

Foreword

IFLA SIG on Library Publishing Midterm Meeting Dublin, March 2019

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There's an old model for connecting authors to readers that we've all lived in for a very long time and it's quite simple: authors write, publishers publish, and libraries (as well as individuals) acquire so readers can read. The model has an elegant simplicity, heavily dependent on print technology and the economics that offered feasible business models for publishers and for libraries under that technology regime.

Nowadays there are many different ways in which authors and readers can connect with one another, and wisdom depends on knowing what the best of many models might be in any given circumstance. One striking development has been the emergence of an increasing number of libraries that publish, more and more and more as time goes by. Of course, libraries have always published, but mostly in limited ways: exhibition catalogues, house journals reporting on activities of a particular institution, and one-off special items. Where those items needed to reach a wide audience, moreover, they would typically be distributed through traditional publishing channels.

But the last five to ten years particularly have seen the emergence of a different scale. More and more libraries – public (from the national level to the local), academic, and special – have found it useful and compelling to take on the work of selecting, editing, and producing for internet distribution works of interest and use to widespread audiences. Some of the work is done simply, but there are now also software systems and service providers that can handle the work processes, leaving the library as the ultimate responsible publisher: responsible for selecting, editing, distributing, and preserving serious (library-quality) publications.

In 2015, Alex Holzman of Temple University Press and I published, through the Council on Library and Information Resources, a study that outlined the opportunities and summarised the state of both theoretical discussion and practical application that we could identify at that time. The study was widely read and discussed and now, five

years later, it is also a benchmark against which to measure some of the exciting progress since that time.¹

There have been two notable IFLA events since the time of that report. First, in 2016, a preconference (scheduled just before the 2016 IFLA World Library and Information Congress held in Columbus OH) took place at the University of Michigan. That exceptional Ann Arbor event was heavy on startups, theory, and prospects. (The proceedings of the preconference appeared in a special issue of Journal of Electronic Publishing: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jep/3336451.0020.2*)

At the Kuala Lumpur World Library and Information Congress in 2018, an IFLA “Special Interest Group” (not on the level of an IFLA “Section” but with many similarities in scope – and SIGs that succeed sometimes become sections) was created for library publishing. Only six months later, this IFLA SIG sponsored a second international gathering, its Midterm meeting, held on the premises of the Dublin Business School (DBS) close to the centre of the city.

Ireland is a hotbed of library leadership and initiative today. The SIG Midterm was a great success, in large measure due to the initiative and energy of Jane Buggle from DBS and colleague Marie O’Neill, who had just moved from DBS to a nearby technology institute, CCT College. The strong support of the Library Association of Ireland was expressed in the enthusiastic presence and participation of Dr. Philip Cohen, Head of Library Services at the Dublin Institute of Technology since 2004 and President of the Library Association of Ireland. (IFLA’s WLIC will meet in Dublin in August 2020 and Cohen has been a dynamic leader in winning the bidding process for hosting and in organising the meetings and venues.)

At the IFLA SIG meeting in Dublin, there were striking stories of successful, scaled-up projects and the growing routinisation of publishing into library missions and workflow. Partial proceedings are presented in this collection, along the following outline:

¹ A. Okerson and A. Holzman, The Once and Future Publishing Library (Washington DC: CLIR 2015 -- <https://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub166/>), sponsored by the Goodall Family Foundation.

1. **Approaches.** The first three presentations and discussion focused on case studies of library-based publishing enterprises.
 - a. [Libraries as publishing partners: Promoting best practices in open access journals](#) - Suzanne Cady Stapleton (University of Florida)
 - b. [Small is big and slow is fast: Stockholm University Press as a case study](#) - Christina Lenz (Stockholm University)
 - c. [White Rose University Press: a case study](#) – Tom Grady (White Rose University Press)
 - d. [Quality communication: is there a best practice for all library publishing programs?](#) - Ally Laird (Penn State University)

