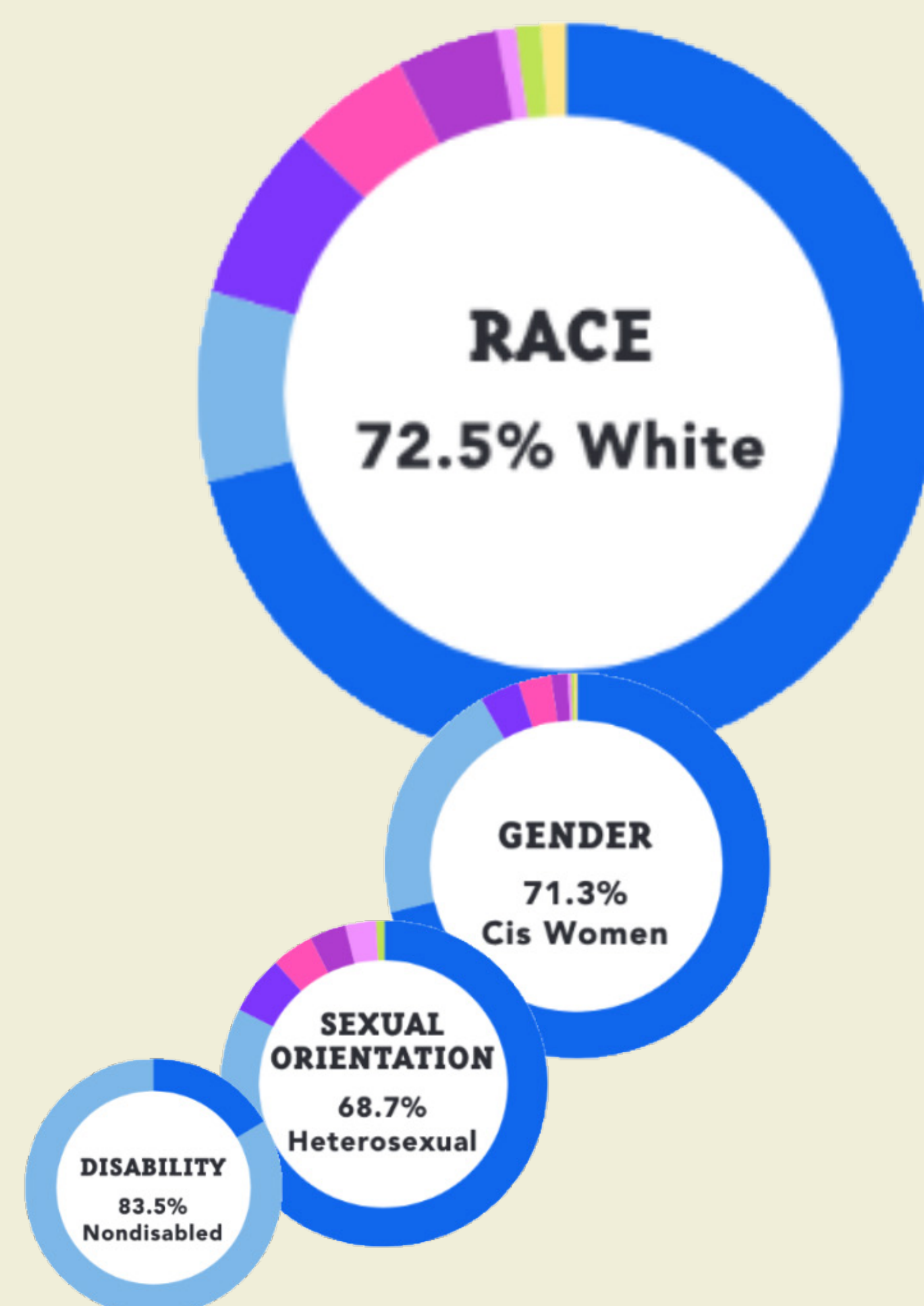
Literary Arts hosts their first Portland Book Festival in the culmination of their 3-year plan

Lee & Low releases Baseline Diversity Survey for results for 2023



Lee & Low, 2015

DISCOVERY FRAMEWORK
Prioritizes consumer discovery & Relies on a variety of product offered and "disorganized" placement to maximize cross-genre appeal.



Lee & Low, 2023

BIPOC WRITERS & PRESENTERS

To understand the impact of Lit Art's Discovery Model on Diversity in Literary Spaces, data concerning all BIPOC Writers & Presenters at the Portland Book Festival 2023 was collected and analyzed.

