

The Academic Book of the Future: Communities of Practice

In this article, I will explore the contexts in which the academic books of the future for the Arts and Humanities (A&H) are being shaped, with the aim of demonstrating how crucial it is that the communities of practice which produce those books continue to work together to build better bridges of understanding and collaboration. How are the communities which operate within the scholarly communications circuit (researchers, publishers, booksellers, librarians, intermediaries, and policy makers) approaching the challenges that face them? What does the academic book of the future look like? Where will it be read? How will it be discovered, consumed, disseminated and preserved? The dynamic, but complex and shifting environment in which these texts are produced means that analysing the relationship we have with academic books of the past and the present may help to shed some light on what lies ahead: using a case study of the scholarly critical editions of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*, I will examine the impact of the relationship between publishing and scholarly editors, the bibliographical impact of different material containers for the text, and offer a perspective on how the once and future text might manifest itself. This work will draw upon research from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)/ British Library Academic Book of the Future Project, which finished in late 2016 (see <https://academicbookfuture.org/>)

As John Thompson has said, 'academic publishing has become one of the terrains on which the logics of two different worlds - the world of publishing and the world of the academy - come together and clash, leading on occasion to tension, misunderstanding and mutual recriminations' (Thompson, 2005, p.175). These are tumultuous times for higher education, and for academic publishing. On the 27th April 2017 the Higher Education and

Research Act (2017) became law in the UK. There is a new regulator and funding council for universities, the Office for Students, a Teaching Excellence Framework, a single strategic research body to be known as UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), and many other changes to the UK HE system. The next Research Excellence Framework, or REF, will take place in 2021, and the parameters of that Framework, which were released in November 2017, build in results of the HEFCE consultation which followed the Stern Review of 2016 (Stern, 2016).

So, it is an interesting time to be talking about the Academic Book of the Future – everyone wants to know what that will look like, but (spoilers) there are no straightforward answers. I led a small team on a Project called The Academic Book of the Future, which ran from Oct 2014-Oct 2016, and which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, partnered with the British Library. The Report for this Project came out in June 2017, and the time gap has a story behind it that I will come back to later. It links to one of the key take-away messages of the Project: that it is more imperative than ever before that we work together, as connected communities of practice, to help define what the academic book will look like and how it will be produced and consumed. By communities of practice I mean scholars, publishers, librarians, policy makers, professional associations and scholarly societies, booksellers, intermediaries – all those groups of people who work with the academic book. Richard Brown, ex-President of the American Association for University Presses, said that the way forwards for academic publishing was to create communities of practice with ‘the thought leaders and gatekeepers and teachers and students and stakeholders in a variety of disciplines.’ His assertion that ‘communities of practice are not simply about individual and social relationships and information sharing...they also lie at the heart of scholarly communication and serve as the lifeblood of any business model,’ was a key inspiration for our project. (Brown, 2011, p.9)

When we pitched for this Project, there were some core points that drew the team (who had not worked as a group before) together: that we knew it would be impossible to cover everything and everyone in the timespan we had, but that we wanted to try to draw in as many different voices and practices as possible across these communities; that we wanted to focus on more than just Open Access, and look at the academic book in its widest incarnations; and that the end result had to represent not our views, but those of the people who had engaged with the Project at all levels. We set aside a large proportion of the funding to cover an open call for activities, and invested another sum in hiring an experienced consultant, Dr Michael Jubb, so that alongside specific focussed research, the Project could also carry out wider scoping in our communities to capture the best possible range of responses. Some of the issues we tackled during the life of the Project included:

- the definition of an academic book;
- Open Access;
- the processes of producing academic books by authors and publishers;
- peer review and recognition;
- discoverability and access;
- the complex supply chains that bring books to readers and readers to books;
- the changing roles of libraries;
- rapidly evolving technologies;
- rights and legal issues;
- the policy landscape;
- economic concerns;
- broad international perspectives;
- academic careers.

There were two Phases to the Project: in Phase 1 the aim was to establish a wide-ranging process of consultation and engagement, acknowledging that in an area as complex as that of the academic book, the interlocking communities of practice must be addressed in an integrated way. In Phase 2, we moved on to analyse four key blocks of activity more deeply: further consultation and data gathering; discipline-based events; events with the wider communities; and project outputs.