2. **Education and Mentoring.** The next session moved to connections between library-based publishing and education/training, both for the publishing activity itself and also for the links between library publishing and the preparation and presentation of learning materials for students generally.
 - a. [The Library Publishing Curriculum](#) - Melanie Schlosser (Library Publishing Coalition)
 - b. [The Digital Publishing Workshop @ Columbia University Libraries](#) - Michelle Wilson (Columbia University)
 - c. [Open education, open access, and open source: information literacy instruction through course-based publishing](#) - Kevin Stranack (Simon Fraser University Library)
 - d. [The Bookshelf Publishing Unit – MOOCs and digital textbooks](#) – at OsloMet University - Helge Høivik (OsloMet University)

3. **Business Models and Sustainability.** Two presentations concentrated on the business mechanics of library publishing (Oslo Met's continuing good work, and an Irish consortium aborning)
 - a. [Publishing open digital journals: The use of Open Journal Systems \(OJS\) at OsloMet University Library](#) - Trude Eikebrokk (OsloMet University)
 - b. [Take the power back: sustainable business models for new university presses](#) - Jack Hyland, Alexander Kouker and Dmitri Zaitsev

4. **Best technological practices: a review of the “nuts and bolts” that support the best work.**
[I know the ‘why’ of DOIs, what about the rest?](#) - Rachael Lammey (CrossRef)

5. **Impacting Communities.** Three vivid presentations described ways in which library publishing can perform a service with high community impact for a smaller-scale undertaking, including examples from Nigerian politics, Irish community-building, and the changing status of the 'Travellers' in Irish society.
 - a. [Open Access publishing of a unique and distinctive collection: The Maynooth University Death-Row Correspondence of Ken Saro-Wiwa](#) - Helen Fallon (Maynooth University)
 - b. [Publishing the ITT Short Story Competition without a budget!](#) - Gerard Connolly, Gerard and Niamh Walker-Headon (Technological University Dublin)
 - c. [Amplifying the voices of the marginalised](#) - Jane Buggle (Dublin Business School)

6. **Global Collaborations.** The final substantive presentations addressed a variety of ways in which partnership and connections can facilitate local activity, from consortial activity among university presses to links among libraries in the US with standardised-technology from PUBLISSO, and work deliberately reaching for global scale
 - a. [AEUP – Connecting university presses in Europe](#) - Isabella Meinecke (Hamburg University Press)
 - b. [Publishing in the hands of librarians -two presentations: library consortial support for publishing](#) - Aajay Murphy and Promita Chatterji (Kennesaw State University)
 - c. [PUBLISSO: an all-in-one publishing platform](#) - Ursula Arning (ZB MED.)
 - d. [The desire for global engagement in independent library-published journals](#) - Christopher Hollister (University at Buffalo)

The meetings concluded with a broad discussion and then a focused wrap-up, summarising the work presented and looking forward to the next stage of discussions at the World Library and Information Congress to be held in Athens in August 2019. All participants will have come away with different impressions, lessons learned, and ambitions for the future. Here I will offer a few reflections of my own perspective, with some comments looking ahead.

The primary theme of the conference was **success**: presentation after presentation told of projects that had been realised and produced concrete outputs that found readers and had impact. Those successes were as widely distributed as Yorkshire and Florida, Penn State and Scandinavia, Dublin and New York. Each successful project was sui generis, and each had its special lessons to draw, but the cumulative effect of learning that there could be such diverse success already, today, with available technologies and without significant support systems, was perhaps the most important single lesson of the conference.

The second theme was the **real library-centric nature of the efforts**. Though a couple of these organisations used the title “University Press,” those organisations were library-housed. Results all came from the success of imagination and organisation from inside libraries. The repository, at one extreme, houses the research output of a given library and its host institution, but offers less curation, editing, and production designed to create a genuinely outward-facing product for wide distribution. Such a repository is as likely to contain the earlier drafts of a scholar's work published more formally elsewhere, as it is to contain material ready for a wide audience. University presses, on the other hand, are designed and built to perform in direct competition with commercial publishers of all scopes and scales — some university presses themselves achieve impressive scale. Often these may think and act like commercial enterprises, wherein sales and marketing concerns are real and important. It is nowadays more or less standard that the bulk of the output of a university press is not drawn from within the host university, and indeed is meant to represent the convening ability of a strong university to bring together work in certain areas from a wide variety of the most credible sources. Library publishing today draws from within and without and presents the world with a different kind of collection and curation than either repositories or presses can do. Two of these stories offer striking examples.

