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From Essays on Contemporary Publishing and Book Culture

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The real new publishing: how interconnected “outsiders” are setting the trends

Abstract:

Some of the most exciting, innovative publishing is currently being developed outside the traditional publishing ecosystem. New entrants are publishing and sharing ideas, stories and images across multiple platforms, from beautifully designed hardback print books, to personalised titles, ebooks, magazines, video, web, merchandise, podcasts, events and social media. In this setting, a book becomes one option among many, chosen when it is the most appropriate form: whether to display images and text in a tactile object, or because a book can so effectively mark a pause, a milestone reached. Sometimes, because a book can help these publishers reach different audiences and amplify different voices. For these emerging post-digital publishers, there is no “print versus digital”; no either/or – the two are companions and interconnected. This chapter investigates these emerging publishers, focusing on the “outsiders”. The primary research underpinning it comes from a study of more than 50 organisations and includes material from responses to an online survey and semi-structured interviews. Through case studies, it identifies and examines four emerging publishing trends: magazine publishers that also create books; spoken word and live events generating book operations (in a reversal of the book festival model); social enterprise and charitable publishing; and tech-enabled businesses. While there is a growing body of expertise and books analysing the indie magazine sector (Leslie, 2013; Jamieson, 2015; MagCulture, 2019), these do not focus on its move into book publishing. For the other trends, this is the first systematic consideration of these publishing phenomena.

Author biography:

Caroline Harris has lectured on publishing for more than a decade, most recently as Course Leader for the BA Publishing (Combined) at Bath Spa University. With over 25 years’ experience in book publishing and journalism, she is co-founder and director, with Clive

Wilson, of book creation and consultancy business Harris + Wilson. The business works with world-leading publishers to propose and produce high-quality illustrated non-fiction titles, such as the popular Ella's Kitchen cookbook series. She is also a published fiction and non-fiction author (*Ms Harris's Book of Green Household Management*, John Murray 2009) and poet. Currently, she is studying for an interdisciplinary practice-based PhD in the English department at Royal Holloway, University of London.

MAIN TEXT:

The real new publishing: how interconnected “outsiders” are setting the trends

When pioneering blockchain author Sukhi Jutla wrote her round-up of takeaways from the 2018 FutureBook Live conference, one of the key insights she highlighted was that “change comes from outsiders”. The phrase had been used by Emmanuel Nataf, co-founder of Reedsy, a platform that connects authors with publishing and editorial professionals. Nataf was talking about the industry's aversion to technology, but this principle holds more widely. Some of the most exciting, innovative publishing is currently being developed outside the traditional publishing ecosystem. A new generation of publishers are rewriting the rules. Frequently arriving at books from other areas of media, culture, internet business, or the third sector, they are taking advantage of new technologies and digital means to produce, market and retail their works. Many are creating highly desirable products; often – though not always, as the success of personalised children's book publisher Wonderbly demonstrates – for niche audiences and sometimes in deliberately limited editions.

For these emerging post-digital publishers, there is no “print versus digital”; no either/or – the two are companions and interconnected. The new entrants publish and share ideas, stories and images across multiple platforms, from beautifully designed hardback print books, to personalised titles, ebooks, magazines, video, web, merchandise, podcasts, events and social media. In this setting, a book becomes one option among many, chosen when it is the most appropriate form: whether to display images and text in a tactile object, or because a book can so effectively mark a pause, a milestone reached. Sometimes, because a book can help these publishers reach different audiences and amplify different voices. You don't have to be

a book publisher to make a book, so what are the motivations for doing so? What are the business models, creative decisions and technical developments driving these new approaches to book publishing?

This chapter investigates the new generation of emerging publishers, focusing on the “outsiders”. Through a selection of case studies, it identifies and examines four trends in the new publishing ecosystem. These are magazine publishers that also create books; spoken word and live events generating book enterprises, in a reversal of the book festival model; social enterprise and charitable publishing; and tech-enabled businesses. The organisations experimenting with publishing in this way range from the financially self-supporting and successful to micropublishers (generally defined as one or two-person operations) reliant on funding from the Arts Council or donations.

The primary research underpinning this chapter comes from a study of more than 50 organisations and includes material from responses to an online survey and semi-structured interviews. It draws on the growing body of established expertise in the indie magazines sector, which has generated a network of specialist shops (both bricks-and-mortar and online), blogs and events. Books such as Jeremy Leslie’s *The Modern Magazine* (2013) and Ruth Jamieson’s *Print Is Dead, Long Live Print* (2015) have begun to analyse the scope, history and drivers of this sector. However, the existing literature on indie magazines does not specifically focus on book publishing, while for the other trends, this is the first systematic consideration of these publishing phenomena.

The niche ecosystems considered here were initially investigated through a literature search of articles in industry periodicals such as *The Bookseller* and respected blogs such as Stack Magazines, by researching networks of links – often regionally based, such as the Bristol and south west of England hub – and through online searches. To ascertain whether these trends extended beyond the UK, international examples have also been included. After the initial scoping phase, an email survey was sent to a selection of the identified organisations, to provide example case studies. Recipients were given the option of an interview or email questions in place of or in addition to the survey – which was designed to provide qualitative rather than quantitative details. Alongside information about their role, the survey asked respondents about areas such as previous publishing experience (their own and within their organisation), how their books were created and distributed (for example, in-house, or with

freelance help, or with a book publisher), and to rate the usefulness of a variety of technologies (from Adobe Creative Cloud and short-run offset printing to ebooks, social media and podcasting). Participants were asked to indicate what had prompted the decision to publish, benefits of the books to their organisation, and if they had plans for future publications. The survey employed a range of multiple-choice questions, to provide comparisons. These, however, allowed multiple answers, in order to capture a more nuanced picture of the variety of business models and experiences. There were also comment spaces for respondents to indicate where their particular organisation and book publishing experience differed from the pre-set answers, or if they had any other comments. These acted as a checking mechanism and also to gather further detail.

