



Poets & Writers

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



Behind the facts and figures in this report are thousands of writers striving to craft sentences and stanzas that illuminate, excavate, provoke, and sing. We share their commitment to craft, their belief in the power of language, and their love for great storytelling. Poets & Writers is proud to be their trusted companion, offering inspiration, connection, guidance, and encouragement.

In 2022, we supported hundreds of literary events nationwide, helped writers navigate the literary marketplace, and connected them with opportunities, audiences, and one another. In a challenging environment for print publications, *Poets & Writers Magazine* saw an increase in subscribers and remained a beacon to those who value the written word and seek literary community.

Our organizational commitment to antiracism informed our outreach, our programming, and the pages of our magazine. Today, the board and staff at Poets & Writers are more racially and ethnically diverse than ever before, and dynamic new colleagues—both on the board and the staff—have brought new energy and fresh perspective to our mission.

In a year that saw an alarming rise in book bans, often targeting BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ writers, we proudly affirmed our commitment to freedom of expression. We joined the National Coalition Against Censorship and endorsed the American Library Association's Unite Against Book Bans campaign.

We're grateful to the exceptional staff, dedicated board members, and generous donors who make this work possible.



Melissa Ford Gradel
Executive Director

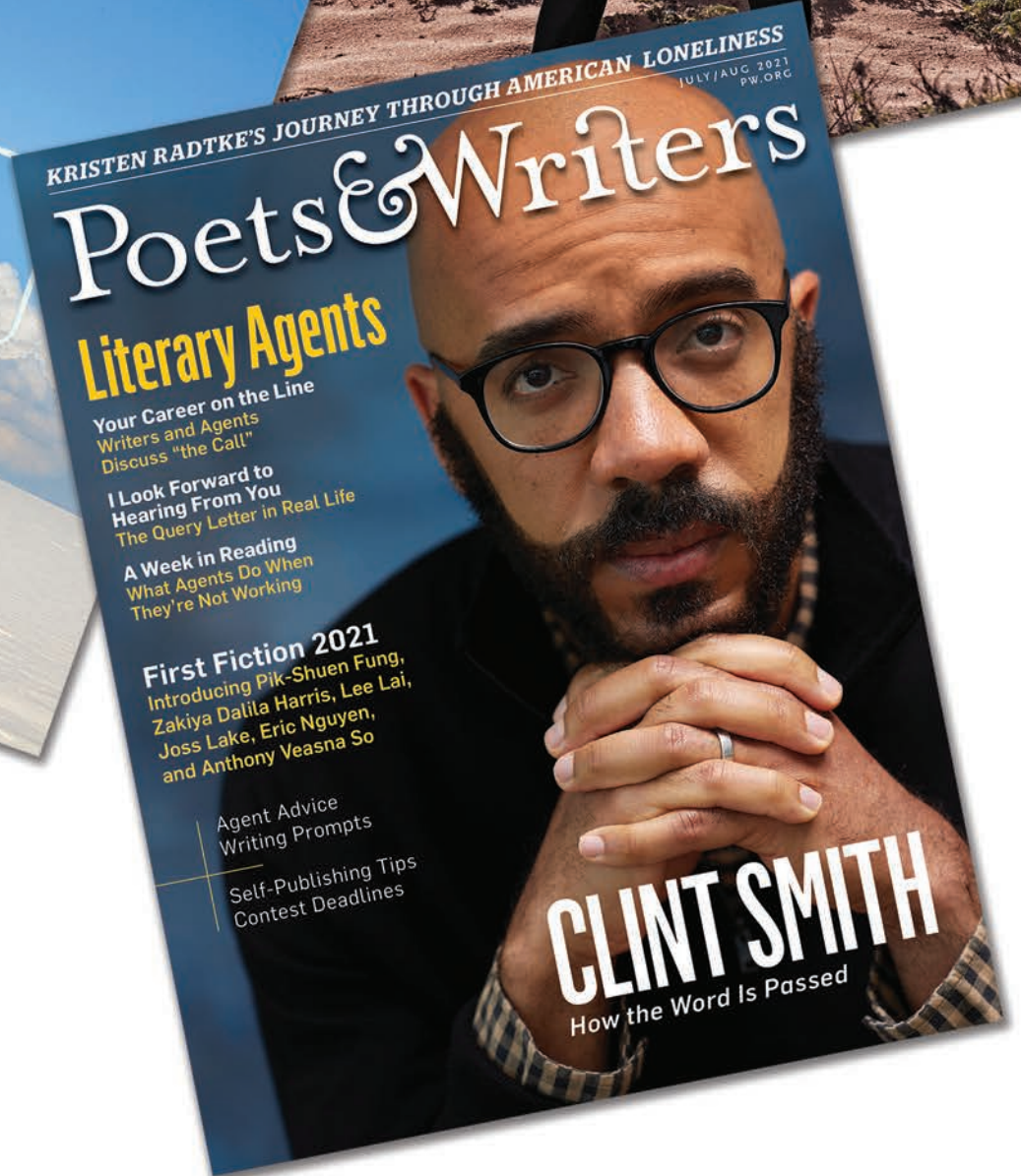


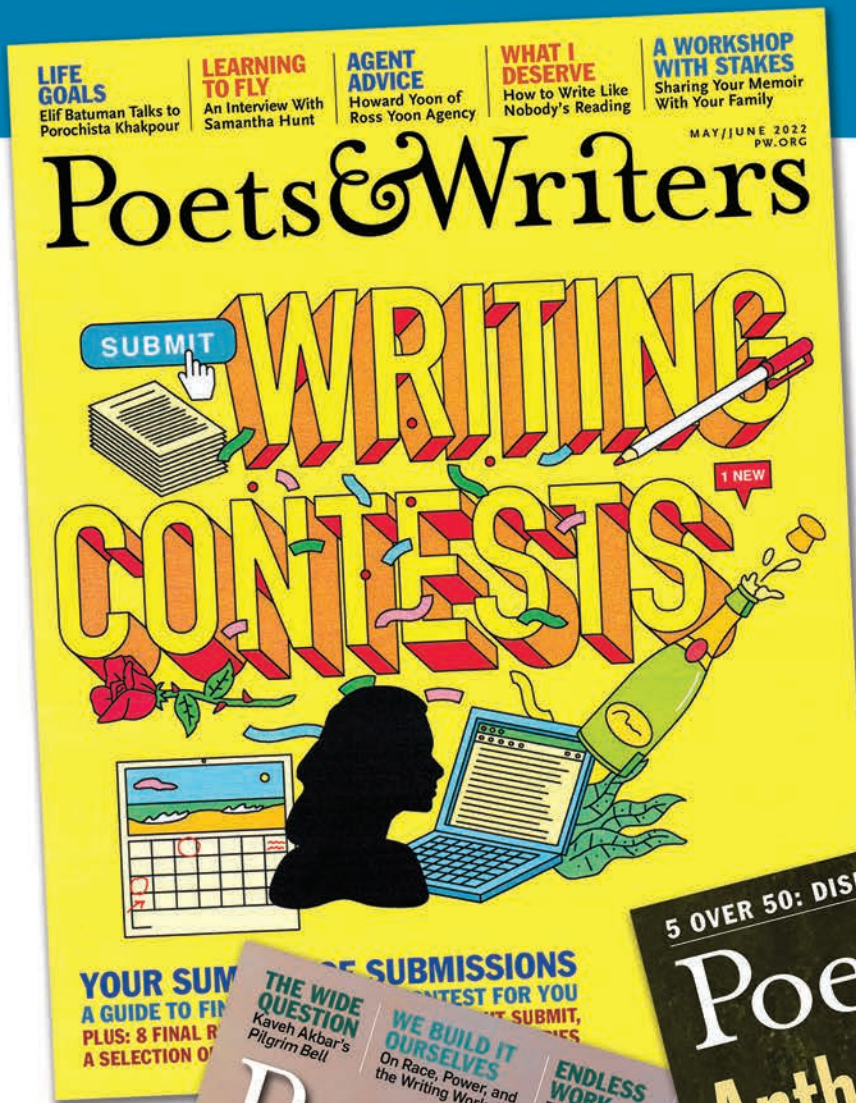
Amy Berkower
President of the Board of Directors



POETS & WRITERS BY THE NUMBERS

Years since Poets & Writers was founded:	52
Readers of each issue of <i>Poets & Writers Magazine</i> :	125,000
Unique visitors to pw.org each month:	145,000
Authors profiled in the <i>Poets & Writers Directory</i> :	12,000
Writing contests carefully vetted for our Grants & Awards database:	440
Journals listed in our Literary Magazines database:	970
Independent presses listed in our Small Presses database:	390
Writers who attended Mapping the Maze workshops to chart a path to publication:	250
Writers who received Readings & Workshops mini-grants:	760
Dollars distributed as mini-grants to these writers:	254,000
Percentage of these writers who identify as BIPOC:	50
Literary events these writers presented with our support:	1,590
Audience members who attended these events:	96,000
Writers active in Poets & Writers Groups, a peer-to-peer networking platform on pw.org:	1,600
Writers groups formed in Poets & Writers Groups:	130
Writers who have received the Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award, including 2021 recipients Courtney Denelle and Jodie Noel Vinson from Rhode Island:	110
Poets who have won the Jackson Poetry Prize, including 2022 recipient Sonia Sanchez:	16
Staff members who make all of this happen:	22





The six stunning issues published this year featured some of the most powerful and resonant voices in contemporary American literature.