During Phase 1, following the production of an initial literature review, our consultant undertook intensive desk research and semi-structured interviews and focus groups with more than two dozen publishers, a similar number of librarians, and twenty intermediaries in the supply chain. This continued in Phase 2, augmented by work on trends in sales of academic books, which has involved gathering and analysing data available in the public domain from the UK and the US, and from SCONUL statistics, and sets of data on retail sales of academic books in the UK from Nielsen BookScan.

The rest of the core team concentrated on connecting with the communities around academic books to evoke responses via more detailed pieces of commissioned research, symposia, workshops and conferences. During Phase 1 of the Project, proposals were sought for activities these communities believed to be important: this resulted in a suite of different mini-projects that gathered data during Phase 2. We commissioned reports on aspects such as Editing, Peer Review, the American University Press context, Altmetrics, Book Discoverability, and new technical developments in academic books, as well as the role of the Intermediary, Creative Writing PhDs, and what can be learned from the REF 2014 data. Other reports came as the result of Project-generated activity, like the Book of the South conference at the British Library, run by Caroline Davis and Marilyn Deegan, or the University Press conference in Liverpool, run by Anthony Cond. These more formal outputs were complemented by a programme of over 50 guest blog posts, hosted on our Project

website, which appeared at regular intervals over the two years, and which covered a whole range of topics, from Musical Scholarship to Multimodal PhDs, OA to the pleasures of reading Real Books (see <https://academicbookfuture.org/blog/>). In addition, the team undertook outreach to the different communities by giving talks and facilitating discussions and debates on their home grounds. In this way, the Project generated feedback from groups such as academic librarians (RLUK, WHELF), publishers (the ALPSP, the IPG, Futurebook, the London Book Fair, UKSG), booksellers (The Booksellers Association) and academics (eg the AHRC Subject Associations Events, the Milton Conference, Arthurian Conference, British Association for Religious Studies Conference, the Digital Humanities Congress, AHRC Digital Transformations meetings, the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, and SHARP). Further bespoke events were supported like workshops with PhD students and ECRs: these were held in Stirling, De Montfort, the British Library and at the London Book Fair. Others brought together media researchers (Lincoln's Impossible Constellation conference), art historians and archaeologists (York) and music scholars (Goldsmiths). To ensure we stretched the Project scope more widely still, Academic Book Week was created. This event was a gamble: a leap of faith to see if our communities really were on the same academic page as us. Without their support, this week of activities would not have worked, and worse, would show a lack of interest in collaboration that would signal a worrying trend for the future. But it paid off. With the support of the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP), the Booksellers Association, the Publishers Association and Midas PR, the first Academic Book Week ran over 70 events and activities: seminars, workshops, debates, symposia, exhibitions (both physical and virtual), writing sprints, competitions, promotions, all taking place throughout the UK and internationally. As a legacy of the Project, it has now run a second time and third times (in January 2017, and April 2018, see <https://acbookweek.com/>), and as such has proved the level of goodwill and

commitment from people in all our communities to work together for the common cause of celebrating the academic book. This is a very encouraging situation.

So it was a very productive and rewarding couple of years, and capturing all that in an end of Project report in a way that does justice to the input all our collaborators have given has been a weighty responsibility. But more of that later. For now, I'd like to take a couple of the key areas we looked at and explore them a bit further, starting with the definition of an academic book.

Let's take as one definition that it is a long-form publication that makes an original contribution to scholarship. The gold standard for this in the arts and humanities has for many years been the monograph. As Geoffrey Crossick points out in his 2015 Report on monographs and Open Access (OA): 'Academics across a wide range of arts, humanities and social science disciplines see monographs as central to the advancement and communication of knowledge, and they have done so for many generations.' (Crossick, 2015, p13.)

The monograph, however, is not the only long-form publication that we needed to consider as an academic book, as Marilyn Deegan explains in the Project Report. (Deegan, 2017, pp.30-36) Collections of essays, critical editions and exhibition catalogues come under the 'book' rubric, and in some of the non-textual disciplines, such as archaeology, anthropology and film studies, long-form publications can be collections of photographs, films, or multimedia presentations. Increasingly, books are produced in digital form: as e-books that are modelled closely on the print format, or as enhanced outputs that incorporate media other than the textual, and that link to resources outside themselves.