Print versus digital: the same old story?

The context for the innovative publishing models discussed here is the landscape of post-digital publishing and self-publishing. Much research and theorising on digital disruption in book publishing has concentrated on ebooks and digital reading (e.g. Gomez, 2008; Striphas, 2011), with the “threats” to books debated since before the turn of the millennium. The focus of this research so far has largely been on book publishing as an industry rather than on book publishing as an activity or process. In the traditional book publishing industry, the book is regarded as the core product, supported by associated marketing and promotional activities and, more recently, different formats, whether ebook, audiobook or video. However, this is not the only way to view the production and place of books. Indeed, Michael Bhaskar, in his 2013 theoretical exploration, *The Content Machine*, contends that publishing is in fact about the selection, manipulation and distribution of content. He writes how publishers, by defining themselves (incorrectly, he says) as “makers of books”, have “straightjacketed themselves” (p.4).

Since the mid-1990s we have become used to witnessing the push-pull of the digital-versus-print story, as ebooks were hyped, then failed to overtake print as predicted; experienced rapid growth in sales after the release of the Amazon Kindle in 2007, then more recently appeared to plateau and drop in popularity. Often unreflectively, each reported rise in print book sales versus each fall in those of ebooks, was still, at the start of 2019, being narrated as a small “success”. In his end-of-2018 round-up, Tim Godfray, executive chair of the UK’s Booksellers Association, characterised the recent movements as a tide that is “continuing to

turn in favour of printed books and bookshops” (Mansfield, 2019). That year was also the fourth of rising print book sales in the UK, up by 2.14% on 2017 by value (O’Brien, 2019). However, there are difficulties both with the “rise” of independent bookshops (which came after massive decline) and with the headline ebook sales reported by Nielsen Bookscan in the UK and the Association of American Publishers and International Digital Publishing Forum in the US. The reported sales figures do not sufficiently take account of non-traditionally published books and those without an ISBN, often from small independents. They also do not consider the titles consumed by readers who have transitioned to subscription services such as Amazon’s Kindle Unlimited, which in 2017 was estimated to represent about 14% of the company’s ebook reads and is dominated by self-published authors (Friedman, 2017).

The difficulty in quantifying ebook sales exemplifies some of the issues for the traditional publishing industry. It has needed to bolt on newer platforms, data-gathering and outside expertise from rival media sectors (The Bookseller News Team, 2017) to its pre-digital foundations. Amazon, in contrast, is built from the algorithm up. Data collection and exploitation are integral to the whole way the online retailer operates. From this starting position, it has been able to then compete in the more established book industry arena, becoming a publisher and bricks-and-mortar chain. Similarly, for the new entrants in this study, digital is their native environment; it is the air they breathe.

While the relationship between print and digital forms has all too often been portrayed as adversarial, couched in the language of apocalypse and prophecy (Grafton, 2015), or extinction and replacement, the reality is much messier than the rhetoric. The ways that digital and print forms relate are complex, sometimes complementary. Striplas, for example, points to “persistent unevenness, or dynamism” in contemporary book culture (2009, p.ix), and this dynamism and unevenness also apply to the newer digital forms.

Author, entrepreneur, publisher and futurecaster Seth Godin asserts that mobile is the “real disruption”, not the ebook (Flatt, 2018). Godin is among those who think that the publishing industry is “in dramatic decline”, with publishers constantly making the wrong decisions. “The smartphone changed everything,” he stated in his pre-FutureBook Live discussion with organiser Molly Flatt. He points out that the average person now spends nine hours a day reading, compared with 20 minutes a day when he started in publishing: a 27-fold increase. The difference is that this reading is mainly on mobile phones and computer screens. Godin

contrasts the connection of smartphone-reading with the *disconnection* of book-reading and argues that “people are fully hooked on connection”. However, this perceived disadvantage has also been at the core of the so-called “print renaissance”, in both the independent magazine sector and in books. Attitudes to digital reading and social media content are complicated, contradictory and not always positive. Millennials and Generation Z value print books for the “safe”, relaxed, non-digital space they offer (Filby, 2017), with 79 per cent of a sample of US 18 to 34-year-olds in a 2015 study having read a print book in the previous year – nearly twice as many as had read an ebook (Cox, 2015).

Self-publishing: challenging the gatekeepers

The new generation of publishers have also been facilitated by the maturing of self-publishing and its challenge to established publishing models. In 2017, the total number of self-published titles exceeded one million, according to official US ISBN and data-collection agency Bowker (2018). This was a 28 per cent increase on 2016, which itself had seen an 8 per cent rise from the year before. Interestingly, the number of self-published print books stood at 879,587 titles: an increase of 38 per cent in the year. However, Bowker attributed this largely to the 50 per cent increase at Amazon’s CreateSpace platform and agent and commentator Jane Friedman and others have pointed out that Amazon has pushed towards print as it sees that it can charge more for paper copies (2017). So this may be a result of commercial strategy as much as author and consumer preference.

While some champion self-publishing as democratising and revolutionary, others regard it as reactionary and individualistic (Skinner, 2014). Either way, it has focused attention keenly on the gatekeeper function of publishers. Steve Watson, founder of independent magazine subscription service Stack Magazines and a leading commentator on that industry, said in his interview for this research that:

There is this growing independence ... the barriers are coming down between the people making things and the people consuming things. It wasn’t very long ago that you needed a book publisher because they had the distribution lists ... there was a gatekeeper you had to go through. These days that’s not as true as it was.