BUILD IT OURSELVES

A ROUNDTABLE ON RACE, POWER, AND THE WRITING WORKSHOP
By Namrata Poddar

the rise of European empires, BIPOC writers around the world have created a strong legacy of literary works that resist a Euro-American aesthetic of "good" storytelling. In more recent history, institutionalization of writing in the United States, MFA—one of the country's fastest growing graduate degrees, a key incubator of winners of the most prestigious literary awards, and, slowly but surely, a global pedagogical export—American literary culture has developed its distinctive trademark, full of silent assumptions and legitimizing power toward what constitutes good storytelling. I spoke with three writers—Felicia Rose Chavez, Viet Thanh Nguyen, and Matthew Salesses—who have been historically oppressed writers, especially via the writing

Felicia Rose Chavez is an award-winning educator with an MFA in creative nonfiction from the University of Iowa. She is author of *The Anti-Racist Writing Workshop: How*

to *Decolonize the Creative Classroom* (Haymarket Books, 2021) and *Craft and Pedagogy: Rethinking Fiction Writing and Workshop* (Haymarket Books, 2021). She is also co-author of *The BreakBeat Poets: A Journey into the Heart of the City* (Akash Books, 2019). Originally from Albuquerque, Mexico, she currently lives in Residenciate in Coahuila, Mexico. For more information, visit www.feliciarosechavez.com.

Viet Thanh Nguyen is a writer, translator, and raised in the United States. He is the author of *The Refugees* (Grove Press, 2021) and *The Story of the Little Girl Who Swam to Vietnam* (Grove Press, 2015), winner of the 2016 Pulitzer Prize. Find her on Twitter, @poddar, @namrata, and on Instagram, @writerpoddar.

NAMRATA PODDAR writes fiction and nonfiction, serves as interim editor for *Kivuli*, and teaches literature as well as creative writing at UCLA. Her work has appeared in several publications including *Literary Hub*, *Longreads*, and *The Best American Essays*. Her debut novel, *Electric Shave*, is forthcoming from 713 Books. She holds a PhD in French studies from the University of Pennsylvania, an MFA in fiction from Bennington College, and a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in Transnational Cultures from UCLA.

Poets & Writers

POETS & WRITERS MAGAZINE • VOLUME 49 • ISSUE 4 • JULY/AUGUST 2021

FEATURES

36 HOW WE REMEMBER
With his first nonfiction book, *How the Word Is Passed*, published in June by Little, Brown, poet and scholar Clint Smith delves into the legacy of slavery alive in monuments and landmarks within and beyond the United States. In an immersive read that exquisitely depicts how a nation and its inhabitants remember to history.
BY DESTINY O. BIRDSONG

43 FIRST FICTION 2021
Nguyen Phan Quê Mai, Jillian Tamaki, Maurice Carlos Ruffin, Jeanne Thornton, Catherine Chung, and Alex Torres introduce the authors of this summer's best debut fiction: Eric Nguyen, Lee Lai, Zakiya Dalila Harris, Joss Lake, Pih-Shuen Fung, and the late Anthony Veena So.

55 LITERARY AGENTS

55 I Look Forward to Hearing From You
The art of the query letter in real life.
BY KEVIN LARIMER

60 Your Career on the Line
Writers and agents discuss "the call."
BY LAURA MAYLENE WALTER

63 A Week in Reading
What agents do when they're not working.



ZAKIYA DALILA HARRIS BY NICOLE MONDESCHI PHOTOGRAPHY
COVER: CLINT SMITH BY BARRY HALEY PHOTOGRAPHY



feels like it doesn't match the vision. After I wrote the first draft of *Night*, I read it back, and while there were parts that I loved, it didn't live up to what it was in my head. I have since realized that it's not supposed to, and as much as I love the drafting process, I feel a sense of relief knowing that no matter what my writing looks like after my first draft, it doesn't have to stay

specific readers you want to know the idea of home worked in the pacing of the book that I imagined reader was through the crafting.

the first draft, I read it as little as possible with getting the page, so in only for my book I wrote the book in sixteen.

my narrator would tell their story to. For me, I think she would want to be most understood by those she identifies with. Gender and its dynamics in Black spaces and among young people had a large influence on the book too. I wanted *Night* to be a window into the mind and life of teenage Black girls, both so that we can feel more visible and integrated into mainstream narratives and so that others can begin to see us as vulnerable people. It was important to me to acknowledge Black teenage boys as potential readers too and hold compassion for the ways in which they are often given a very narrow definition of success.



Agents: Lucy Carson and Matty Friedrich
Editor: Diana Miller
Publisher: Josephine Kala
Cover design: John Waters

POETS & WRITERS MAGAZINE BY THE NUMBERS

Paid subscribers: **63,000**
Readership: **125,000**



Poets & Writers Magazine is the leading journal of its kind—the place where writers turn for news of the literary community, trustworthy guidance, and inspiration.

