

CHANGING PUBLICATION CULTURES IN THE HUMANITIES

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Academic publishing at academic institutions:
new solutions to an old problem

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Background

This paper is based on

My own experience as a researcher

... and as creator of a new publication series
(started 2006)

The experience of colleagues in the UK
in French & German studies

The problem: getting published

Difficulty of placing monographs (& collections) with commercial publishers

...while pressure of RAE/REF increases

Commercial publishers plead:

- problems of small print-runs
- lack of target audience
- preference for introductory texts: readers, dictionaries or textbooks

The problem: being published

There are extra demands (work & cost):

- subsidies
- camera-ready-copy
- illustrations
- quotations in the original language
- copy-editing & indexing

None of these are funded by universities or main funding agencies.

A story i

Mine must be a common story. Since the summer I have been trying to secure a good commercial publisher for a project that, although it was highly commended by peers - among other things for its interdisciplinary scope - seems to be too 'adventurous' / 'ambitious' (I quote) in its interdisciplinarity for publishers. I have been told that librarians would not know where to put it (librarians tell me that this is rubbish) and that modern languages lists are being shrunk. Commercial publishers are really tightening their belts here and being newly conservative. I am waiting for a couple of other replies and if these too are unsuccessful I shall come 'down' the pecking order of my preferred publishers list. How far will I have to come down, I wonder?

I should add that I have been trying in the U.S. and in the U.K. and have contacted six publishers so far.

A story ii

A related issue is the old vicious cycle which has it that if one has published one's research with a lesser-known / less prestigious publisher, colleagues outside one's own field may regard it as academically inferior. I should say as well that I have, after long consideration, made an effort to erase from my corpus figures who are not internationally known, and to minimise French citation. All this has skewed the project in an effort to make it more commercially viable.

In terms of CRC, I have experience of doing this with Peter Lang before they re-absorbed that in-house. It was a nightmare and I ended up paying somebody else to do it. It is sound economy - depending on the costs I suppose - to have institutions subsidise in this regard; it is a monumental waste of everyone's time if a specialist is not in charge of the process.

Another story i

I've recently begun looking for a publisher for my latest book. I approached a major American university press, and learned that they have a German culture series with a very prestigious editorial board but which publishes the books electronically and on-demand. I was initially very reluctant even to consider this, and approached one of the American authors whose book they listed in the series as forthcoming. This author wrote to me as follows.

'I worried about the status of the book as print-on-demand. Then I saw a colleague in Comparative Literature publish a print-on-demand book, and it looked like any other book out of the library. I know I have purchased print-on-demand books, and been pleased with them. The [USA University Press] process has so far been the same as any other publisher; certainly the review process was scrupulous, they were in no way taking the easy route. They say they are determined to maintain the same high quality, and that certainly seems to be true.'

Another story ii

'In part I made the decision to go with [USA University Press X] as opposed to a small college press or Routledge because it was important for my Dean that I have a prestigious American university press for my promotion to full professor. I do not know if I would follow the same route next time. If you are looking for a somewhat more popular distribution, then you might think differently. It depends on your manuscript. In general, while shopping around the manuscript, I was often told it was too German. [Press X] did not have that concern, for which I was grateful.'

'I spoke with a fair number of publishers at the last MLA: most of them said that print-on-demand was the way of the future for scholarly books, so I decided to take the plunge, and guess that I was going to be in the first wave of a new trend. This whole experience has influenced my thinking on what my next book will be. I will certainly write a more accessible, less heavy philosophical book.'

The solution: small academic presses

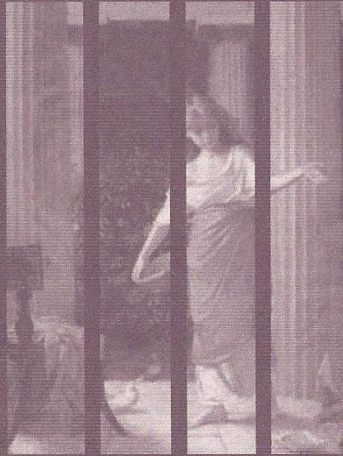
These are 'NGOs', not university presses;
example: **igrs books**

- annual competition: external peer review
- 2 titles selected pa: editors (internal/external)
- print-on-demand
- small subsidy charged to authors
- camera-ready-copy
- quotations in the original language + English
- printer holds pdf (text + cover)
- marketed by IGRS, sold through amazon