Bhaskar, writing in 2011, had also noted that when “everyone can communicate with

everyone” the gatekeeper function of media companies breaks down. However, he characterises this development as bringing “super-abundance” and “[o]verwhelming complexity”. His language, of “fragmentary content production ... barely held together by the forces of centralisation”, conveys the anxiety of established book publishers in the face of this loss of control (p.58). Alison Baverstock and Jackie Steinitz’s research conclusions are more positive, challenging the prejudice that quality is compromised with self-publication and instead pointing to high levels of motivation and preparation for the process among authors, and sharing of knowledge (2013).

Self-publishing is also generating new co-creation and business models. Author collectives include Triskele Press, Five Directions Press and Year Zero Writers – the latter of which eschews the title of “publishing company”, instead focusing on the relationship between writers and readers (Year Zero Writers, no date). Gill Harry and Brenda Bannister are two of the coordinating team for Silver Crow Books, the co-publishing imprint of Frome Writers Collective, and answered the survey for this research. With over a hundred members, one of the group’s aims is to support those who wish to self-publish. Working towards this, the Silver Crow Books imprint collaborates with preferred partners, such as Silverwood Books, Matador/Troubador and the Self-Publishing Partnership in Bath. Its goal, Harry and Bannister explained in their survey response, is “to make our services to members accessible, professional and low-cost. If our selected authors do not have the confidence or all the required to become a publisher themselves, we help them to prepare their manuscripts for publication and guide them through the publishing process. We also offer joint promotion and marketing opportunities.”

The relationship between authors and readership continues to be transformed. Jutla is the first blockchain-published author (in April 2018), her book *Escape the Cubicle* being published via the UK’s Publica (Albanese, 2018). On the evidence of 2018, blockchain was on its way down the Gartner Hype Cycle, which charts the expectations over time for emerging technologies, from the “Peak of Inflated Expectations” to the “Trough of Disillusionment” (Panetta, 2018). However, it has possibilities for supporting direct relationships between author and readership. Publica uses a crowdfunding-style system where authors pre-sell their books via ICOs, or Initial Coin Offerings (Publica, 2019). Other tech-driven possibilities for self-publishing include Reedsy’s Discovery platform, launched in 2019, which calls itself “Goodreads for indie authors” (Reedsy, 2019).

Definitions and study: problems and potential

It is into this new digital-print ecosystem that the emerging publishers surveyed here have been born. They are certainly publishers, as defined by Bhaskar, who theorises that publishing is at its core about content and the “framing and models, filtering and amplification” of that content. Like other publishers, they make content public and amplify it, scaling it up from one instance to multiple copies (2013, p. 6). However, they are often non-traditional, or non-mainstream, in their approaches when compared with the more established book publishing industry.

Non-traditional is, by general definition, not the norm; not the way things have been done before. It is the “other”, encompassing the new, the as-yet unrecognised, the small-scale, the eccentric, the edgelands. In publishing, the term has been used as a catch-all for self-publishing, on-demand publication of works that are out of copyright and micro or niche publishing. However, figures from Bowker revealed that even in 2010, non-traditional publishing of this type accounted for eight times the output of traditional publishing (Bradley *et al.*, 2011) – making it, in terms of scale, more the norm than so-called “traditional” publication. The category of “non-traditional” is defined by Bradley *et al.* through the author relationship: mainstream publishers pay authors for their work through royalties; non-traditional publishers secure material through other methods. By this definition, the emerging and niche publishers who are the subject of this chapter combine both mainstream and non-traditional means. Some self-publish, some produce books for brand clients, some partner with authors, some follow a more mainstream publishing model.

In their combining of multiple platforms and publishing formats these emerging publishers might be called hybrid – except that this term has already been applied to companies that offer authors both the traditional publishing model and various forms of co-publishing where the author pays for some or all of the services (Friedman, 2016). In their seamless distribution of content across multiple platforms, they could be termed omnichannel publishers, a phrase used in marketing and business studies to denote companies and strategies that combine online and offline operations (Wiener, Hoßbach and Saunders, 2018). However, definitions vary. “Omnichannel publishing” is used by some marketing commentators to denote a seamless integration of channels that is more complete and mature than “multichannel”. At

the same time, it is used more narrowly to describe the pairing of consumer data with targeted content, using analytics to tailor digital communication strategies across channels (New Target, 2016).

While certain features unify the new-generation publishers studied here, they are also characterised by their diversity. They have different aims and operate in different sectors and niches. The criteria for inclusion in this study were that they were perceived to be involved in or have derived from activities other than publishing, or have been facilitated by digital disruptions and developments. The analysis focuses on attempting to identify emerging trends and clusters of similarities. In so doing, naming these trends becomes a tool for focusing on and teasing out what is happening at this point in the dynamic interplay that is contemporary publishing.

Many of the organisations are “outsiders”. However, as examples such as crowd-funding publisher Unbound, digital-first press Canelo, Miranda West of event-led independent Do Book Company and Crystal Mahey-Morgan’s cross-platform storytelling brand Own It! show, experienced publishing professionals too are either setting up their own enterprises or running their more innovative ventures as side projects. For some, there is a dissatisfaction with the models being offered by traditional publishing. For others, an inkling that there are more innovative, inclusive ways of making books and connecting with potential readers. Benoit Knox, who started BK Publishing from scratch while in the second year of a publishing degree, explained: “I could see that the traditional publishing industry was unable to cater for the needs of the wider South African market. It had and still has a narrow view of who its readers are and is content with its limited distribution options. To me as a young person this was not the type of industry I wanted to work in.” Echoing this from the UK, John Mitchinson, who as co-founder of Unbound had both publishing and TV experience, compares traditional publishing to “agri-business”, where publishers, in his view, are only looking for the highest yield “crops”. “That means that there is a massive amount of interesting and good stuff that just isn’t being published. Because it is not easy for a publisher to see the return, real innovation in publishing is compromised,” he says (Hussain, no date).