This meant that the project needed to take account of the complexity of academic book production and use within and beyond the academy. The academy, after all, is not the only place where serious scholarship happens. Many freelance writers and journalists produce scholarly works drawing on impeccable research: for example, the excellent

historical biographies by Michael Holroyd, Richard Holmes, Claire Tomalin; books on the Crusades by Richard Barber and many more. Academics are not the only people who read works of scholarship, either. As Jonathan Bate remarked in 2014: ‘The substantial work of serious scholarship with a wider reach than that of the immediate academic sub-field is a precious thing, at the core of our cultural life and intellectual discourse’. (Bate, 2014) So, we looked at the crossover book (an area that is certainly in need of more study), and we looked at media and film “publications”; we looked at short form monographs, via an experiment with Palgrave Pivot (see <http://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137595768>), and we engaged with scholars in art history and archaeology, too, to see what they are concerned about. We still did not capture anywhere near a comprehensive picture of what is happening, although we did create some new ideas to add to the mix. As well as our experiment with UCL Press and BOOC (Books as Open Online Content), testing the tolerances of the peer review system with newer forms of “academic” content (see <https://ucldigitalpress.co.uk/BOOC>) we supported Lincoln University’s SCHOLR initiative, run by co_LAB: see a short glimpse into their concept here:

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/uYSrs/>

We wanted to look at the academic book as it was, and what it is, or could, evolve into. But it is impossible to do that without realising that in defining what the academic book is as a *visible* product, we need to define it *philosophically*, too. The Open Access agenda has acted as a key catalyst for this as we are confronted in the UK by a future where only OA work, whether in journal article or book form, will be submissable to the REF. This will politicise research in a way that has never happened before: there is a push from policy makers to prioritise OA research, and this brings with it many questions about who is controlling that agenda, and around the very wide-ranging implications it has for academics, publishers, and academic libraries (both positive and negative). So, though we have been a

UK-based project, reporting on issues of key concern to academics here, we took account of many projects outside the UK offering useful models and perspectives to widen our understanding of how OA fits into the larger picture. In the US and Canada, where concerns about the position of the monograph in the academy are equally pressing, a whole range of pertinent reports and articles have appeared in the last few years.¹ US university presses, facing severe financial challenges with declining sales, are making new alliances between the press, the library and the wider university. The Andrew W Mellon Foundation has been instrumental in encouraging and funding new developments to expand capacity for the production of (enhanced) monographs, most of which have library and faculty involvement in the publishing process. In Europe, too, there is concern about the place of the monograph in the scholarly system, with a particular emphasis on open access. The OAPEN project (OA Publishing in European Networks), hosted from the National Library in The Hague, is dedicated to open access, peer-reviewed books, and has published useful reports and surveys. OAPEN-UK, a collaborative research project gathering evidence to help stakeholders make informed decisions on the future of OA scholarly monograph publishing in the humanities and social sciences, carried out an extensive survey of UK academics in 2014, and released its final report in 2016. This survey has greatly informed our work on OA during this project, as has the HEFCE report, *Monographs and Open Access*, produced by Geoffrey Crossick. To reiterate: this was not a project about Open Access, but Open Access issues formed a thread running through all our activities. It was unavoidable, as with the release of the reports mentioned above, OA was a constant news dominator throughout the life of the Project. This

¹ Eg, the Mellon Foundation's *Monograph Output of American University Presses, 2009-2013* (see <https://mellon.org/resources/news/articles/monograph-output-american-university-presses-2009-2013/>), and John W. Maxwell, 2015, "Beyond Open Access to Open Publication and Open Scholarship." *Journal of Scholarly and Research Communication*. 6 (2). <http://src-online.ca/index.php/src/article/view/202>

made for challenging management: how to work these into our Project to help move the research contained within those reports further along, but also not allow OA to take over from all the other threads we had coming through. Michael Jubb has highlighted the fact that ROARMAP (the Registry for OA Repository Mandates and Policies) records 474 mandates for OA currently active in Europe: that figure alone makes it very clear why it is impossible to see a distinct path ahead for any dominant business model right now. We found that many academics are still very confused about the different OA models, and how they operate. The Project Report underlines this ongoing anxiety among A&H researchers about OA publishing, and what it means for their work, especially among early career researchers. The principle of making academic work freely available, and more widely disseminated, is easy to support, but we need to really understand what that means in terms of cost before we can make claims, as Martin Eve has done recently, that there is a ‘near-universal consensus that OA would be good for humanities books.’ (Eve, 2017) This is unsubstantiated, and despite the undoubtedly great impact Eve has had on the OA debate at policy level for Arts and Humanities, there is a need for more research to be carried out, underpinned by as wide a consultation with as varied a cross-section of academics as possible at that table. This is something that affects all parts of the scholarly communications circuit. Crossick offers a more holistic perspective, and his remark that he was impressed by the ‘cautiously positive approach towards open access’(Crossick p. 65) he encountered amongst academics is a more realistic – and helpful – indicator of where we are at. It is easy to say that we need more publishers to try new business models, or that institutions should look at new ways of using library budgets – and Eve is right in that there is a desperate need for institutions to begin these ‘difficult internal conversations’ to make OA for books work – but those conversations are complicated by other key processes, for example those underpinning academic promotions, and pulling everything into line for such a radical new way of working and