White Rose publishes monographs coming mainly from three collaborating universities (York, Sheffield, and Leeds). One of their recent efforts is an extensive two-volume study (with both print and digital distribution channels) reporting the results of a long running archaeological dig in Yorkshire (*Star Carr*), concentrating on the Anglo-Saxon period. This is exactly the sort of thing a University Press might publish, with every reason to expect that sales might soar into the low three-figure range. But, after a very short time, the open-access distribution of this study has reached 6,000 downloads around the world. As a traditional university press product for sale, it would have seen almost all of those hundred copies go to university libraries, most of them in the region of the press and the excavation, and perhaps to others with existing strong scholarly interest in the subject. But this publication made it to Hong Kong, among many other places, a long way from North Yorkshire. At the same time, it was possible to bring it to that audience more rapidly and more inexpensively than formal publication would have been able to achieve.

A similar story came from Helen Fallon, Librarian of Maynooth University. Maynooth is a town about thirty miles west of Dublin, and the institution was from its founding until 1968 exclusively a seminary training Catholic priests. It has since diversified and is a full, but still modest-sized, campus of the National University of Ireland. However, this story of library publishing has to do with Nigeria. An Irish nun, Sister Majella McCarron, who had been in Africa for many years, worked there with a civil-rights

activist named Ken Saro-Wiwa, who led the struggle to protect the Ogoni people of coastal Nigeria from the depredations of Big Oil in the 1980s and 1990s. The government reaction was fierce and violent. Saro-Wiwa and a group of his colleagues were arrested, tried on trumped-up charges, and eventually tragically executed, to set an example to others not to interfere with the environmentally and culturally rapacious ways of the petroleum extraction business. It was sheer coincidence that Sister Majella, returning to Ireland shortly after, had connections at Maynooth that led to the library taking a role in preserving and cataloging photos and documents she had brought home — and collecting additional materials. In support of the cause Saro-Wiwa had died for, this led to the nascent library publishing enterprise producing a book length account reproducing many of the documents and making it available on the net, again for open access distribution. To leap across centuries for comparison, Robin Hood left behind legend and mystery and skepticism — not a detailed historical record to sustain credibility to his cause and activities. Robin Hood should have known more librarians!

The effect of the Maynooth publication was similar to the White Rose archaeology report: strikingly large numbers of downloads worldwide and much more impact in Nigeria than could ever have been the case with a conventionally-published book. Both products brought works of value to small and well-defined (in the Maynooth case, ad hoc) communities of interest and found wide distribution for these works — and much more of an ongoing influence than could ever have been the case for traditional publishing.

One common theme of these and other stories was that similar projects, focusing on material of local, regional, or institutional interest and expecting interested but small and sometimes widely distributed audiences, can and should be given the structure and cachet of formal publication. The structure makes the material widely accessible and useful (better than even a very good finding aid for a digitised archive), and the cachet brings the resultant product to the attention of an audience that will find it interesting.

A key theme was the **commitment to open access publication**. I came away convinced that in the “use case” of library publishing, there’s an important body of material that can only come into existence and reach its audience effectively if it’s both professionally prepared and freely distributed. For much such material, libraries are uniquely positioned to be the distribution channels.

In addition, there were discussions of ways to **organise**. One of the members of the organising committee of the Dublin-IFLA Midterm meeting was Educopia's Melanie Schlosser, who is also the Community Facilitator of the US-based Library Publishing Coalition, founded in 2013/14. The LPC publishes an annual Library Publishing Directory of its members' efforts. That Directory gives further ideas and, of course, names of institutions and colleagues with experience they are happy to share with others.

The papers we heard in Dublin confirmed that publishing efforts in libraries, even at a limited scale (sometimes teams of two or three people, all with other 'day jobs'), have an important role. Sharing such stories is one way of making it possible for other institutions to take inspiration and action themselves

The point at which this conference left off is thus the point at which those who participated and those who follow this work can, and should, think and act for concrete next steps to make the idea of library publishing itself more familiar to a broader audience and to make the techniques of library publishing more easily reproducible in large institutions and small. The library community has established what these days we like to call "proof of concept", and faces the tasks of (in our current vernacular) "taking it to scale." This conference left participants confident that we have reached those points and that an exciting future is at hand.