

SPLAB Annual Report 2020

SPLAB turned 27 in 2020, but that was at year's end. During this pandemic lockdown year we actually improved our situation and gained clarity on how to move forward in the post-Covid, post-Trump era.

We had a board retreat in February of 2020 and a new mission and vision were established:

SPLAB Mission & Vision

SPLAB was founded in Auburn, Washington, December 14, 1993. (For pre-Feb 16, 2020 mission, [see this statement](#).)

The Seattle Poetics LAB (SPLAB) works to reestablish poetry as a method for knowing self & place by engaging poets, writers and artists bioregionally in Cascadia to build community through shared experience of the spoken & written word.

SPLAB supports:

- Poetry as a [noetic](#) practice allied with outsider traditions.
- A poetry of witness, deeply rooted to place.
- Organic form in all of its manifestations, open, discerning and aware of/responsible to the interconnectivity of life.
- A visionary poetics that embodies our place on the edge of a continent.

SPLAB envisions 10,000 people each year participating in [POPO](#) and using those revenues to maintain operations, including administration, the [Cascadia Poetry Festival](#) and other in-person events in Seattle and the Cascadia bioregion and our ongoing [interviews](#).

POPO Rebranding and Participation

We developed a new website exclusively for POPO, the August POetry POstcard Fest, which was re-branded with a new logo:



But a proposed POPO mascot, Piper the POPO Opossum, was rejected for the time being:



Participation in POPO went from 2018's 306 to 424 in 2019 to 544 in 2020 and produced over \$5,440 in 2020 revenues.

REVENUES

2020 revenues were boosted by an early January donation of \$10,000, which enabled us to pay off some Cascadia Poetry Festival debts and secure ourselves for the chaos that was to come. We raised \$41,459 in 2020, a 5% decrease in revenues, which is excellent considering the circumstances.

Cascadia Poetry Festival

Given the Covid lockdown situation, we postponed the Cascadia Poetry Festival until May of 2021 and then postponed it until September 11-12, 2021, at which time we hope to stage it on San Juan Island at the Multiverse and other venues. This is expected to be a long-term home for the fest and the plan currently is to stage it annually, raise the price, make it sustainable and also make it the signature SPLAB event.

Board Development

The Board added Jason Wirth, Professor of Philosophy and noted bioregionalist in July of 2020 and there are more Board changes brewing as long-term board members Joe Chiveney and Nadine Maestas ended their tenure after two consecutive terms and Peter Munro left the board after one four year term to focus on personal issues. All three are expected to be active on committees, which are to be developed in the first quarter of 2021.

Covid Pivot

Due to the lockdown enacted to help slow the transmission of Covid-19, SPLAB started facilitating POPO events and then a six week workshop session, *Poetics as Cosmology* which quickly sold out and a second class added. This, along with signups for the follow-up workshop, (*Seriality: (A Workshop)*) added \$6,353 dollars to SPLAB revenues.

Some Workshop Testimonials:

Paul E. Nelson's "Poetics As Cosmology" course begins in a completely astounding way with a poem by Ed Dorn, "My Tribe." If that is not enough to stop you in your tracks, what follows provides inroads and out roads from this seed sprout, this shake down. While Dorn would be embarrassed to be an initiator of such weight of purpose, he would also be so honored by Nelson leading "Poetics As Cosmology" and its poetic investigation via the stance of the Black Mountain School with his poem.

Nelson helps all attendees to explore the possibilities of language, and especially the long poem as an embodiment of instruction in one's own life. Course materials, discussions, and work-in-progress all contribute to a sense of participation in the mysteries of the creative process made real and "organic," to use Levertov's term. Knowing that Nelson's course is dispatched from deep in the Cascadia bio-region makes it even better. How wonderful it is to be a part of this.

– Susan Kay Anderson, Fall 2020 Poetics as Cosmology participant

Paul Nelson's Poetics as Cosmology course was resonant and revelatory. I appreciated Paul's high expectations for engagement. The workload was significant, and pushed me to meet the material: to

engage with the demanding readings, to write a lot each week, and to make space in my life for artist dates. Paul pushed me to live as an artist: all-in, lit up, senses sharp, aware of life's richness and magic. The experience felt like much more than a weeks-long, online course. It felt like a door onto something very good.

– Laura King, Fall 2020 Poetics as Cosmology participant

Paul Nelson's organic poetry workshops are less a class than a journey, leading the participant not only to an ingeniously natural method of writing, but to the living energy of the poem itself. And he does this all with humor, profound inclusion and deep knowledge about organic verse, its origins with the Beats & Black Mountain school and its profound applicability to today's poets. If you want to learn how to clip the strings of your mental editor and free your lines to run where they really want to, take this course.

– Rob Lewis, Fall 2020 Poetics as Cosmology participant

Interviews

Among the interviews produced in 2020 were nine interviews with POPO participants and:

Miriam Nichols on Robin Blaser

Jason Wirth on Cascadian Zen

Shin Yu Pai on *Enzo*

Iris Cushing on the first books of Mary Norbert Körte and David Henderson

Priscilla Long on *Holy Magic*

Rick Rouse and Paul Ingram on *The World is About to Turn*

Wedlidi Speck on an indigenous perspective on Cascadian Zen

501 Commons Reorganization

In late 2020 we contracted with 501 Commons to diagnose organization limitations and to make SPLAB more sustainable. To this date the two consultants, James Morgese and Rebecca Garrity Putnam have created a SWAT for SPLAB and are helping guide a revisioning to:

- Construct a three-year hopeful operating budget
- Construct a timeline of activities
- Construct a survey and get help to process the results (collect metadata)
- Help Paul or whoever identify funding sources and write grants
- Re-write mission statement
- Look for more partnerships & educational collaborations
- Transform branding to a national/global organization, enhance web presence
- Build a strategic plan

It is with great hope for the future and huge appreciation for everyone involved in any way with SPLAB that I offer this report on the 20th of January 2021.

Paul E Nelson
SPLAB Founding Director