judging research will take a long time. The REF might encourage publication via OA routes, but do promotions committees take the same view? How do you balance what is the best strategy for publishing your work if these two are at odds? How might that focus hinder the exploration of other new ways of publication not best served by OA or traditional publishing models? Tom Mole has written an excellent chapter on the Academic Book of the Future where he calls for ‘a debate that is both historically informed and technologically literate’ (Mole, 2015, p. 12) and he positions book history as the discipline most able to help with this. ‘Many people’, he notes, ‘have a stake in the academic book of the future’. (Mole, 2015, p. 16) Right now this is most obvious in the area of Open Access publishing.

So, increasingly, the question ‘what does the term “academic book” mean?’ is a complex one. This is exciting, allowing for new definitions, and new experimentations, but also daunting and risky, as personal scholarly reputation becomes entangled more overtly with the choices of route to publication an academic takes. Do you publish with a reputable university press, that does not offer open access but gives your work a stamp of worth in a global context, or do you publish with a lesser known, new OA press and get credit for REF but risk less impact on promotions committees or outside of the UK? The good news is that there are growing routes to publication where both boxes can be ticked (UCL Press, for instance, is growing a good reputation for its OA outputs), but not yet enough for this to make it an easy choice. Both Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press are exploring ways of making OA routes available, but in 2016 a senior editor at CUP reported less than a dozen requests for Humanities monographs to be made OA, so there is still not enough push to the publisher to make this shift very quickly.

In a recent article in *The Guardian*, Sam Leith claims that ‘we are living in what looks like a golden age of publishing for, of all people, the university presses’ (Leith, 2015). University presses are, he remarks, engaging in ‘chewy, interesting subjects treated by writers

of real authority but marketed in a popular way'. His argument is that university presses can take risks with books that trade publishers might avoid. It is certainly true that university presses are growing in number in the UK, with many academic institutions exploring ways of exploiting specialisms within their own faculties, and experimenting with new ways of disseminating research. The Project sponsored the first University Press Redux conference, organised by Liverpool University Press in 2015: in a special issue of the ALPSP journal, *Learned Publishing*, Anthony Cond recognises 'first that there is a community of university-based publishers out there who continue to privilege the mission of scholarly dissemination in the face of an evolving and often challenging marketplace, and second that despite this common thread there is no such thing as a typical university press.' (Cond, 2015, p. 314) It follows, by extension, that there is no such thing as a typical academic book: these new presses (and established ones, as well as commercial publishers) continue to invest and experiment with new ways of packaging content.

A hybrid economy will be in place for a long while to come: arguably this would allow for a creative mix of publishing models to flourish. But this richness of potential publishing opportunities is not a positive if mandates are placed on where publication 'should' preferably take place. Surely freedom to try and publish where an academic wants ought to be a fundamental principle of scholarly life? This is not a flippant question, as this Project has made me reflect long and hard about my own assumptions and beliefs in this regard. It is no coincidence, I think, that Stefan Collini's conclusion in his book, *What Are Universities For?* stresses that a good way to answer that question 'may be to consider what it is that we value and admire about good work in scholarship and science, and then to reflect on the conditions which seem conducive to its achievement.' (Collini, 2012, p.198) At present it can feel like the emphasis is not so much on creating *good* research, but on creating *accessible* research, or research with impact. Academic work must be visible. But it should

also be valid, and validated. A good relationship of trust might have been built up with an editor, and the academic may want to continue to work with them on future books, but what happens if those books cannot be made OA? Indeed, the network of relationships built up as scholars are a vital part of scholarly identity, just as academic work (particularly, perhaps, in the art-related disciplines, but also in the more traditional humanities-based ones) reflects that, too. This is something Crossick acknowledges as very important: ‘the self-contained nature of the book may serve in some way as the physical embodiment of the deep patterns of thought and understanding that emerge from a sustained period of research on a single topic; in a very real sense, the book is part of the author’s identity.’ (Crossick, 2015, p.15) This is often different to the way work – often multi-authored work – is produced and viewed in the science disciplines. Jim McGuigan points out that there is an irony in the AHRC promoting the fact that it is ‘the only funding body in the UK that supports humanities researchers in large-scale collaborative research across disciplinary boundaries’ (McGuigan, 2013, p.81), as this displays what he calls ‘a distinct lack of realism when probably the greater part of research in the humanities is conducted by individuals, most typically within disciplinary boundaries.’ Whilst it is true that there is a growing number of good collaborative research in the humanities, there is also still a healthy body of solo research, too. After all, PhD students are still trained to produce a single thesis, as a long-form piece of writing. Completed, this looks a lot like a book, and indeed many end up being turned into an academic book. To change this model means unpicking the system of academic research from the postgraduate level upwards, something that is not happening in any large-scale way – yet.