Findings suggest that literary spaces striving towards Equity show inclination towards the inclusion of Independent publications and placement by age categories in effort to meet - or in this case - exceed the goals of self-set Diversity Initiatives

FINDINGS

45% of BIPOC Authors & Presenters Published Independently despite Big 5 Publishers publishing 62% of all Trade Paperback books in 2023

1 in 3 BIPOC Authors & Presenters shared writing in Juvenile and Young Adult age categories



100% of Publishers at PBF 2023 were Independent

4.6 was the average number of published books a BIPOC Author had at PBF (with 6 Authors writing in the Juvenile and Young Adult age category having more than 10 publications)



At PBF 2023, Discovery looked like:

- Books Sold in Multiple Places
- Books for one author are sold in many places
- More opportunities for purchase books
- Three types of Author-to-Audience interaction
- No genre categories, books sorted by age category

Because browsing is encouraged and BIPOC authorship is well maintained, BIPOC representation occurs organically and with minimal opportunities for booksellers or consumers to discern hierarchy between writers and publishers.



OBJECTIVE & QUESTION

How do literary institutions achieve and evaluate successes in equity? Do certain factors expedite this transition?

Investigate:

- The inclusion of BIPOC Writers in a Literary Space
- Trends in publication and genre
- Observe if trends provide an appropriate response to known inequity

RESULTS

Did Literary Arts provide an appropriate response to known inequity by using a model that prioritized consumer "discovery?"

Publishing Industry Event

Consistent calls to action from the public for equitable changes to literary spaces to make them racially inclusive



58.7% of US Publishers operate in the Northeast



Despite advocacy since 2015, the 5 largest corporate publishers responsible for approximately 77% of all U.S. publications across Trade Paperback, Hardcover, and Mass Market Publications in 2023), did not publicly release data on employee & author diversity until around 2020

Inclusive Children's Literature is challenged/banned in unprecedented quantities, 2021 -2023



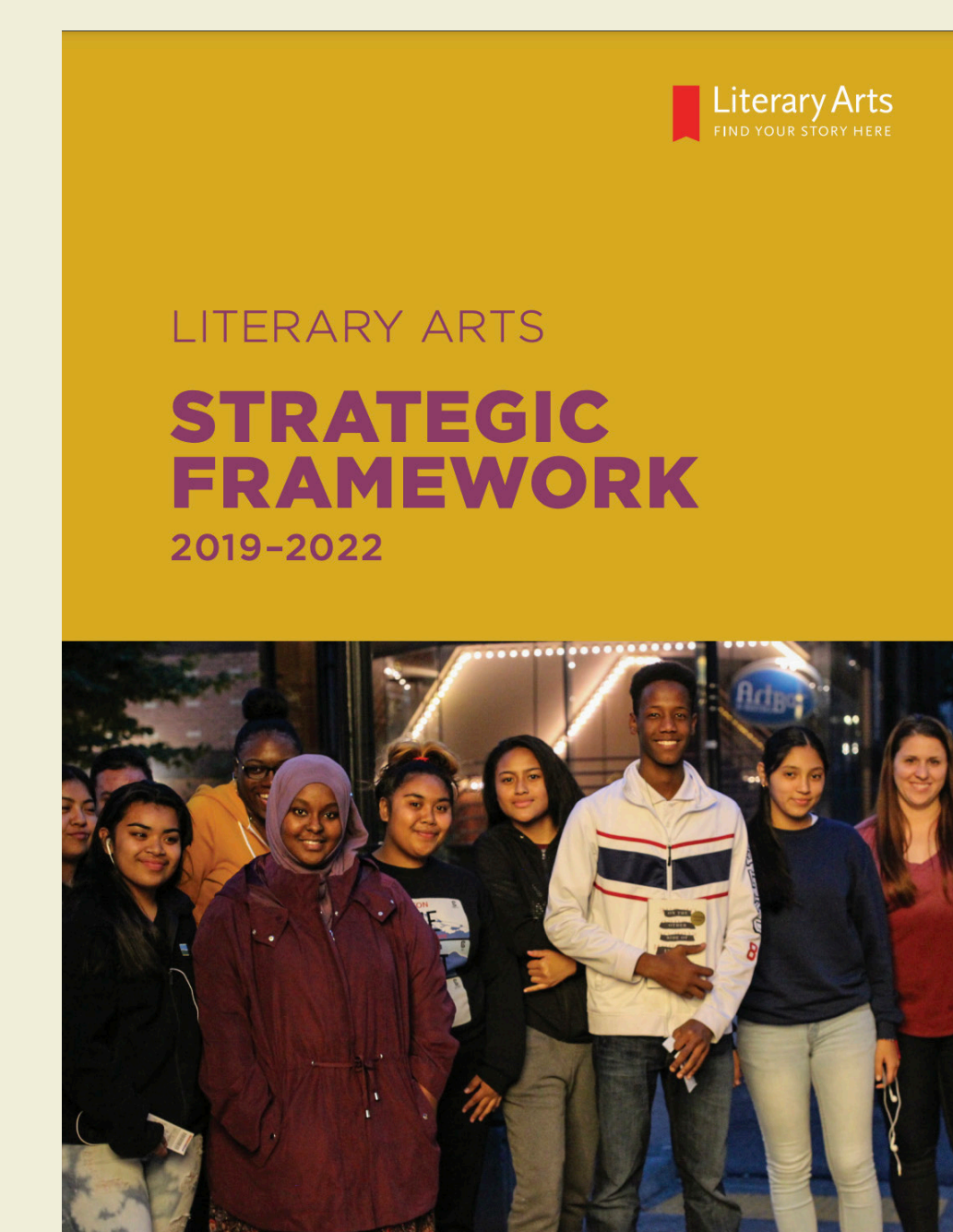
Influence on BIPOC Authors & PBF Literary Space