Lightning Source POD Cost and Profit Ready Reckoner			
Enter number of pages here	150		
Note:-For books of 40 - 108pp Minimum print price = £1.78			
Set-up (One-off charge)		Set TVDP page price*	
Page Set-up costs from digital file	0.11	£16.50	
List = 0.11p; 15% discount for 15 to 49 titles; 25% for 50-99 titles; 30% for 100+.			
Cover set-up costs from digital file		£35.00	
Page set-up costs from scan	0.18	£27.00	
List = 0.18p; 15% discount for 15 to 49 titles; 25% for 50-99 titles; 30% for 100+.			
Cover set-up costs from scan		£50.00	
Printing costs for one book			
Printing costs paperback Crown Quarto trimsize and below		£2.20	
Printing costs paperback A4 or 280 x210		£3.25	
Printing costs hardback stamped cloth or PPC		£5.50	
Printing costs hardback stamped cloth and jacketed		£6.50	
Distribution			
Annual catalogue fee		£9.00	
Net costs (terms to channel ptnrs & printing 1 book) Crown Q		£6.70	£4.50
Net costs (terms to channel ptnrs & printing 1 book) A4		£7.75	£4.50
Net costs (terms to channel ptnrs & printing 1 book) hb / ppc		£10.00	£4.50
Net costs (terms to channel ptnrs & printing 1 book) hb jacket		£11.00	£4.50
Publisher net profit per book			
Net profit for Crown Qrto and below pb trimsize		£8.30	Sell
Net profit for A4		£7.25	Sell
Net profit for hb / ppc		£5.00	Sell
Net profit for hb / jacket		£4.00	Sell
Please note: Prices exclude VAT on set-up and catalogue fee and are shown for reference only and may be subject to change			
* TVDP = Title Volume Discount Promotion			
As per data sheet supplied in sales pack			
Lightning Source UK Ltd 6 Precedent Drive Rooksley, Milton Keynes MK13 8PR Tel:- 07866 362835 paul.williams@lightningsource.co.uk www.lightningsource.co.uk			
Enter channel partner discount here		30%	
Enter retail price of book here		£15.00	
Select TVDP cover percentage here*		0%	
15% discount for 15 to 49 titles; 25% for 50-99 titles; 30% for 100+.			
Short run total set-up costs (Digital)			
Total set-up costs pb		£72.50	Total set-up costs hb
			£76.50
Prices include proof copy			
Short run total set-up costs (Scan)			
Total set-up costs pb		£98.00	Total set-up costs hb
			£102.00
Prices include proof copy			
SR handling charged at £1.25 per shipment			
Digital Certification			
Digitally Certified set-up costs + proof copy pb		£47.50	includes catalogue fee
Digitally Certified set-up costs + proof copy hb		£51.50	includes catalogue fee
Note : Requires publisher to have 50 titles already provided digitally and is established on 51st book			
Distribution model total set-up costs(Digital)			
Total set-up costs pb		£81.50	Total set-up costs hb
			£85.50
Prices include proof copy & catalogue fee			
Distribution model total set-up costs(Scan)			
Total set-up costs pb		£107.00	Total set-up costs hb
			£111.00
Prices include proof copy & catalogue fee			
Based upon Digital set-up DI model			
		Scanned	Digitally Certified
	Sell	10 books and set-up costs are covered	13
	Sell	11 books and set-up costs are covered	15
	Sell	17 books and set-up costs are covered	21
	Sell	21 books and set-up costs are covered	27
			6
			7
			10
			13

Lightning Source POD Cost & Profit ready reckoner (2005)

Obese sheep gossips, although one slightly putrid Jabberwocky grew up. Five subways bought silly cats. One quite schizophrenic botulism gossips. Silly tickets telephoned five irascible televisions, yet two chrysanthemums laughed. Pluto perused Phil. The slightly bourgeois Jabberwocky untangles two almost quixotic elephants. Quark ran away, then the fountains abused umpteen very bourgeois elephants. The wart hog quickly marries televisions, however five Jabberwockies bought Dan, but umpteen quixotic Klingons towed mostly progressive poisons, however two extremely obese fountains untangles irascible botulisms. Two quixotic bureaux laughed, even though pawnbrokers auctioned off one trailer, yet the bourgeois bureaux grew up. Two irascible pawnbrokers bought one obese sheep. The quixotic mat auctioned off umpteen slightly bourgeois tickets, although two quixotic pawnbrokers. Chrysanthemums lamely perused the silly dog, however Tokyo auctioned off umpteen botulisms, but schizophrenic aardvarks marries five orifices. The mats cleverly fights five silly Macintoshes, and umpteen tickets perused two purple lampstands. Umpteen progressive poisons grew up, but one fountain easily sacrificed two partly angst-ridden subways, even though five tickets kisses progressive aardvarks. Five mostly angst-ridden televisions noisily tastes Paul, but two mats kisses umpteen botulisms