Even when we are talking about solo work, however, the steps between researching and writing, and publication, take the expert input of a network of support. An academic publishing editor’s role is arguably the most essential part of this, and to demonstrate this

point I'd like to bring in a short case study: the editing and publication of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*.

Katharine Reeve's work for our Project engages with the importance of the role of the academic editor, finding that 'all respondents agreed that editors are the creative powerhouses of academic publishers – close to the creators and users of academic publications, with a uniquely broad knowledge of their field and those in it.' (Reeve, 2017) So, choices around publication are not just about prestige of publisher, or about the REF, but also connect to very personal working patterns and behaviours. When this connects to producing editions of works which are canonical texts, using publishing history can reveal the significance of these working relationships on how those texts come to be curated for the scholarly – and more general – reader. The editor, as academic or as publishing professional, has a range of tools and contexts to manage, and while digital media continues to reconfigure the way we consume texts, the complementary fields of bibliography, textual criticism, media theory, book, cultural and publishing studies, and creative writing have, as Neil Fraistat and Julia Flanders (who edited the recent Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship) said, 'rendered our understanding of authorship and textuality immeasurably more complex.' (Fraistat and Flanders, 2013, p.1) Or, to put it another way: 'We are not entering – we have already entered and will never leave – a new intellectual space, where the speed and the distance between question and answer is qualitatively different from that for which we were trained.' (Crane, 2010)

Publishers are, as John Thompson has argued so convincingly in his book of the same title, 'Merchants of Culture': they need the symbolic capital produced by the prestige accorded to certain individuals or institutions in order to survive in the marketplace. (Thompson, 2012, p.8) In a scholarly critical edition of a canonical literary work, this symbolic capital is created by the status of the scholarly editor and the reputation of the press

(and therefore, by extension, the publishing editor) through which it is published. If we examine the stories of these texts and their production, exciting new insights can be discovered which explain how we have come to receive these curated versions.

Editions of the works of Sir Thomas Malory have been significantly influenced by the publishing editors who worked on them. The stories of King Arthur have endured for centuries: told, written down, re-appropriated, augmented, and remediated. Scarcely has a story had more texts and paratexts connected to it, and scarcely have texts and paratexts played more vital a part in that story's publishing genealogy. The only manuscript copy that exists of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* was found by the librarian of Winchester College in 1934 whilst he was looking for interesting bindings in the College library; the ink blots found on this manuscript and analysed by Lotte Hellinga, proved that it was in Caxton's workshop at some point in its history (Hellinga, 1977). In this Winchester Manuscript, the paratextual elements of preface, title page, and any possible dedication are missing – provocatively so. For those missing beginning and ending leaves may well have contained the information needed to solve, once and for all, the authenticity of Malory's work. Nothing remains in Malory's own hand, so we rely entirely on the scraps left behind by history to try and reconstruct a text with integrity, which is why the editing of *Le Morte Darthur* is such a challenging endeavour. Eugène Vinaver, a medievalist scholar from Manchester University, had already been working on a scholarly edition of Malory based on Caxton's version for several years when the announcement of the Winchester manuscript find was made. Using both texts, it took Vinaver over a decade longer to produce what became the standard edition in 1947. The academic book of the future will feature less dramatically physical stories of scholarly endeavour than this, as the glamour of scholarship (a term very appropriate when we are talking about King Arthur's world) has changed with digital methods of communication. The story of this edition, and the role OUP's editors had in creating its

reputation as the standard version, has been told elsewhere (Rayner, 2015). I've now been looking more closely at how Penguin treated the text, and have discovered an editorial process every bit as rigorous as that given to Vinaver's labours by Oxford University Press. Vinaver plays a part in this history, too, and although the Penguin two volume edition came out over a decade after his own, what I am beginning to piece together shows how our scholarly networks define far more than just our own scholarly identity. Publishers' archives can hold keys to evidence of just how entwined textual histories are with these relationships: evidence that sheds light on the process of scholarship itself, and certainly how an academic book, perhaps most illuminatingly in the case of scholarly editions, is shaped by chance, personality, and professional tact and knowledge. In both the OUP and Penguin editions, the editors had a far from straightforward time getting their academic editors to produce the final texts: in both cases it is fairly clear that without the intervention – the knowledgeable and very patient intervention – of the editors at either publishing house, we might not have the benefit of being able to consult, today, two such acclaimed versions of Malory's Arthurian stories.