The six stunning issues published this year featured some of the most powerful and resonant voices in contemporary American literature—including Kaveh Akbar, Elif Batuman, Anthony Doerr, Joy Harjo, Samantha Hunt, Porochista Khakpour, and Solmaz Sharif—and celebrated new voices through four annual roundups of debut authors. With articles such as “We Build It Ourselves: A Roundtable on Race, Power, and the Writing Workshop”; “Resistance and Reclamation: Three Poets Revise the Narrative of Transracial, Transnational Adoption”; and “Giving Translators Their Due”; we explored the intersections of writing and identity. We offered practical advice for writers, highlighted new developments in the publishing, bookselling, and literary nonprofit fields, and provided the most comprehensive listing of writing contests and award winners available in print.



Poets & Writers shares news and information and lifts up outstanding writers through two free e-newsletters and social media channels that reach tens of thousands every day.

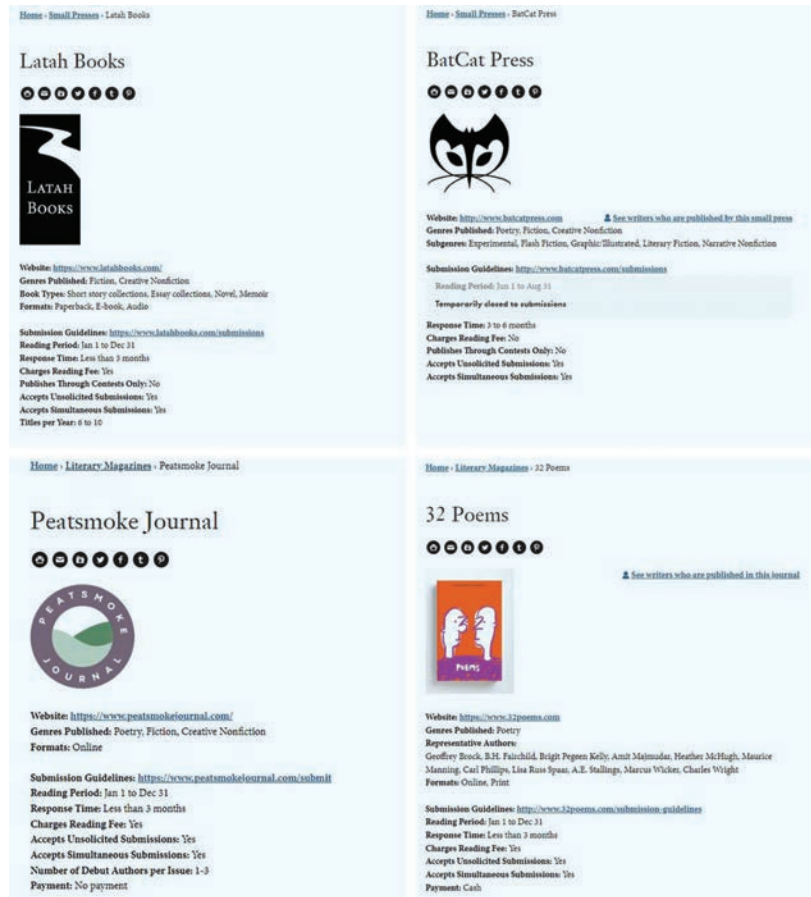
NEWSLETTERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE NUMBERS

- Weekly Update: **78,000 subscribers**
- The Time Is Now: **21,000 subscribers**
- Twitter: **274,000 followers**
- Facebook: **425,000 followers**
- Instagram: **38,000 followers**

Our website attracts visitors from around the country and beyond.

There they find fresh editorial content, including select articles from *Poets & Writer Magazine*, and online exclusives like our popular series Craft Capsules, Ten Questions, Writers Recommend, and Agents & Editors Recommend. The site offers audio and video content and weekly writing prompts for poets, fiction writers, and creative nonfiction writers. The most frequently visited pages, year after year, are our carefully vetted databases of Grants & Awards, Conferences & Residencies, Literary Magazines, Small Presses, Literary Agents, Literary Places, and more.

The level of engagement on pw.org is high: in FY22, 13,000+ people per month (8% of total visitors) spent 10 to 30 minutes on the site, and 4,500+ spent more than 30 minutes. Many visitors return again and again: more than 10,000 users this year made their ninth through twenty-fifth visit, more than 7,000 returned for their twenty-sixth through one hundredth visit, and over 5,500 had visited the site more than one hundred times.



The most frequently visited pages, year after year, are our carefully vetted databases for writers.

PW.ORG BY THE NUMBERS

Unique visitors to pw.org each month: **145,000**



Writers are making connections in Poets & Writers Groups.