This study aims to look instead at the innovation. There is crossover between the groupings

in the taxonomy that follows, and the trends sketched here are of course not the only way of categorising these new ecosystems. There are also continuities and overlaps with long-established models and traditional publishing practices among the case studies. In a rapidly changing media sphere, culture and industry, where developments from Apple's podcast app to HP Indigo digital printing are rapidly absorbed and exploited, this chapter can only ever provide a snapshot. It is an attempt to navigate, chart and question the emerging forms of book producers as we traverse into the third decade of the 21st century.

Transferrable skills and aesthetic values: magazines as book producers

It is twenty years since the likes of *The Idler* and *Frieze* art magazine (born of the Frieze art fair) were launched, and nearly fifteen since the beginnings of the latest wave of independent magazines (*Little White Lies*, for example, started in 2005). *Print! Tearing it Up*, an exhibition at Somerset House, London in summer 2018, began its homage with the 1914 Vorticist journal *Blast*. This long history, and the current boom, mean there is a wealth of templates, and of experience, about how to make a magazine outside the mainstream.

Traditionally, magazine and trade book publishing have operated in separate spheres, with different content forms (collected articles submitted by a multiplicity of authors versus a single-author volume), design styles, business models and author relationships. However, several factors have in the past decade and more brought areas of convergence between the two industries. These include the maturing independent magazine sector's focus on high-quality print; the disruption of digital and its challenge to the traditional magazine business model; and the maturing of the blogger generation.

In the early 21st century, the standardisation and commercially driven formats and content in mainstream magazine publishing prompted a number of independently minded titles to experiment. In their efforts to differentiate themselves, a number of titles explored designs more reminiscent of books, such as the quiet, highly formatted covers of business and design title *Monocle* – innovative when it launched in 2007 – or the single-column typography and broad margins of lifestyle magazine *Kinfolk*, launched in 2011. High production values became a point of distinction. *The Idler* brought out editions in fabric hard cover, a trope also employed by fashion title *PETRIe*, which aims to be mix beautiful imagery with serious journalism (Wang, 2017). Travel and lifestyle magazine *Cereal* – one of the most successful

of the new wave – perfected a much-copied minimalist style of layout and photography, with weighty, collectable, high-pagination issues produced at first quarterly and then biannually. As editor Rosa Park explained to MagCulture, “we are of a generation where the way things look is important, and having a brand identity that filters through all of your images and design was very important to us” (2017). *The Hieronymous Journal*, launched in 2018 by the eponymous Swiss stationer, has a foil-embossed cover and open thread stitched spine. With issue one advertised at CHF220 (about £170) and in a limited edition of 500 hand-numbered copies, this occasional journal takes periodical publishing into the territory of artist’s bookwork.

The second factor driving the convergence of books and magazines is the disruption wrought by digital. This has affected both traditional magazine business models, where it has drastically reduced advertising revenues, and delivery platforms, by increasing the number of potential channels for appealing to readers. “Where once there was a single business model (sell ads and sell copies) now there are multiple ways of making money and distributing magazines,” writes graphic designer and industry commentator Jeremy Leslie in *The Modern Magazine* (2013, p.9). *Cereal* carefully curates its commercial relationships, making strategic brand alliances with the likes of British perfume house Penhaligon’s or Levi’s Made and Crafted. It also generates income by acting as a media agency. Similarly, TCO, publisher of film magazine *Little White Lies* and youth culture title *Huck* delivers targeted editorial across platforms from film to social media to print with brands including The North Face, Nike and WeTransfer.

The blogging generation, who have grown up with an online voice, have been the drivers of much of the indie magazine expansion. Journalist Lizzie Garrett Mettler argues that the image-led aesthetic and abundant white space in the titles she studied are influenced by platforms such as Pinterest and Tumblr: “these magazines haven’t so much rejected the Internet as brought it off our screens and onto paper” (2014). Leslie notes how producing a printed magazine alongside a website brought a counterpoint to the ‘disposability’ of blogging for design commentary site *It’s Nice That*; advertisers and clients took them more seriously (pp. 214-5).

It is no surprise that alongside book-like magazines these magazine brands are now producing their own books. Watson pointed out that magazine publishers “feel like they understand how to bind paper on one side and sell it to people ... Anyone who’s a magazine

publisher will have all of the expertise to lay out a page that could be used for a book, or a page for a magazine.” Some of these magazine publishers produce books themselves, born from their own content and niche subject matter; some work with established book publishers; others create books for clients.

For these magazine producers, facing the financial challenges of the current media market, books can act as an additional income stream, or be another channel to offer clients. Clive Wilson, consultant head of books for TCO and co-founder of book creation business Harris + Wilson, explains that they are “one element of the TCO offering to brands – alongside other premium content including film, digital and events”. Wilson says that “white-label, non-trade publications ... provid[e] a brand with a premium quality marketing asset”. Examples include the “thought leadership” publications that the agency produced for Google, entitled *Think Quarterly*, and a book for Microsoft after its acquisition of Nokia in 2014. TCO also produces trade titles with established book publishers as partners, which additionally play a marketing role by amplifying their magazine brands. As of November 2018, 12 *Huck* and *Little White Lies* books were in print, with another six titles due in 2019. These are funded through flat fees and advances from publishers (Laurence King Publishing, US publisher Abrams and HarperCollins imprint William Collins for the existing titles). The *Huck* book *Paddle Against the Flow* was placed with Chronicle Books in part because TCO was aiming to build a US audience. “Editorial, design and marketing expertise translates very well from a magazine environment to a book publishing one,” says Wilson. There is a “genuine commitment to the physical, tactile qualities and potential of the printed page”.