A more recent Penguin publication, a 'retelling' of Malory, called the *Death of King Arthur* (2010), was written by Peter Ackroyd after being commissioned by Penguin Editorial Director Alexis Kirschbaum. The fact that this edition was commissioned by the editor of the Penguin Classics list (and from the information gathered from the notes sent out by Kirschbaum to Ackroyd, very heavily steered by her editorial preferences) makes this a particularly fascinating complementary case study to the earlier two volume Penguin edition. Although not a medievalist, or an Arthurian expert, Kirschbaum has an MPhil which looked at the works of Edmund Spenser, so a mix of a limited scholarly experience and professional publishing editorship shaped the final text. The marketing materials show that branding (the Penguin Classics imprint, the use of Ackroyd as 'reliable' reteller, the use of Philip Pullman

as chief ‘puff’ provider) was aggressive and very calculated. Media coverage of the book’s launch was strong as a result. This was marketed as a crossover book, but as it was placed in the Penguin Classics imprint, sits alongside its earlier, more academic sibling in a juxtaposition that shows us the challenges in trying to define what an academic book is. Copies of the Ackroyd version were taken to the International Arthurian Society’s Congress in Bristol in 2011 and distributed to each of the 200 plus Arthurian scholars there. The overwhelming majority dismissed the value of the book without getting past the cover: for most, it was simply not academic.

This kind of response to academic books was more comprehensively demonstrated during the first Academic Book Week when the Booksellers Association ran a competition to decide the 20 Academic Books that Have Shaped the World. The titles were chosen by the public, and by publishers and booksellers. Furore on social media ensued from academics incensed by the choices, but if we are to understand what our scholarly work could and should look like in the future in order to create wider impact, and how it could become more accessible, we should look more carefully at results like this, because it tells us a great deal about how academic books, and therefore academic work, is perceived in the wider world.

Look at the success, for instance, of UCL Press’s publication of a series of open access books called *Why We Post*, which look at how we use social media (see <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/why-we-post>). The first book in this series, *How the World Changed Social Media*, was downloaded over 60,000 times between its publication in Feb 2016 and a year later, in Feb 2017 (physical book sales were at 382 at end of Jan 2017). Now, of course, this does not follow that it has been read by all those people, but it is a phenomenal figure for any academic title: what needs to be done now is more work on how those downloads translate into usage. If we can start to analyse how people are using these freely available texts, and whether they are academics or non-academics, then open access

proponents will have a stronger base to argue from. After all, a library book may have been borrowed hundreds, if not thousands of times, but the way that library data works right now, it is impossible to capture that information effectively: how can books consulted in situ in the library, rather than checked out for use elsewhere, be recorded, for instance? One book sale to a library might hide a large figure in terms of readership. Whilst academic libraries today are increasingly disposing of their physical collections, we are losing, perhaps forever, resources that could be very valuable to researchers, now and in the future.

Academic libraries are the most directly engaged community with the debates around the book of the future: some of the most interesting discussions are happening within events organised by librarians, both in the UK, in Europe and in the US. Many academic presses work out of an institution's library 'home', so their perspective can be a powerful internal lever. Yet one of the key things the Academic Book of the Future Project worked on was an awareness that academic librarians and academics need to find ways to communicate more productively: their relationship to each other is shifting, as libraries become less service providers and more partners in getting academic work disseminated. This move began with the implementation of internal repositories for research material, and is now becoming more entwined with the OA policy moves. Do academics really understand what an academic librarian today does? Do academic librarians really understand an academic's role?