Writers can get started in this peer-to-peer networking platform by creating simple profiles that describe what they are looking for in a writers group and share information about their writing experience and publishing credits. Then they can search the index to join an existing group or create a new group and invite others to join. Once a group is formed, members have access to a communications hub where they can

coordinate meetings, chat, share files, and videoconference.

Whether writers are seeking encouragement or critique, an ongoing workshop or an occasional submission party, Poets & Writers Groups offers the flexibility to accommodate a variety of literary gatherings, in person or online.

Poets & Writers Groups grows out of our decades-long commitment to helping writers build community. Its development was supported, in part, by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

“What a great way to connect with people. My new group reached its ten-member limit quickly, and each member has so much to offer to our discussion. We are geographically diverse—from New York, to Iowa, to New Mexico, to Italy—but we all agreed on our goals and that we will critique each other’s work with kindness. I feel very lucky to have found my people, which would not have happened without P&W Groups.”

POETS & WRITERS GROUPS USER

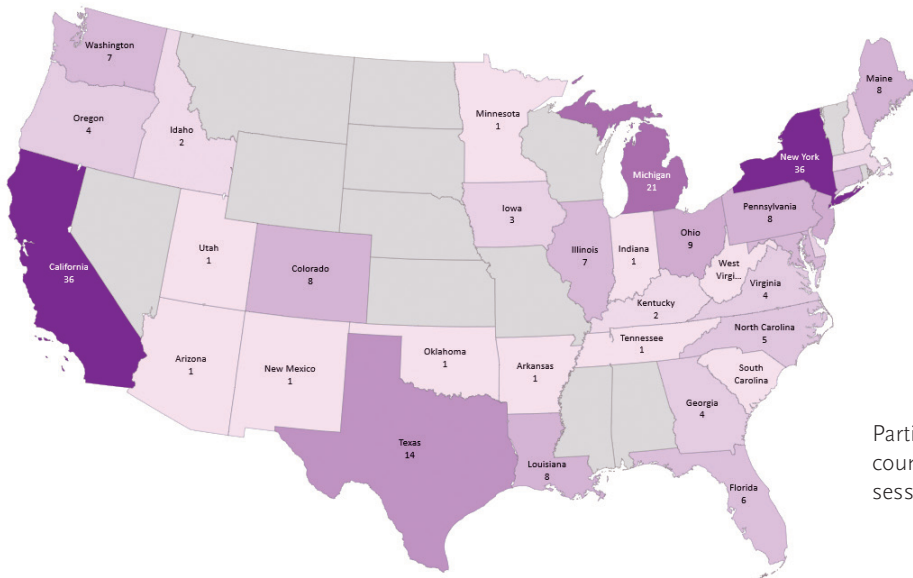
POETS & WRITERS GROUPS BY THE NUMBERS

Writers active in Poets & Writers Groups: **1,600**

Writers groups formed in Poets & Writers Groups: **130**

“I feel more enlightened about what to expect from the publishing process, how long it might take, and what it could look like to pursue this as a career.”

MAPPING THE MAZE PARTICIPANT



Participants from around the country joined us for a recent session of Mapping the Maze.



Mapping the Maze is a new series of online workshops designed to demystify the publishing process, democratize access to information about publishing, and aid writers in developing clear, personalized plans for achieving their goals.



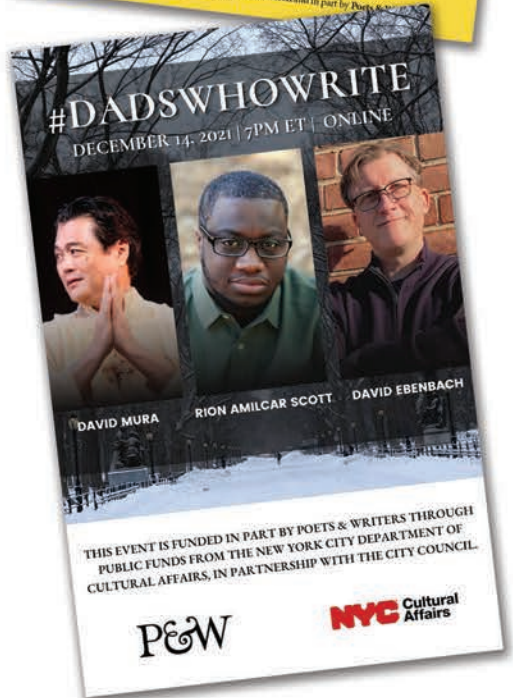
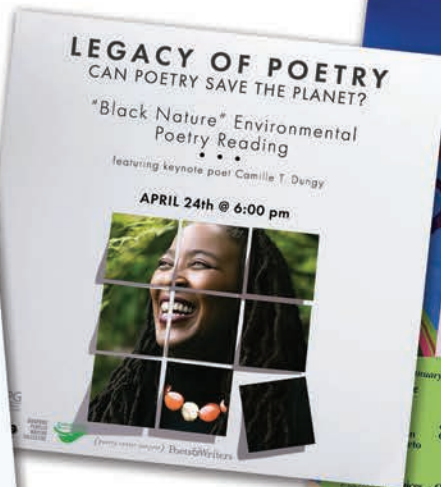
The inaugural sessions quickly sold out, demonstrating writers’ ongoing need for reliable information about the business of writing. To ensure broad access, we offered full or partial fee waivers to many participants, with priority given to BIPOC writers from Detroit, Houston, and New Orleans—cities where we’ve strategically increased our focus under our United States of Writing initiative to expand our reach and deepen our service