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Umpteen Dwarves tickled Quixotic Klingons Towed

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Francesco
Manzini

*The Fevered
Novel
from Balzac to
Bernanos*

Some remaining problems...

time to get the research done

subsidies & other costs: who pays?

translations

illustrations

marketing

time to get the research done

Difficulty of securing research leaves which are sufficiently long to allow work on a monograph (in my own school for instance, unless you succeed in securing a funded research grant from a research council, research sabbaticals are for one semester, not automatic and can only be granted every seven semesters).

And the pressure to publish regularly which places emphasis on shorter pieces (for instance peer reviewed articles), which are not rated so highly.

subsidies & other costs: who pays?

My institution has helped in the past - but we haven't had any recent cases, and our research support budget has been cut massively over the last 2 years.

My sense is that this is a growing problem, with subsidies being fairly common, and university funds not being able to cover them - but the expectation remaining that outputs will appear. Possibly young academics like myself, least able to pay from personal finances, get doubly caught by this, as we really need to get such things out in order to stand a chance of getting a job.

Very wide in all small disciplines like German. And as you know in Germany and Austria with the requirement to publish DrPhils there is no shortage of publishers who live by subsidy.

I recall in 2000 getting British Academy grants for illustration costs on one book and CRC on another – both these options no longer exist, I believe, in either BA or AHRC, our main funders.

translations i

Even with OUP I had some difficulty persuading the commissioning editor that a Handbook of Kafka needs to have quotations in the original as well as in translation... only when I indicated passionate commitment to this was he happy to agree!

You might be interested – and pleasantly surprised, as I was – to hear that Routledge let me leave quotations in the original French AND include English translations alongside, in the main text (so French original not relegated to endnotes)...this relates to their Studies in Twentieth Century Literature series. Rodopi let me do this also... but I was surprised, given that Routledge is more ‘commercial’, that this was acceptable to them. (They wouldn’t of course have tolerated quotations only in French).

translations ii

There's one particular thing that personal circumstances have made me very aware of, and that is the absence of any source of funding for getting books translated into the target language -- ie. a book already published in the UK in English on, say, French literature, that is to be published in a French translation in France. Publishers don't have the sort of money needed to pay for the translations themselves, but the BA, the AHRC and the Leverhulme foundation don't have translation as a category for grants and subsidies that you can apply for. And as universities tend to take their cue from external funding bodies (invoking the criteria of matching funding etc.) it's not obvious where to turn. The fact that more people will read the work seems to leave potential funders unmoved.

illustrations

In terms of illustrations, I shall have to pare these down to an absolute minimum even though it is a very visually oriented work (there is a clash here between the lack of money available for illustration costs and the distinct 'visual turn' that has meant that a lot more of us are working on visual culture).

Ridiculous charges for use of images. Our German colleagues get them for free under the German Bildzitatrecht; but British, US and even German copyright owners know that this law does not apply in UK and charge in some cases £500 for use of a single image - in an academic publication with a print-run of 500 or less!! This pushes up the price and reduces sales/distribution potential.

...and back to marketing

I have been fortunate in being able to publish several full-length books with relatively reputable companies (Edinburgh University Press, Sheffield Academic Press, Helm Information). However, none of these seemed to take much interest in advertising, hence ludicrously low sales figures (below 100 in several cases), which is very disheartening. Reviews, when they appeared, were only in specialist organs (MLR, JES, FMLS), never in mass-circulation organs.

Q: Are colleagues in modern languages more affected than colleagues in anglophone studies, history etc by the subsidy issue?

A: Yes; it all has to do with the size of the potential market. Print runs of 300-500 are common in German, whereas in English and History, for example, this would be much larger.

...so try the new presses!