45% of all Writers and Presenters at PBF 2023 identified as BIPOC. This population exceeds national, statewide, and local racial parity

Regional Publishers skew Independent at the festival 100% of Publishers tabling at the event were Independent 44% of BIPOC Authors reside within the Pacific Northwest

45% of BIPOC Writers and Presenters were published independently

Literary Arts increases BIPOC Authorship of Children's Literature proportional to the adoption of a "Children's Stage" at PBF 2023



Artenang, Adwan, and Renny Ratna Dewi. 2022. "Indie Books Publishing: Actor Collaborations and Knowledge Preservations." Cogent Social Sciences 8 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331886.2022.2091564>.
Berkers, Pawlik, Suzanne Janssen, and Marc Verbeerd. 2014. "Assimilation into the Literary Mainstream: The Classification of Ethnic Minority Authors in Newspaper Reviews in the United States, the Netherlands and Germany." Cultural Sociology 8 (1): 25-44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1499751514809060>.
Brough, Melissa M., and Sangita Shrivastava. 2012. "Fandom Meets Activism: Rethinking Civic and Political Participation." Transformative Works and Cultures 10 (June). <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.03033>.
Craig, Alisha, and Sebastian Dubois. 2010. "Between Art and Money: The Social Space of Public Readings in Contemporary Poetry Economics and Careers." Poetics 38 (5): 441-60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2010.07.003>.
Disicoll, Beth, and Claire Squires. 2018. "Serious Fun: Gaming the Book Festival." Mémoires Du Livre / Studies in Book Culture 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1046988ar>.
Eckoff, Ida. 2023. "Narrative Cities - Literary Edinburgh: A Model to Follow." Academicism International Scientific Journal 27 (27): 42-56. <https://doi.org/10.7336/academicism.2023.27.03>.
Camp, Steven E. 2021. "Contemporary Publishing and the Culture of Books by Alison Beverstock, Richard Bradford, and Madelena Gonzalez." Journal of Scholarly Publishing 52 (3): 192-97. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jsp.52.3.06>.
Murray, Simone, and Millicent Weber. 2017. "Live and Local?: The Significance of Digital Media for Writers' Festivals." Convergence (London, England) 23 (1): 61-78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/154886016677531>.
Noorda, Rachel, and Kathi Iones Berens. 2020. "Keep Portland Weird?: Carnivalesque Elements in the Rebranding of the Portland Book Festival." Mémoires Du Livre 11 (2). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1070252ar>.
O'Connor, Nealla, and Sangkyun Kim. 2014. "Pictures and Prose: Exploring the Impact of Literary and Film Tourism." Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change 12 (1): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2013.862923>.
Weber, Millicent. 2015. "Conceptualizing Audience Experience at the Literary Festival." Continuum (Mount Lawley, W.A.) 29 (1): 84-96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10344312.2014.986058>.

Acknowledgements
Literary Arts
Lee & Low
Kathi Berens & Rachel Noorda
PSU Creative Writing

link to my website