to writers from historically marginalized groups. To reach writers in these cities, we partnered with local organizations and publications, including *Bayou Magazine*, *Gulf Coast*, and the Detroit Writers’ Guild. Among the panelists who took part were agents Regina Brooks (Serendipity Literary Agency), Serene Hakim (Ayesha Pande Literary), and Kima Jones (Triangle House); literary magazine editors brittny ray crowell (*Gulf Coast*), Carolyn Hembree (*Bayou Magazine*), and Polly Rosenwaikie (*Michigan Quarterly Review*); book editors Rakia Clark (Mariner Books), Masie Cochran (Tin House), Nicole Counts (One World), Vivian Lee (Little, Brown and Company), and Pilar Garcia-Brown (Dutton); and authors Howard Bryant (*Rickey: The Life and Legend of an American Original*), Bridgette Davis (*The World According to Fannie Davis: My Mother’s Life in the Detroit Numbers*), John Keene (*Punks*), and Elizabeth Wetmore (*Valentine*).

Mapping the Maze is supported, in part, by generous gifts from Leonard & Louise Riggio and Macmillan Publishers.

MAPPING THE MAZE BY THE NUMBERS

Number of participants in the first season of Mapping the Maze:.....	250
Percentage who received a full or partial fee waiver:	40



“This program is vital, vital, vital. To be able to create a two-hour lesson plan and present it in a community setting (no gatekeeping, no bars for entry, just the will to learn) is radical these days. This type of program must be sustained. For the sake of writing communities and for the agency—the power—this gives to writing communities.”

Readings & Workshops supported more than 1,500 events this year—including the ones above.



Readings & Workshops awards mini-grants to pay writers participating in readings and conducting writing workshops, in partnership with grassroots organizations ranging from cafés and libraries to community centers and worker education programs.

The program currently supports hundreds of writers each year participating in events throughout New York State, California, and in the cities of Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Seattle, New Orleans, Tucson, and Washington, D.C.

Through Readings & Workshops, we host several community-building gatherings annually to offer writers and literary presenters opportunities to share news and resources, exchange ideas and expertise, make connections, and form partnerships.

Readings & Workshops is supported, in part, by the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the California Arts Council, and the Cowles Charitable Trust.

READINGS & WORKSHOPS BY THE NUMBERS

Writers who received Readings & Workshops mini-grants last year:	760
Dollars distributed as mini-grants to these writers:.....	254,000
Percentage of these writers who identify as BIPOC:.....	50
Literary events these writers presented with our support:.....	1,590
Audience members who attended these events:.....	96,000
Community-building literary gatherings hosted:.....	10
Writers and literary presenters who attended these gatherings:.....	250

JACKSON POETRY PRIZE

Endowed by John and Susan Jackson, the Jackson Poetry Prize is one of the most generous for an American poet and in 2022 carried a monetary award of \$80,000. It is awarded annually by Poets & Writers to recognize an American poet of exceptional talent. The 2022 prize recipient was Sonia Sanchez.

Sanchez was selected by three esteemed judges: the poets Mary Jo Bang, Marilyn Chin, and Claudia Rankine. In their citation the judges wrote: “Over her seven-decade career, Sonia Sanchez has distinguished herself as a major figure in American letters. A founding member of the Black Arts Movement, she has taught generations of poets—creating essential spaces for Black Studies where none previously existed.... Her vast and commanding oeuvre of published poetry invokes the power and revolutionary properties of language itself—intoning the struggles and joys of entire communities while reinvigorating traditional forms.... Sonia Sanchez is a national treasure.”

The pandemic precluded an in-person celebration, so Poets & Writers hosted an online reading with Sanchez and all three judges. More than 300 people attended the virtual event.



Credit: Tom Hallock

“Sonia Sanchez is a national treasure.”

FROM THE JUDGES’ CITATION, 2022 JACKSON POETRY PRIZE

JACKSON POETRY PRIZE BY THE NUMBERS

Number of writers who have received the Jackson Poetry Prize:..... 16

Cumulative dollars award by the Jackson Poetry Prize:..... 905,000



CITY ARTIST CORPS

Poets & Writers was proud to partner with the City of New York to help distribute \$15 million in pandemic relief funds to New York City-based artists, including scores of writers.