Some independent magazines use the book form to collate past issues or compile yearbooks: travel title *Lodestars Anthology*, for example, or German typography blog-turned-magazine publisher *Slanted* with its *Yearbook of Type*. For others, the books speak to the interests of their niche audiences. *Apartamento*, established in 2007 in Barcelona and describing itself as “an everyday life interiors magazine”, has built a list of photo-led, cookery and even adult colouring books with its own imprint (Apartamento Magazine, 2019). The *Cereal* website offers coffee-table volumes of curated images and words – such as *These Islands: A Portrait of the British Isles* – and city guides in digital and print forms. Editor Rosa Park is also the author of an illustrated children’s title, *A Balloon Away*, also published through *Cereal*. With events, its agency and even a gallery project, *Cereal* exemplifies the multi-layered, omnichannel presence of many in this new generation.

London and North America-based *Pom Pom Quarterly*, a journal focusing on knitting, crochet and craft, was set up in 2012 and conceived as “a collection of patterns complemented by thoughtful writing and useful tutorials” (2018). By the beginning of 2019, the Pom Pom Press page listed six standalone titles and a six-volume series, *Interpretations*. Readers can purchase digital, print or gift set editions. In answer to questions for this research, co-founder and editor Meghan Fernandes described its core business areas as magazine or journal publisher, events or festivals, podcast or other audio producer and niche interest publisher. Fernandes is the only one of the Pom Pom team with previous publishing experience: working “as an assistant in the picture research department of a lifestyle book publisher part-time as a student. I then helped produce exhibition catalogs [sic] at a small gallery.” They create the books themselves in-house, developing their approach and production schedules with each title, but employing a freelance graphic designer. According to Fernandes, the decision to become book publishers came because they “saw a gap for more boutique-style books in the craft industry”. The books add value for their audience and Pom Pom plans to continue publishing three to five books a year. Interestingly, Fernandes described Amazon as “Not at all useful” compared to the importance of social media for this niche craft audience: the high-volume, low-discoverability market hall, where it can be difficult to convey points of distinctiveness, does not always lend itself well to these niche non-fiction publishers.

The story is slightly different for literary periodicals. For these publishers, books – or the aspiration to produce books – is often part of the original plan, and editors are more likely to have a background in book publishing. *Slightly Foxed* was set up by Girl Pirkis and Hazel Wood, formerly of John Murray, in 2004 and began producing *Slightly Foxed Editions* in 2008 (*Slightly Foxed*, 2019). These clothbound limited runs of forgotten works are printed by Smith Settle, the same craft printers who have produced the journal since its beginnings. The magazine itself, said Watson in interview, is “a bookish object, and [Pirkis and Wood] realised they could take these great works ... and know this is the sort of stuff that their readers love ... It’s such a lovely little ecosystem they’ve got going.” More recently, Laura Jones and Heather McDaid launched 404 Ink first with a literary magazine in autumn 2016, followed by the Kickstarter-funded and widely reported *Angry Women* as their first book publication in March 2017. Both are publishing freelancers, with experience in books and journalism.

This model of mixed journal and literary products is also to be found in poetry. Corbel Stone Press, run by Autumn Richardson and Richard Skelton, has an innovative multimedia list spanning artworks and special editions, journal *Reliquiae*, original books and paperback editions of out-of-print titles by the founders and others; it also publishes music in cassette, DVD, USB drive and digital download forms (Corbel Stone Press, no date).

Spoken word first: podcasting and events

In recent years there has also been convergence, or perhaps more of a readjustment, between the written and spoken word. Audiobook sales are “booming”, according to a *Bookseller* article based on 2017 figures from Nielsen, having risen 15% by value compared with 2016 in the UK and doubling in the five years from 2012. Podcasts are reaching 6 million people a week in the UK (Ofcom, 2018), with podcast publishers reporting close to 150 million downloads globally a month (Statista, 2019). Magazines such as *Little White Lies* produce podcast editions, while Stack Magazines has a long-running “behind the scenes” podcast series. There are also podcast-to-book ventures, such as the Lunar Poetry Podcasts anthology, *Why Poetry?*, and more interwoven co-productions, such as the podcast-plus-pocketbook output of Radiobook Rwanda, a collaboration between Bristol-based No Bindings, Huza Press in Rwanda and Kwani Trust in Kenya to “showcase Rwandan and East African creative voices” (Radiobook Rwanda, no date).

David Turner, founder of Lunar and co-creator, with Lizzy Turner, of *Why Poetry?*, explained in interview: “I’ve always seen the podcast as like a zine or magazine.” Lunar is a series of conversations with poets about the process and theory of writing. He now also publishes the transcripts; thanks to funding from Arts Council England they are available freely through Lunar’s website. “I think a lot of people who are attracted to podcasts want to reject traditional publishing,” he said. “[That] was never my choice. I just wanted to have more space.” *Why Poetry?* was published by Verve Poetry Press in 2018 and came about through an invitation from Stuart Bartholomew, co-founder of the press, which itself developed from the Birmingham-based Verve Poetry Festival: “What I’m trying to achieve with the podcast is what they’re trying to achieve with the festival, which is an open view of what poetry is, and not having a division between spoken word and written poetry.” The Turners jumped at the opportunity for someone else to do the distribution, although they were

the editors and typesetters for the book. It showcases the work of 30 poets featured in the podcast, woven through with the story of the podcasts, told in a series of interviews.

