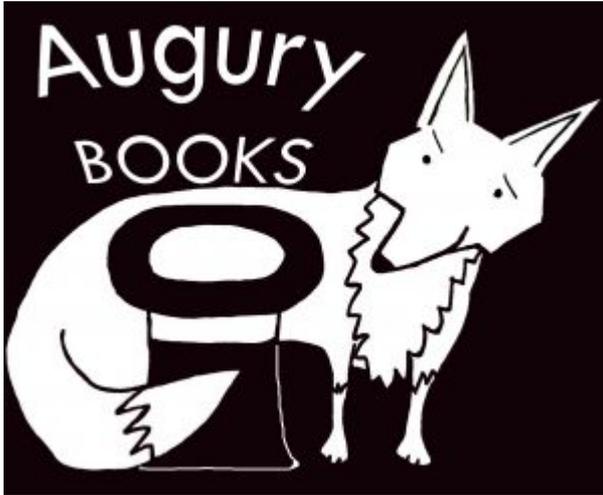


# [Augury Books](#)

written by Entropy | November 8, 2016



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## *Interview with Kate Angus, Founder and Editor*

*How did Augury Books start?*

In 2010, a grad school friend and I began Augury Books as a poetry-only press. We opened up a Submittable account, shared our call for submissions, and—within a year—published our first titles (a full-length manuscript selected from an open reading period and two chapbooks solicited from friends). After the first year, my founding co-editor stepped down to take on other work and Kimberly Steele joined our editorial board to replace her; a year or two later we added our assistant editor Nicolas Amara. While the majority of our catalog is poetry, three years ago we also began publishing short story collections and creative nonfiction.

*Tell us a bit about Augury Books. What are your influences, your aesthetic, your mission?*

We're influenced by other publishers whose work we admire and whose author lists, if we could, we would happily pillage: Wave Books, Graywolf, Alice James, Flood Editions, etc. On a daily basis, we're inspired and influenced by every other indie press around: it's a lot of hard work to run a press—often thrilling, but frequently full of difficult and thankless tasks—and I admire everyone who is doing this, who is giving of themselves to help facilitate the continuation of independent literature, all the other editors and publishers working hard to bring new books out into the world. As far as our aesthetic goes, I think Augury is a bit of a Joseph Cornell box: we're drawn to a variety of approaches so I hesitate to narrow it down. Our mission is to find and publish work from voices who feel fresh and important to us, whose work is aesthetically innovative but still emotionally resonant.

*Can you give us a preview of what's current and/or forthcoming from your catalog, as well as what you're hoping to publish in the future?*

I'm especially glad you asked for a preview of forthcoming titles since we just had a launch party for our newest books: Arisa White's poetry collection *You're the Most Beautiful Thing that Happened* and Sara Schiff's short story collection *Say Something Nice About Me*. Arisa's collection is a kind of love song, one that takes hate and transforms it. She titles her poems using terms she found in a list of international anti-LGBTQ hate terms, and responds with poems that dismantle the hatred through art. Sara's short stories are also fantastic—so darkly funny and poignant. We're really excited about both titles. As far as what we're looking to publish in the future: both more of the same, but also surprise us! We hope to publish more titles from voices we aren't hearing enough of yet—both established and emerging writers. We want to continue publishing the kind of strong work we've already found, but we also want new manuscripts that will push us in directions we can't even conceive of yet.

*We used to ask, "What about small/independent press publishing is particularly exciting to you right now?" We're still interested in the answer to that, but we're even more interested to know what you think needs to change.*

We need to find a way to make small-press publishing more sustainable, honestly, and bring it to a wider audience. Lynne DeSilva-Johnson at The Operating System has been coordinating with the "Seed Library" project at Stonefruit Espresso in Brooklyn to stock indie titles there and that's a great idea. I would also like to see more indie titles on display in record stores and clothing stores, art galleries, fancy wine shops, places like that. One thing I'm working on is coordinating a series with Pen and Brush, the 122-year-old international nonprofit for women in the visual and literary arts, where Pen and Brush hosts a monthly reading series designed to bring in independent presses to its gallery space as a way to open up more dialog (and hopefully collaboration and sales) between visual artists and writers. Bookstores are amazing, but we also need to get books outside of the bookstore and into places where people might happen upon them as they're running around buying groceries, getting a cup of coffee, picking up new music to listen to or a t-shirt to wear.

*How do you cope? There's been a lot of conversation lately about charging reading fees, printing costs, rising book costs, who should pay for what, etc. Do you have any opinions on this, and would you be willing to share any insights about the numbers at Augury Books?*

There are a lot of sides to this conversation and I think every publisher has to take the approach that makes the most sense for them. I can't condemn or comment on anyone else's approach; I can only speak to what we're doing. At Augury Books, we charge the lowest reading fee we can afford (\$10) and what we take in from that fee, as well as what we earn in sales (although all sales have to also take into account the percentage of profits shared with our distributors and bookstores), has to pay for book printing costs, shipping, taxes, our accountant, and other assorted costs-of-doing-business

fees like our membership in CLMP, the fee we pay SPD to distribute our catalog, our Submittable and WordPress costs, etc. Although we do pay our authors, none of our editorial board or design team is paid—all the work reading submissions, editing manuscripts, designing and producing the books, shipping the books, coordinating publicity, etc. is done as volunteer labor. That takes up a lot of time—it's like having a full-time unpaid job on top of our paying jobs, our own writing, and the attempt to maintain some semblance of a personal life. If we charged a higher reading fee, we would probably be able to hire a publicist and pay our authors more, and pay ourselves enough sometimes that we could balance this volunteer labor better against the jobs that pay our rent and grocery bills when push comes to shove. But then we also might be excluding lower-income writers from submitting to us and that's something we strongly want to avoid. So I honestly don't know. In an ideal world, maybe all indie publishers would have rich sponsors (individuals or institutions) who would make no demands on us in terms of what we publish or how, but would fund our efforts. In the real practical world: it costs way more money to make books than I ever realized before we started Augury and all the models I've seen so far have their own individual strengths and flaws. If there's someone out there reading this who wants to be our de Medici, email me!

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*Recent releases from Augury Books:*