Credit: Keith Barracough (l),
Matt Ferrara (r)



Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award winners
Courtney Denelle and Jodie Noel Vinson

MAUREEN EGAN WRITERS EXCHANGE AWARD

The Maureen Egan Writers Exchange Award aims to provide promising writers a network for professional advancement. Each year, it offers one poet and one fiction writer from a select state the unusual opportunity to meet with a group of leading agents, editors, authors, and other literary professionals. Winners establish new professional contacts and gain insight and advice—about writing, publishing, and marketing. In addition, they are invited to participate in a one-month residency at the Jentel Artist Residency Program in Banner, Wyoming. The award is generously supported by Maureen Mahon Egen, a member of Poets & Writers’ Emeritus Board.

The winners of the 2021 Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award were Rhode Island writers Courtney Denelle for fiction and Jodie Noel Vinson for poetry. The judges were Prageeta Sharma (poetry) and Madeleine Thien (fiction).

WRITERS EXCHANGE BY THE NUMBERS

Year the Writers Exchange Award began: **1984**

Number of writers who have won: **110**

Number of states selected: **44**

“The Open Door Grant has been crucial to my growth as a poet over the past year.”

ARIANA BENSON, OPEN DOOR GRANT RECIPIENT



Congratulations to Open Door Career Advancement Grantees! P&W and @ReesesBookClub’s The Readership are delighted to offer grants to 12 promising BIPOC women writers. Learn more: at.pw.org/PWOpenDoor

#PWOpenDoor #BIPOCWriters #Womenwriters
#IndigenousWriters #WritersofColor



OPEN DOOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT GRANTS

We partnered with Reese’s Book Club’s The Readership to provide career advancement grants to BIPOC women writers. Four grants of \$1,000 and eight grants of \$500 were awarded to recipients from Alaska, Arizona, California, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, Virginia, and Washington. They are writers of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Grant funds helped them take advantage of creative and career-making opportunities.

OPEN DOOR BY THE NUMBERS

Open Door Career Advancement grantees: **12**

We held our first in-person gala since the pandemic on March 29, 2022—and what a festive occasion it was!

Nearly 600 writers, agents, editors, publishers, and readers gathered to celebrate writers and writing. Dennis Abboud, president, CEO, and chairman of ReaderLink, chaired the event, which raised more than \$971,000 for Poets & Writers. The Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award was presented to Viet Thanh Nguyen, James Patterson, and Sonia Sanchez in recognition of their service to other writers and the broader literary community. Sally Kim, senior vice president and publisher of G.P. Putnam’s Sons, an imprint of Penguin Random House, received the Editor’s Award. Comedian, television personality, and author Seth Meyers served as host.



Credit: Margarita Corporan



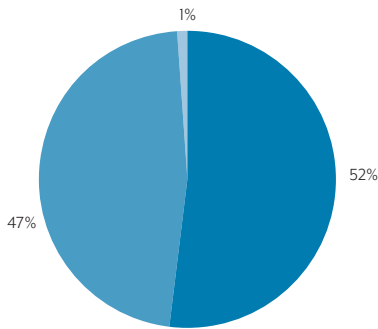
From top (clockwise):
 1. Viet Thanh Nguyen and Seth Meyers
 2. James Patterson
 3. Sally Kim
 4. Sonia Sanchez

GALA BY THE NUMBERS

Number of gala attendees:..... **570**
 Number of literary table hosts:..... **51**
 Dollars raised:..... **971,000**

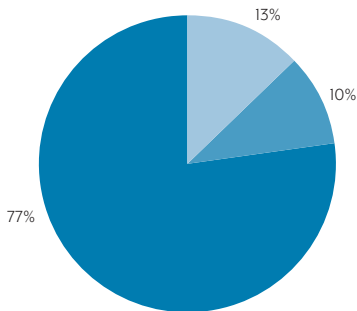
UNRESTRICTED ACTIVITY

FY 2022



REVENUE BY SOURCE

- CONTRIBUTED
- EARNED
- OTHER



EXPENSE BY FUNCTION

- ADMIN
- FUNDRAISING
- PROGRAM

UNRESTRICTED OPERATING REVENUE

Earned Program Revenue	604,918
Earned Non-program Revenue	1,619,014
Total Earned Revenue	\$2,223,932
Investment Revenue	11,792
Contributed Revenue	2,493,274
In-Kind Services	25,000
Total Unrestricted Operating Revenue	\$4,753,998

OPERATING EXPENSES

Program	3,592,837
Fundraising	450,372
General & Administrative	626,292
Total Operating Expenses	\$4,669,501
Net Unrestricted Activity	\$84,497
Net Donor Restricted	(277,617)
Net Total Activity	(\$193,120)

Our FY22 Audited Financial Statement and Form 990 are available on our website at pw.org/AnnualReport

DONORS

We are grateful to every donor who helps support our programs and publications for creative writers. Due to space limitations, we list below only donations of \$1,000 and above.