The Do Book Company sprang from spoken-word events of a different kind. The Do Lectures were set up by David and Clare Hieatt, co-founders of ethical clothing companies Howies and Hiut Denim, and run each year on their farm in Cardigan, Wales. The idea is a simple one: that people who do things can inspire the rest of us to go and do amazing things too. The talks are filmed and made freely available via the website and Do has become a worldwide “encouragement network”. Impressed by the Do ethos and prompted by a “desire to run my own independent publishing company”, Miranda West, who answered survey questions for this study, set up The Do Book Company as a separate but associated enterprise. Operating from a small office in Shoreditch, London, the company sends a royalty of 5% from the proceeds of each sale back to the Do Lectures. The books are written by speakers from the lectures: “Our aim is to recreate that same positive change in book form – whether that’s the mastery of a new skill or craft, a simple mindshift, or a shot of inspiration to help you get started” (The Do Book Company, n.d.). Similarly, the School of Life creative and life-hacking workshops, based in London, have led to its business in linked books and stationery. Unlike many of the new entrants studied in this research, she has more than two decades of established expertise, having been publisher for André Deutsch and editorial director for Ebury Press before moving to Vermilion. “I would not have started a publishing business without having industry experience,” West commented in her survey answers.

These publishing operations extend the brand and audience reach for the original ventures and add a tangible element for the existing audiences. Events can become both the instigator of a book or publishing operation and the point of sale. However, books can work in another way for events: to capture and explain. “We needed to find a new way to record an event or programme that is disparate/transient, that can’t be captured through photography or video alone,” wrote Rosie Allen, director of contemporary art curators and producers Field Notes in her survey responses. A community interest company (CIC), they produced *The Wanderers* with a young artist publishing collective, using riso printing and traditional binding. Their work is funded on a project by project basis, with finance for the first ISBN-registered publication from Arts Council England and Cornwall arts funder FEAST. “The reception of the book has been perhaps the most surprising thing,” said Allen; “the degree to which it has

allowed us to explain the project as a whole has greatly extended the legacy of the project and is helping us to build useful connections for a new programme and publication.”

Books with purpose: social enterprise and charity publishing

Reaching different audiences; amplifying different voices: these aims draw together organisations that are trying to initiate change through their books and publishing projects. They are concerned with social value, not just aesthetic, informational or financial value. This study identified two main forms of social value publishing: charities that have begun to produce books or have set up a publishing business, and book-related ventures that have formed themselves as a social enterprise or have a social imprint. Although definitions of social enterprise vary, a broad categorisation is that these organisations sit between traditional charities and profit-driven business. They have commercial elements, but aim to create positive social change, reinvesting profits to “tackle social problems, improve people’s life chances, provide training and employment opportunities for those furthest from the market, support communities and help the environment” (Social Enterprise UK, 2016).

Benoit Knox is director/publisher of BK Publishing, a magazine and book producer based in Pretoria. Much of its output is for clients – from small to international publishers and from children’s titles and personalised books to poetry and local interest – but BK Publishing also has its own social imprint, Meetse a Bophelo: “The Water of Life”. This currently publishes two to three titles a year – and Knox hopes it will be more in future. “Social value extends far beyond the cultural value of books,” he wrote in his survey answers. “Our books and magazines and distribution models are designed to create a book-reading and book-buying culture in the disadvantaged communities in South Africa.” He wants to appeal to a diverse audience, and BK Publishing has been experimenting with reaching people who would not usually buy books, by hand-selling and distributing through alternative outlets such as “pop-up bookshops on our street corner” and “spaza-shops” (informal traders of groceries and sweets).

In the United States, Anne Trubek is the owner and publisher at Belt Publishing, “a platform for new and influential voices from the Rust Belt and Midwest” (*Belt Magazine*, 2018). Trubek wrote that she was prompted to produce books by a “[d]esire to tell stories that were not being otherwise told”. She also founded *Belt Magazine*, a journalism website focusing on

the politics and culture of the region, and now a separate non-profit organisation supported by readers, donations and grants.

The aim of facilitating diversity, inclusivity and access to the industry has encouraged a number of organisations to provide mentoring and support. Verve Poetry Press, for example, has plans to assist the development of emerging poets through workshops, writing opportunities and the support of the press's published poets (2019). The Good Literary Agency was set up by author Nikesh Shukla and his agent Julia Kingsford to focus on "discovering, developing and launching the careers of writers of colour, disability, working class, LGBTQ+ and anyone who feels their story is not being told in the mainstream" (2019). While there are no plans to become a book publisher, Shukla also edits *The Good Journal*, a quarterly journal showcasing British writers of colour. Its status as a social enterprise is important, said Kingsford in her interview responses, "because there is a clear social purpose to the agency". The structure is also necessary, as the venture is partially funded by Arts Council England. Currently working with more than 40 authors, it has received an "incredibly positive" response from publishers, with many providing low-level funding.

