Dear members, supporters, and friends,

2019 was a year of growth and transition for MWPA. We expanded our staff, said goodbye to Joshua Bodwell, our director for nine years, and continued to expand our programs around the state. Thank you for all of your support that makes our work possible. We are especially proud of our 1,430 MEMBERS in all 16 MAINE COUNTIES.

As we move into 2020, we continue to grow the number, depth, and reach of our events, workshops, and conferences. We continue to imagine new ways to invite and involve more writers, editors, publishers, and literary professionals in Maine’s vibrant literary community. Wherever you are in your writing and publishing journey, whoever you are in Maine’s world of letters and books, you are welcome under our big literary tent.

Onward,

Gibson Fay-LeBlanc  Deborah Cummins
Executive Director  Board President

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Gibson Fay-LeBlanc  Executive Director
Taryn Bowe  Associate Director
Hannah Perry  Program Director
Megan Webster Douston  Office Coordinator

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MISSION
Founded in 1975 by a group of small presses and writers, Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance (MWPA) has worked for forty-four years to enrich the literary life and culture of Maine. We bring together Maine writers, editors, publishers, booksellers, and literary professionals at all stages of their careers to sharpen craft, create community, and celebrate great writing.
In the fall of 2018, Portland writer Samara Cole Doyon received a scholarship to attend PITCH, our conference for writers pitching their projects to agents and editors. That day, Doyon pitched a children’s book to Tristam Coburn, co-publisher at Tilbury House. The book, *Magnificent Homespun Brown*, was published in January 2020.

“I learned a lot from attending PITCH. Mainly, I learned the importance of finding people who are aligned with your creative goals and vision. I wasn’t interested in selling my work to publishers who didn’t see value in its message. I wrote this book for my daughter. I’ve watched her struggle in coming to grips with herself as a Child of Color in an overwhelmingly white social environment. As children, we don’t want to stand out or be different. Picture books are an incredibly potent tool for seeing and affirming children who’ve been pushed to the margins. When I met Tris Coburn from Tilbury House, we instantly connected over the content of my writing. It was the open door I was looking for. It felt like everything was falling into place.”
In 2019, MWPA held free long-term Community Word Workshops at the Maine Correctional Center: Women’s Center and Portland Adult Education. Each Community Word Workshop provides writers from marginalized groups with a safe and supportive environment to experiment with words, hone storytelling techniques, and ultimately craft work to share with the community. Kenneth Beek, one of the students in the Portland Adult Education workshop, was working on a memoir about addiction and homelessness at the time of his class. Since then, he has gone on to publish his memoir, *Transience*, in serial-form in *Maine*. “The most important thing I got from the workshop was a sort of confirmation that I could do this, a confidence in my work. As an artist, who is painfully personal in his approach, I have always felt insecure in sharing. Many artists never know how their art will be received, or if it will ever be experienced by others at all. I believe that’s especially true for writers.”

In 2017, Brian Randall signed up for Ron Currie’s 10-week fiction-writing workshop, “The Long Haul: Pulling a Novel to Completion.” After the class ended, Brian continued to work one-on-one with Currie to rewrite his novel and apply the craft lessons he’d learned. At MWPA’s PITCH in 2018, he met with an agent who advised him to pitch his work directly to a strong, independent LGBTQ imprint. He researched and selected Riptide Publishing, who signed him. *Demaris: Protocol*, the story of a young, closeted evangelical Christian taken in by the CIA and trained as a clandestine operative, will be released in June 2020. Additional books in this semi-autobiographical series are forthcoming in late 2020 and 2021.

Of all the things Brian learned from Currie, he says one of the most important is: “Writing is a discipline and an art. You can’t improve without daily practice. Get in the saddle and write.”
What We Are Excited About

✦ In 2020, MWPA will publish Suzanne Langlois’s *Bright Glint Gone*, the winner of the 2019 Maine Chapbook Series as selected by poet Martha Collins. Langlois’s chapbook will feature cover art by a Maine artist and mark the return of this historic series. In 2020, the Maine Chapbook Series will welcome manuscripts from emerging Maine fiction writers.

✦ We are excited to continue expanding our Online Workshop Offerings, including multi-week workshops for those who want the in-depth experience of a longer workshop but may not be able to drive to Portland.

✦ Maine Bicentennial Poetry Video Project: We are working with Maine Poet Laureate Stuart Kestenbaum to celebrate Maine’s bicentennial by producing videos of Mainers reciting Maine poems. Readers will reflect Maine today, both geographically and culturally, and the poems selected will express what it is like to live in Maine and the character of the people living here. Stay tuned for more details about where and when these videos will air!

✦ New Logo & Website: Since last summer, we have been working with our friends at Might & Main on a new look, logo, and website. We look forward to showing you our cleaner and clearer new website later this year.

✦ In early 2020, MWPA announced the application process for the first Bodwell Fellowship. This fellowship honors Joshua Bodwell’s nine-plus years of service as MWPA’s executive director by providing one emerging Maine writer per year with time, space, and financial support to further creative projects at Hewnoaks Artist Colony in Lovell, Maine.

✦ Lastly, we are excited to work with our community partners to bring the Maine Lit Fest to Portland in 2021. Stay tuned for more details about this celebration in the coming year!

Thank You

We are deeply grateful for the support and engagement of all our members, instructors, students, donors, funders, community partners, and volunteers. Special thanks to our generous 2019 foundation donors:

The Betterment Fund, Davis Family Foundation, Horizon Foundation, Maine Arts Commission, Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust, Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation, Virginia Hodgkins Somers Foundation

CELEBRATING MAINE WRITING

The 2019 Maine Literary Awards were held at The Bangor Public Library on June 13th. Authors and publishers nominated 139 books. In short works categories, 61 adult manuscripts were submitted, along with 64 youth manuscripts for a total of 264 entries.

Two writers, Julia Bousma (poetry) and Gillian French (YA), were recognized with Maine Literary Awards in their respective genres for the second year in a row.

This year, we chose the Franklin Library as the recipient of a full set of 2019 Maine Literary Award entries and winners, 139 books in all.

MLA Crime Fiction Finalists Lea Wait (who passed away in August 2019), Bruce Robert Coffin, and Barbara Ross (winner) with MWPA Exec. Dir. Gibson Fay-LeBlanc