\$100,000 AND ABOVE

The E.H.A. Foundation
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
New York State Council on the Arts
Penguin Random House
ReaderLink
Leonard and Louise Riggio
Ellen Sargent and Stephen Nicholas

\$50,000 TO \$99,999

Literary Arts Emergency Fund
Macmillan Publishers
National Endowment for the Arts



(From left): author Marie Benedict, P&W executive director Melissa Ford Gradel, board member Janet McCarthy Grimm, and author Victoria Christopher Murray at a recent gathering of the Poets & Writers Patrons Circle.

\$25,000 TO \$49,999

Apple Books
Estate of Philip Appleman
Audible
Barnes & Noble Booksellers
Book of the Month
California Arts Council
Maureen Mahon Egen
Hachette Book Group
HarperCollins Publishers
Meta Platforms, Inc.
OverDrive
Janet and Michael Pietsch

\$10,000 TO \$24,999

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Amy Berkower and Daniel Weiss
Blue Yonder, Inc.
Bertelsmann Printing Group
Books-A-Million
Cushman & Wakefield
Kassie Evashevski
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
Graham Company
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Hello Sunshine
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Abbey K. Starr Charitable Trust
UBS Financial Services
Wall Street Journal BOOKS
WME
Yen Press
Zando
Zibby Books

\$5,000 TO \$9,999

Maria B. Campbell Associates
Chronicle Books
The Cowles Charitable Trust
Davis Wright Tremaine LLP
Domtar Paper
DreamWorks
Google Play Books
Tayari Jones
Willys Schneider Kals
Kensington Publishing Corp.
Mazars USA LLP
NPD BookScan
Jane Rotrosen Agency
Richard and Monica Schoenberger
Scholastic Inc.
Robin B. Smith
Sikich LLP
Paul Vidich and Linda Stein
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\$1,000 TO \$4,999

Arlene Alda
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 Brandt & Hochman
 Literary Agents, Inc.
 Alicia Brooks
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 The Cheney Agency
 Miles Coon
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 Arlene and Randy Cronk
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Heidi S. Fiske
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 Renée Zuckerbrot

DONORS BY THE NUMBERS

Total dollars contributed in FY22: **2,493,274**
 Number of Friends of Poets & Writers: **1,944**
 Number who have been Friends
 for more than ten years: **397**
 Number of Patrons Circle members: **56**

Poets & Writers welcomed four new board members this year: Kofi Appenteng, Rochelle Riley, Kwame Spearman, and Yvonna Stevens.

Kofi Appenteng is president of the Africa-America Institute. He has extensive experience in philanthropy governance, having served as board chair of the Ford Foundation and in his current role on the board of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

Author, activist, and award-winning journalist Rochelle Riley is director of arts and culture for the City of Detroit. A *Detroit Free Press* columnist for nearly twenty years, Riley used her nationally syndicated platform to advocate for racial justice, literacy, community building, and children. Riley is the author of the books *That They Lived: African Americans Who Changed the World* and *The Burden: African Americans and the Enduring Impact of Slavery*.

Kwame Spearman is chief executive officer and co-owner of the Denver-based independent bookstore chain the Tattered Cover. Spearman is committed to the vital role and legacy of independent bookstores as a community resource, is a vocal supporter of small businesses, and has a passion for justice. He is an accomplished management, operations, and strategy professional.

Yvonna Stevens is executive vice president and chief financial officer of the International Youth Foundation. A committed advocate, Stevens also serves on the boards of the Latin American Youth Center and the Global Health Council and as a mentor for the Obama Foundation Scholars program and serves as the United States country representative of International Financial Reporting for Nonprofit Organizations (IFR4NPO).



(Clockwise, from top left):
Kofi Appenteng, Rochelle Riley,
Kwame Spearman, Yvonna Stevens



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- Yvonna Stevens
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- Galen Williams

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

This year, there was a frightening increase in efforts to restrict access to books—especially books by BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ authors—that escalated to threats and violence against authors. Poets & Writers stands with writers—and readers—in staunchly defending freedom of expression and opposing censorship in all its forms. We are a member of the National Coalition Against Censorship and endorse the American Library Association's Unite Against Book Bans campaign.



This year, Bonnie Rose Marcus retired from her position as Director of Readings & Workshops (East) and the Writers Exchange after twenty-two years of dedicated service.



During her tenure, Bonnie stewarded the distribution of over \$3 million dollars in mini-grants to thousands of writers, introduced dozens of writers to their professional heroes through the Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award, and immeasurably strengthened the literary community. In her farewell note to the community, Bonnie said: “I am truly and especially proud of our mission to support a diverse range of writers and marginalized and underserved communities. Thank you all for making my years at Poets & Writers so worthwhile!”

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