The scholarly communication ecology is best described as an 'impossible constellation', a term coined in 2013 by Professor Ruta Mateus-Berr at the University of Vienna to describe the range of artistic research in her department, and then taken up by researchers from Lincoln University in 2015 to look at academic book production within media and the performing arts as part of the Academic Book of the Future Project (see <http://frequency.org.uk/uol-symposium-impossible-constellations-publishing-in-the-digital-age/>). Using this metaphor more widely to describe the whole of the current scholarly

communications circuit helps highlight how easy it is to lose sight of some of the key agents: booksellers, for instance. This group is a valuable part of that circuit, but academic booksellers are facing tough times, especially campus booksellers, where space is being taken back for other purposes: in 2016, for instance, Leicester University's bookshop closed to make way for more 'social space' for students, which the university said was needed. Alan Staton, from the Booksellers Association, warned that 'as universities move from the Research Excellence Framework (REF) to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), quality teaching and learning resources will become ever more central, and nobody is better placed to objectively curate and advise on the best learning resources than campus booksellers.' (Staton, 2016) In her report for the Project on Discoverability, Anna Faherty highlighted responses which underlined the value of the campus bookshop in acting as a good way to find new books on a topic: she also acknowledges the complexity of the scholarly experience in finding books, and concludes, 'even with the speed and expansive access afforded by digital technology, finding, evaluating and obtaining academic content may involve multiple stages and a number of different tools and approaches.' (Faherty, 2016, p.21) Faherty proposes five key messages for publishers, librarians and booksellers: 'be present, focus on customers, shift to services, adapt and collaborate.' Her report, which explores the different ways we access, evaluate, and discover academic books, provides fascinating insights into the current landscape: a landscape which totally justifies her choice of opening quotation, from H. G. Wells's *The Story of An Education*: 'What a tortuous, untraceable business the coming of knowledge is!'

In Michael Pidd's futuristic chapter of our *Academic Book of the Future* Palgrave Pivot, he presents us with a vision of the RIF (Research Impact Framework) 2038. In this world, Wearable Books are the norm, underpinned by Linked Ideas, which 'had emerged as the primary technical method for structuring academic discourse' since the mid 2020s. In a

parody of academics' current obsession with data and metrics, as well as the unspoken feeling that there are too many academic books in the world, he creates historian Professor Audrey Chad, from a university 'somewhere in Yorkshire', who dares to submit a physical book to the RIF, and causes consternation among the panellists. 'She was asked if she would digitise the object and resubmit, but she declined to do so. Not even as an ebook.' Chad's old-school defiance 'did little to influence the RIF, but it did give rise to Physical Humanities and new ways of communicating research.' Chad claimed that 'it can be stultifying to be required to work within the constraints of the Wearable Book format, deafened by the constant noise of competing academic discourses that are the stock-in-trade for Linked Ideas, always reminding you that your own ideas are not an island.' (Pidd, 2015, p.22) The chapter ends:

Print Humanities is now emerging as a serious and respected body of methods within humanities research and communication. Practitioners have their own Manifesto. Barely a week goes by without a new Chair in Print Humanities being advertised, and the next RIF is expected to explicitly permit printed monographs, which will go a long way towards making printed books an acceptable part of the discourse ecosystem. The printed book's future is likely to be disruptive, with some academics declaring that it is here to stay and others believing that it will be a short-lived fad. Some colleagues even argue that Print Humanities should be treated as a new discipline. What is certain is that the future of the Wearable Book and Linked Ideas is no longer guaranteed. As such, a consortium of key stakeholders – academics, librarians, technologists and opticians – is now needed to explore what academic books might be like in the future. (Pidd, 2016, p.23)

This is parody, but there is a warning built into this ending, a prompt to underline that we need to keep talking to each other, across communities, but in useful ways, so that these

discussions don't go round in self-perpetuating circles. Anthony Cond, Director of Liverpool University Press, said 'discussion of the future of academic publishing has too often failed to transcend the self-interest of individual groups of stakeholders . . . One of the most significant contributions of The Academic Book of the Future project has been to bring these various communities together to develop a shared understanding of where we are now and of what might, or indeed might not, happen next.' (Cond, in Deegan, 2017, pp. 11-12)