Trigger exemplifies a model of charity-related publishing driven by the aim of widening audience and access. Adam Shaw, chair and founder of The Shaw Mind Foundation, had struggled for over 30 years with debilitating OCD. On recovering with the help of psychologist Dr Lauren Callaghan, he wanted to support people who might not have access to the private therapy he had benefited from. "His Pulling the Trigger books series aims to provide evidence-based recovery tools written by clinical psychologists and psychiatrists," explained editor Stephanie Cox, answering on behalf of Trigger. Callaghan is a founder of the press, which means that "every book we produce has a professional stamp of approval, which is vital when putting out such important books." The press began with a seasoned copywriter and editor, and graduates as publishing coordinators. It has now grown to include a range of imprints and brought in directors from Palgrave MacMillan and Quarto group alongside highly experienced sales and publicity managers. There are plans to move into children's publishing and to become more of a "mental health and wellbeing publisher". Proceeds from the books, aside from author royalties, fund The Shaw Mind Foundation's mental health projects. "Information about the charity is shared inside our books and we cross-promote our services at events and other ventures," explained Cox.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation also finds that books help them reach different audiences, as editorial lead Ian Banks stated in his survey answers. “Our standard format of publication has been the research report, but a book offers access to a different readership (e.g. academics), allows for outside authorship and contributions, and is a place where we can explore concepts and ideas related to but outside the remit of our reports,” he explained. The Foundation is a charity that aims to accelerate the transition to a circular economy and promote positive economic change globally. It does this by engaging with decision-makers from government, business, design and academia. It offers in-depth reports, workshops and learning activities, and web-based resources. By the end of 2018 it had released three books under its own imprint. However, being a new entrant to publishing, especially one (unlike magazine businesses) not used to trading, expectations of distribution figures “sometimes exceeded what might be normally expected for that type of book”, wrote Banks. A subsequent book collaboration was undertaken with a mainstream publisher to strengthen distribution, marketing and revenue collection – as well as to bring in outside help for design and graphics, as for previous books – due to lack of capacity as well as gaps in expertise. For the Foundation, their books also provide evidence of dissemination and impact for funders and stakeholders.

What these organisations share is that their publishing-related operations are concerned with making a difference. They also aim to create a virtuous circle, where the different areas of the organisation support and amplify each other. This circularity and mutual support, which contrasts with a linear, “broadcast”, get-it-out-there-and-promote-it model, is a feature of this interconnected publishing.

Digital enabling: platforms and relationships

In the current world of post-digital reading, distribution and marketing, new platforms and technological developments have enabled connection between readers, authors and books in a variety of ways. Social media platforms were highly valued by the survey and interview respondents in this research but, beyond that, each pinpointed their own bespoke combination of tech-related enablers, whether digital printing, or ebooks, or Amazon, or lower-cost equipment and software. The availability of industry-standard graphic design programme InDesign on subscription service Adobe Creative Cloud has had a particular impact in lowering the financial barriers of production, especially for micropublishers. Instead of a

substantial up-front software investment, new entrants can pay month by month, with free trials and reductions for students and in promotions.

Other publishers established over the past decade have been tech start-ups as well as publishing companies. John Mitchinson, who co-founded Unbound in 2011, noticed how, while many small, independent presses had sprung up in the gaps left by the big publishers, “no one seemed to be doing anything in the technology space. Nobody seemed to be challenging the relationship between readers and writers” (Hussain, n.d.). Unbound has taken the crowdfunding model and applied it to book publishing, with its own dedicated platform in the foreground, backed up by traditional editorial services and, since 2018, in-house sales and distribution (Onwuezemi, 2018). It has published more than 150 books, with Shukla’s prize-winning *The Good Immigrant* a particular success, having sold more than 70,000 copies (Myers, 2018; *Courier*, 2018). David Hieatt’s book *Do Purpose*, part of the Do Book Company series, was funded via the Unbound platform. The publisher has combined technological with editorial, business and marketing innovation, pursuing a policy of publishing underrepresented writers, giving authors 50 per cent of profits from their title and importing the reader-author relationships fostered by social media and Kickstarter-style crowdfunding into the publishing model itself. In the style of the newly interconnected publishing, it has also launched an online journal, *Boundless*, with content ranging from essays to reviews, a podcast and unpublished fiction, edited by established journalist and critic Arifa Akbar. Alongside providing literary value, Mitchinson has said *Boundless* is “a way of enlarging our data set, with relatively minimal investment” (*Courier*, 2018).

While some publishers, such as digital-first Canelo and Hera, have moved away from print, for Wonderbly the book experience is crucial, even though it is enabled by a host of back-end technological developments. The personalised book company was originally called Lost My Name, in reference to its first product, *The Little Boy/Girl Who Lost His/Her Name*, which by 2017 had sold 2.7 million copies and, according to the company’s website, was the best-selling picture book of 2018 in the UK (Wonderbly, n.d.). Chief product officer Nick Marsh said in his interview for this research that the company had been on a “big journey” through a rapid growth phase to its current position as a “slightly more mature medium-sized business”. Wonderbly sees itself as “really just a children’s publisher, it’s just that our USP is personalisation”. Marsh stated:

We don't have this as our customer-facing value proposition, but personalised books are personalised in order to make the stories inside them and the messages children take from them more impactful and more memorable and more valuable to them.

Wonderbly is a “microcosm” of the publishing industry, he continued: a publisher, an ecommerce retailer, manufacturer and marketer all in one. Marsh's own background is in graphic design, while the four founders – Asi Sharabi, Tal Oron, David Cadji-Newby and Pedro Serapicos – had some writing and design experience, but none in publishing; the group's core expertise lay primarily in digital marketing, internet business and start-ups. They took the format of the personalised book and made it into a high-quality product, with fine attention to the detail of story, scripting and illustration.

The digital driver in the company's growth was “the opening up of Facebook as a digital marketing platform”. This, Marsh revealed, took the *Lost My Name* books from a niche product to a mass-appeal product. He also pointed to developments such as the browser technology that renders the personalised book previews on the website and high-resolution PDFs that are sent to print: “our website is basically a website that allows you to print off another website,” he explained. Then there are the standards around image and rendering technologies and graphics processing, and the “high-quality, high-volume digital print” allowed by the slightly older technology of HP Indigo digital offset presses.