I am very proud to have been part of this Project, and to have helped create some of these bridges – but we need to keep building them, keep opening up new ways to work together, in order to prevent the 'clashing terrains' of the academic book John Thompson talks about. And the Project's own Report is evidence of this. The team believed that collating all the information we had gathered would be a challenge, but had no inkling that that challenge would come not, in the main, from the sheer amount of data to include, but rather from the differences in approach that writing the Report revealed. We were fortunate that the strong working relationships within the team kept communication going, but the gap between how the policy-makers and funders needed the Report to be written, and what the academics felt they should be delivering, was suddenly a big one. After a miserable period when we tried to reconcile both perspectives, we realised that the only way forwards was to produce a Report in two halves: one half written to satisfy each community involved. We had not anticipated this gap: it opened like a sinkhole during the collaborative writing process. This example proves that we are still a long way from thoroughly understanding the other groups in our scholarly communications circuit, and as we struggle with that challenge, events are moving so fast that we could end up flung further apart by this centrifugal force of constant new ideas, discussions, and policies. The positive: we know there is the willingness to work together. Now we need to keep going, because as Maja Maricevic of the British Library says: 'the present moment offers an exciting environment for experimentation, for

building new and deepening existing relationships, which in turn may lead to a common understanding of what we want the academic books of the future to do – if we want them to be different, in which ways, and to what purpose.’ (Maricevic, 2016, p.63) Building this ‘common understanding’ is a responsibility for all of us, whichever academic community of practice we belong to, if we want to ensure a sustainable future for scholarly books.

Works Cited:

Bate, Jonathan, 2014. ‘Open and Closed.’ *Times Literary Supplement*, January 10th 2014. <http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/open-and-closed/>

Brown, Richard, 2011. 'University Press Forum 2011: The End of the Tunnel?' *The Journal of Scholarly Publishing*. Volume 43, Number 1, October 2011 pp. 1-13

Crane, Gregory, 2010. ‘Give us editors! Re-inventing the edition and re-thinking the humanities.’ OpenStax CNX. 14 May 2010 <http://cnx.org/contents/5df82a16-bb60-4ab2-8277-a61894c801ab@2>

Crossick, Geoffrey, 2015. *Monographs and Open Access: A Report to HEFCE*. (HEFCE) <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2015/monographs/>

Deegan, Marilyn, 2017. *Academic Book of the Future Project Report*. https://academicbookfuture.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/project-report_academic-book-of-the-future_deegan3.pdf

Eve, Martin, 2017. ‘It’s time to heed the drive towards open books’. HEFCE blog (<http://blog.hefce.ac.uk/2017/02/28/its-time-to-heed-the-drive-towards-open-books/>)

Faherty, Anna, 2016. *Academic Book Discovery, Evaluation and Access Insights and opportunities for enhancing the scholarly experience*. https://academicbookfuture.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/faherty_academic-book-discovery-full-report.pdf

Fraistat, Neil and Julia Flanders, 2013. Introduction, *Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship*, pp. 1-16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Hellinga, Lotte, and Hilton Kelliher, 1977. ‘The Malory Manuscript’. *The British Library Journal*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 91–113

- Jubb, Michael, 2017. *Academic Books and Their Futures*.
https://academicbookfuture.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/academic-books-and-their-futures_jubb1.pdf
- Leith, Sam, 2015. 'The crisis in non-fiction publishing' in *The Guardian* online, 26 June 2015 (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/26/is-there-a-crisis-in-high-calibre-non-fiction-publishing-sam-leith>)
- Lyons, Rebecca E. and Samantha J. Rayner, eds., 2015. *The Academic Book of the Future* (London: Palgrave Pivot)
- McGuigan, Jim, 2013. "The Higher Philistinism", in *Humanities in the Twenty-First Century*. (London: Palgrave)
- Maricevic, Maja, 2016. 'National Libraries and Academic Books of the Future' in *The Academic Book of the Future*, pp.57-66 (London: Palgrave Pivot)
- Mole, Tom, 2016. 'The Academic Book as Socially-Embedded Media Artefact' in *The Academic Book of the Future*, pp. 11-17 (London: Palgrave Pivot)
- Pidd, Michael, 2016. 'Wearable Books' in *The Academic Book of the Future*, pp. 18-24. (London: Palgrave Pivot)
- Rayner, Samantha J., 2015. "The case of the 'curious document': Thomas Malory, William Matthews and Eugène Vinaver", *JIAS* 3(1): pp120–138
- Reeve, Katharine. *The Role of the Editor*, forthcoming 2017. *BOOC: Academic Book of the Future* (London: UCL Press)
- Staton, Alan, 2016. 'BA backs campus bookshops as Leicester axes academic offer'. *The Bookseller*, 5 September 2016. <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/ba-backs-campus-bookshops-leicester-axes-academic-offer-388186>
- Stern, Lord Nicholas, 2016. *The Research Excellence Framework Review*.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-excellence-framework-review>
- Thompson, John, 2005. *Books in the Digital Age*. (Cambridge: Polity Press)
- Thompson, John, 2012. *Merchants of Culture*. 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press)