Turner of Lunar Poetry Podcasts noted the rise of easily accessible platforms on which to publish audio, together with cheaper equipment aimed at beginner podcasters. He uses Soundcloud, because “when you share the link through social media it automatically embeds with a player that is compatible with just about every device.” He wanted engaging with the podcast to be as easy as picking up a magazine. This compatibility, and accessibility of the means of making, are important to Turner, who says of the current upsurge in indie production:

I liken it very much to ... the 70s [when] there were photocopiers popping up in public buildings and offices and then zine culture really exploded because suddenly you could just run off a hundred copies – behind your boss's back.

Why a book?

The new generation of publishers in this study all had their own particular reasons for publishing books – from being invited, to financial, to championing diversity, to audience-building, to documenting, to the desire to run their own press. For all of them, however, books offer a special and particular value. In *The Revenge of Analog*, David Sax argues that the ubiquity and efficiency of digital has re-valued analogue technologies, including paper and physical books. Initially, digital makes the analogue versions “worthless”, but when digital becomes the default, the “honeymoon” with the next new tech product ends: each technology can then be judged on its true merits (2016, p.xvi). In Sax’s view, the older analogue tool is then either recognised as working better or coveted for its inefficiency. This to an extent holds true in publishing, in particular for the indie magazine sector and with limited editions, but in the interconnected publishing researched here, it is more the case that digital and print are woven together. Each technology has its particular role and strengths. There is a continuum: from ephemerality and disembodiedness towards longevity and “weight” – from social media, to website, to print magazine – with a book sitting, logically, as the farthest point.

The bound-ness of books has been contrasted in negative terms to the supposed freedom of digital forms. However, in an era of in-finite information and scrolling without end, the finiteness of a book becomes a point of difference: a benefit. The artisan aspect of print has also been re-valued, with letterpress printing a growth area that has spawned its own magazines, including Alberta-based *Uppercase* (which also produces books) and *Pressing Matters* from Bristol. Turner referred to a conversation with Michael Curran, who started Tangerine Press around the time that the Amazon Kindle came out:

People said: “You’re crazy, people don’t want books any more.” And ... because he does really nicely handbound books, and everything’s really considered and everything’s really beautiful, he said that he only saw a rise in sales because people don’t want one thing or the other, they want choice ... They’re very different experiences: holding a book and reading words.

Among his examples, Sax analysed the success of Moleskine and discussed how the company positioned its notebooks as “the ideal companion to smartphones” (2016, p.31). Perhaps this is a way to view the print books being produced by these new publishers: as companions. This terminology at least questions the adversarial tenor of debate around how

the disruptive potential of digital will play out, and the language of challenge and defence. As *Cereal* editor Park has stated: “I don’t think that digital is on a different par to print, it’s equally important. But it’s difficult to compare because they are so different. They’re dependent on each other” (MagCulture, 2017).

Many of the emerging publishers studied here are niche and have built a close relationship with their audiences and online communities through digital means. However, niche does not necessarily mean small, especially as publishing enterprises expand their omnichannel presence. By 2019 *Monocle* had become a global lifestyle and publishing brand, spanning designer goods to radio and film, and from annual Quality of Life conferences to cafés in London, Tokyo and Zurich. It has a book list published with German house Gestalten (Monocle 2019).

As shown by the examples of Google and Microsoft, leading global brands are themselves looking towards print and books, sometimes as vehicles for internal communications. Brands have for several decades produced books as part of their marketing and brand development. The Soho House group of clubs and hotels, which for a time had their own publication programme including magazines, has produced two books with Preface Publishing; Harris + Wilson created a series for Octopus Publishing Group with organic children’s food brand Ella’s Kitchen. In a more unusual move, fashion retailer COS itself published *Creating with Shapes* by fashion designer and long-time collaborator Usha Doshi.

Books bear great cultural and informational significance. They have for centuries played a central role in “how people have given material form to knowledge and stories”, as Leslie Howsam writes in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book* (2015, p.1). In 2019, Sharmaine Lovegrove, publisher at Dialogue Books, called on the publishing industry to be “bolder and braver” and “appeal to the full range of potential readers”. Her rallying cry was predicated on a view that books are the “foundation of culture”, or that they should be (Lovegrove, 2019). Books are still seen as special: a category apart. However, they are no longer the primary information channel. In his 2011 deconstructionist analysis of the book, Striphas was suspicious of the hegemony of print: “So much of the work of the world in the age of the [printed] book has been the exercise of dominion and domination over not only the forces of nature but other men and women, cultures and societies,” he wrote (p.xii). Ironically, with the new hegemony of digital big

business, print offers possibilities as a vessel for alternative viewpoints and as a vibrant space for experimentation.

Digital culture commentator Craig Mod wrote in *Wired* how the “Future Book” is not what we thought it would be. Rather than “interactive, moving, alive ... lush with whirling doodads, responsive, hands-on”, it is exemplified by an independently produced special edition to mark the 40th anniversary of the Voyager spacecraft; a multiplatform, crowd-funded publication that was “complex and beautiful, with foil stamping and thick pages, full-color, in multiple volumes, made into a box set ... for a weirdly niche audience, funded by geeks like me who are turned on by the romance of space” (2018). Mod calls the whole of the digital communication and production infrastructure that led to the final products the “book” – a classification that could be questioned. His highlighting of the changing “lattice-work” that goes into creating books, however, chimes with the findings of this study.

The “outsider”, emerging publishers discussed here use the whole of the digital-print continuum, in a way that is interconnected and that listens and responds to their audiences. They may not be *the* future of book publishing, but they are certainly indicative of how publishing is being transformed and remade in post-digital times.

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